

The Role of Media in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in Somalia: A Comprehensive Analysis of Media's Impact on Conflict Resolution and Societal Cohesion

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Abstract

This research explores the critical role of media in peacebuilding and reconciliation in Somalia, a country that has endured prolonged conflict and political instability. The study begins by highlighting the significant influence media holds in shaping public discourse and its potential to foster dialogue and unity in post-conflict settings. However, it also notes that the effectiveness of Somali media in contributing to peace and reconciliation is not well understood. The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the role of media in promoting peace and reconciliation, identify the challenges it faces, and propose actionable recommendations. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative data from structured questionnaires distributed to 424 participants and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews with 30 key informants, including media practitioners and regulatory bodies. Content analysis of media outputs was also conducted to assess how peacebuilding and conflict are portrayed in Somali media. The study's findings reveal a highly fragmented media environment in Somalia, characterized by political interference, safety concerns, and limited resources. Quantitative data analysis, including inferential tests, shows no significant relationship between current media practices and peacebuilding outcomes. The qualitative data further corroborates these findings, revealing that media practitioners often lack conflict-sensitive reporting skills, face external pressures, and operate in an environment where sensationalism overrides responsible journalism. The research concludes that while Somali media has the potential to be a powerful tool for peacebuilding, there are significant challenges to overcome. Recommendations include targeted training for journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting, enhancing journalist safety, and developing comprehensive media policies. The study also acknowledges its limitations, particularly the challenging security environment, which restricted data collection in some conflict-affected areas. This research provides valuable insights into the role of media in peacebuilding in Somalia and offers practical recommendations for improving the media's contribution to sustainable peace and reconciliation.

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1. Introduction

Somalia, located in the Horn of Africa, has endured decades of protracted conflict, political instability, and socio-economic turmoil. The collapse of central authority following the overthrow of President Siad Barre in 1991 plunged the country into chaos, leading to a civil war that fractured the nation along clan lines (Lewis, 2008). The absence of a centralized government allowed various clan-based militias and warlords to vie for control over territory and resources, exacerbating ethnic tensions and violence (Menkhaus, 2010). This period of lawlessness and disorder set the stage for a series of humanitarian crises, including famine, widespread displacement, and the emergence of extremist groups like Al-Shabaab (Harper, 2012). The persistent instability in Somalia is intricately linked to historical, political, and social dynamics. Recent research underscores how the enduring legacy of colonialism, the entrenchment of clan-based political structures, and Somalia's strategic significance in the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa continue to fuel conflict and hinder peacebuilding efforts (Hoehne, 2021; Khalif, 2020; Williams, 2020). External interventions, both by neighboring countries and international actors, have often compounded the situation, leading to a highly fragmented society where multiple factions compete for dominance (Marchal, 2007). Despite numerous peace conferences and international efforts to stabilize the country, the underlying drivers of conflict—such as clan rivalries, competition over resources, and political fragmentation—remain deeply entrenched (Elmi, 2010).

In this context, the role of media becomes crucial. Media can serve as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion, fostering dialogue, and promoting peace and reconciliation (Howard, 2013). However, in Somalia, the media landscape is fraught with challenges. The lack of infrastructure, pervasive insecurity, political interference, and the threat of violence against journalists all contribute to a constrained media environment (Puddephatt, 2006). Moreover, the Somali media is often polarized along clan lines, reflecting the broader societal divisions and exacerbating tensions rather than fostering understanding and reconciliation (Menkhaus, 2010). Despite these challenges, the potential of media in peacebuilding cannot be ignored. Media has the ability to reach wide audiences, disseminate critical information, and provide a platform for diverse voices, including those of marginalized groups (Galtung, 2002). In conflict-affected societies, media can play a transformative role by promoting inclusive dialogue, countering misinformation, and providing balanced reporting that bridges divide and fosters social cohesion (Brahimi & Dobbins, 2007). The role of media in peace negotiations is particularly significant, as it can influence the narratives surrounding peace processes, highlight the voices of peace advocates, and hold parties accountable to their commitments (Williams, 2011).

In Somalia, the need for peacebuilding is urgent. The ongoing conflict and instability have devastating consequences for the population, hindering socio-economic development, and perpetuating cycles of violence (Muggah, 2009). Peacebuilding efforts in Somalia require a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes of conflict, promotes reconciliation, and builds resilient institutions capable of sustaining peace (Bradbury, 2008). Media, as a critical component of civil society, has the potential to contribute significantly to these efforts. By providing accurate information, facilitating dialogue, and amplifying the voices of those advocating for peace, media can help to create an environment conducive to peace and stability (Puddephatt, 2006). However, the effectiveness of media in peacebuilding is contingent upon several factors, including the professionalism and ethical standards of journalists, the independence of media institutions, and the ability of media practitioners to operate safely and without fear of reprisal (Menkhaus,

2010). In Somalia, where the media faces constant threats and challenges, these factors are often compromised (Harper, 2012). As a result, the potential of media to contribute to peacebuilding is not fully realized.

This study seeks to explore the role of media in peacebuilding within the Somali context, examining both the opportunities and the challenges faced by media practitioners. Through a mixed-methods approach, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how media can be leveraged as a tool for peace and reconciliation. By analyzing the perceptions of media practitioners and the general public, this study will shed light on the critical gaps that exist between media efforts and public expectations, offering insights into how these gaps can be bridged to enhance the media's role in fostering peace and stability in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2010). In doing so, the study will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of media in conflict resolution, providing valuable lessons for other conflict-affected regions where media has the potential to play a transformative role in peacebuilding (Galtung, 2002). Through a set of targeted recommendations, the study aims to offer practical strategies for strengthening the capacity of Somali media to support peacebuilding efforts, thereby contributing to the long-term stability and development of the country (Muggah, 2009).

2. Methodology

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology employed in this study, outlining the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategies, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The methodology is structured to ensure a systematic and rigorous examination of the research objectives, offering a robust framework for interpreting the findings.

2.1. Research Method

The study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, informed by recent advances in research methodologies tailored to conflict-affected regions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2020).

2.1.1. Qualitative Component

The qualitative aspect of the research involves in-depth interviews with key informants, including media practitioners, editors, media owners, and representatives from media regulatory bodies. This component provides rich, detailed insights into the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of those directly involved in the Somali media landscape.

2.1.2. Quantitative Component

The quantitative component consists of structured questionnaires administered to a broader sample of media practitioners and community members. This component seeks to quantify perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to the role of media in peacebuilding, providing statistical evidence to support the qualitative findings.

2.2. Sampling Strategy

2.2.1. Purposive Sampling for Qualitative Data

A purposive sampling strategy is used for selecting key informants for the in-depth interviews. Participants are chosen based on their expertise, experience, and relevance to the study, ensuring that the sample includes a diverse range of perspectives from different segments of the media landscape in Somalia. The selection criteria include factors such as

the participant's role within their organization, their experience in the media industry, and their involvement in peacebuilding initiatives.

2.2.2. Stratified Random Sampling for Quantitative Data

For the structured questionnaires, a stratified random sampling method is employed to ensure representation across different types of media outlets (radio, television, print, and online) and regions within Somalia. This approach ensures that the sample is diverse and reflective of the various segments of the media landscape. Stratification is based on media type, geographic location, and participant demographics, ensuring that the sample is representative of the broader population of media practitioners and community members.

2.2.3. Sample Size Calculation

One of the major challenges was that there is no accurate number of Somali journalists. The media organizations have estimate numbers based on their registered journalists. By concluding the numbers, they provided the estimated population of approximately 3,700 active journalists in Puntland and south-central Somalia, the sample size for the survey was calculated using Cochran's formula for sample size estimation in large populations. The formula is as follows:

Where:

n_0 is the sample size,

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{e^2}$$

Z is the Z-value (1.96 for a 95% confidence level),

p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population (assuming $p=0.5$ for maximum variability),

e is the desired level of precision (margin of error, set at 5% or 0.05). Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot (1-0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$n_0 = \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

Rounding up, the sample size is approximately 385 journalists. To account for potential non-responses and incomplete surveys, the sample size was increased by 10%, resulting in a final sample size of approximately 424 journalists.

2.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Amoud University academic dean. All participants provided informed consent before their participation, after it was explained to them that their participation was voluntary, and that the information obtained will only be used for the purpose of this research. All efforts were made to ensure confidentiality of their responses.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

2.4.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data from in-depth interviews and open-ended survey responses is analyzed thematically. This involves coding the data into themes and sub-themes, which are then analyzed to identify patterns and insights related to the

research objectives. Thematic analysis is chosen for its flexibility and ability to provide rich, detailed accounts of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process includes multiple readings of the interview transcripts and survey responses, followed by coding and categorizing the data into thematic areas. These themes are then interpreted in relation to the study's research questions and objectives, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and perceptions of Somali media practitioners.

Basic Characteristics of the In-Depth Interview Participants

In-Depth Interview Participants				
KI Code	Sex	Age in Years	Occupation	Affiliation
IDI-01	Male	45	Media manager	Radio Director
IDI-02	Male	39	Media manager	Radio Editor
IDI-03	Male	42	Media manager	Radio Admin and finance
IDI-04	Female	35	Media manager	TV direct
IDI-05	Female	37	Media manager	TV Director
IDI-06	Male	34	Media manager	TV Director
IDI-07	Male	26	Media manager	TV Editor
IDI-08	Female	29	Media manager	TV Editor
IDI-09	Female	29	Media manager	TV Editor
IDI-10	Male	37	Media manager	TV Admin and Finance
IDI-11	Male	34	Media manager	TV Admin and Finance
IDI-12	Male	32	Media manager	TV Producer
IDI-13	Male	34	Media manager	TV Producer
IDI-14	Male	32	Media manager	TV Editor
IDI-15	Male	37	Media manager	TV Vice director
IDI-16	Male	39	Media manager	TV Vice director
IDI-17	Female	34	Media manager	TV Vice director
IDI-18	Female	33	Media manager	Chairman of Radio station
IDI-19	Female	31	Media manager	Acting TV manager
IDI-20	Male	36	Media Organization	Director general
IDI-21	Male	29	Media Organization	General secretary
IDI-22	Male	32	Media Organization	General secretary
IDI-23	Male	39	Media Organization	General secretary
IDI-24	Female	38	Media Organization	General secretary
IDI-25	Male	43	Media Organization	Project manager
IDI-26	Male	47	Media Organization	Chairman
IDI-27	Male	31	Media expert	Media trainer
IDI-28	Male	36	Media expert	Media freelancer
IDI-29	Male	31	Media expert	Program producer

Table 1: In-depth interview participant characteristics.

2.4.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the survey and content analysis is analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and means, are used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, such as chi-square tests and regression analysis, are employed to examine relationships between variables and test the study's hypotheses.

Statistical software, such as SPSS and Excel, is used to facilitate the analysis and ensure accuracy. The results are presented in tables, charts, and graphs, providing a clear and concise representation of the data.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

2.5.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews are the primary qualitative data collection method used in this study. These interviews are semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring specific issues that emerge during the discussions while ensuring that all relevant topics are covered. The interview guide is designed based on the research objectives, focusing on the challenges faced by media practitioners, the ethical dilemmas encountered, and the role of media in facilitating peacebuilding initiatives.

The interviews are conducted with key informants who have significant experience and expertise in the Somali media landscape. These include journalists, editors, media owners, and representatives from organizations such as the Media Association of Puntland (MAP) and the Federation of Somali Journalists (FESUJ). The interviews are conducted both in-person and via telephone or online platforms, depending on the availability and safety considerations of the participants.

2.5.2 Structured Questionnaires

The quantitative data is collected through structured questionnaires distributed to a sample of media practitioners and community members. The questionnaires are designed to capture a wide range of data, including demographic information, perceptions of the media's role in peacebuilding, challenges faced by media practitioners, and levels of trust in local media. The questionnaire includes closed-ended questions, Likert-scale items, and a few open-ended questions to capture additional qualitative data. The questionnaires are distributed both online, using platforms such as Google Sheets, and in-person, ensuring a broad and representative sample. The online distribution is particularly effective in reaching participants in remote or conflict-affected areas where in-person data collection may be challenging.

2.5.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis is employed to examine how conflict and peacebuilding efforts are portrayed by Somali media outlets. This involves a systematic analysis of media content, including news articles, radio broadcasts, and social media posts. The content is analyzed for themes, narratives, and frames related to conflict and peacebuilding. This method provides both quantitative data on the frequency and nature of peace-related content and qualitative insights into the framing and tone of media reports (Neuendorf, 2017).

3 Results

This section presents the findings from the mixed-methods research conducted to explore the role of media in peacebuilding within the Somali context. The results are organized into subsections corresponding to the key research questions, with a detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.1 Quantitative result

3.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study surveyed 424 media practitioners and conducted in-depth interviews with 30 key informants from various media organizations in Somalia. The demographic profile of the respondents is as follows:

3.1.2 Socio-demographic characteristics

The below table provides an overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, broken down by different locations (Mogadishu, Kismayo, Baidoa, Beledweyne, Galkayo, Garowe, Bosaso) and categorized by two main groups: Media Practitioners and the Community. The characteristics include residence and marital status. The table gives a comprehensive overview of the participants' demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, allowing for analysis of how these variables may influence the study's findings.

Variable	Categories	Number (424)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	267	62.9
	Female	157	37.1
Maternal age at birth (years)	18-24	86	20.3
	25-34	198	46.7
	35-44	94	22.2
	45-54	29	6.8
	55+	17	4.0
Educational background	High school or below	180	42.5
	Diploma	78	18.4
	Bachelor	119	28.1
	Above bachelor	47	11.0
Location	Mogadishu	105	24.8
	Kismayo	46	10.7
	Baidoa	72	17.0
	Beledweyne	63	14.9
	Galkayo	47	11.1
	Garowe	52	12.3
	Bosaso	39	9.2
Marital Status	Married	82	19.3
	Divorced	89	21.0

	Single	175	41.2
	Widowed	78	18.4

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the quantitative respondents

The socio-demographic analysis reveals that the majority of participants were male (62.9%), with a significant portion holding high school education or below (42.5%) and a substantial number having a bachelor’s degree (28.1%). This suggests a relatively educated group, with diverse representation from key Somalia cities like Mogadishu (24.8%) and Baidoa (17.0%). The demographic diversity, particularly in education and location, implies that the opinions and behaviors analyzed later in the study are likely influenced by these factors. However, the gender imbalance may affect the generalizability of the findings across a more gender-diverse population.

3.2 Role of Media in Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

The perceptions of media’s role in peacebuilding are mixed, with a significant portion of participants viewing the media’s contribution negatively. This indicates a critical need for the media to reassess its approach to covering peace and reconciliation efforts in Somalia. The perceptions of media’s role in peacebuilding are mixed, with a significant portion of participants viewing the media’s contribution negatively. This indicates a critical need for the media to reassess its approach to covering peace and reconciliation efforts in Somalia.

Variable	Categories	Number (424)	Percentage (%)
How would you describe the overall role of media in Somalia’s peacebuilding and reconciliation	Very positive	68	16.0
	Positive	76	17.9
	Neutral	89	21.0
	Negative	142	33.5
	Very Negative	49	11.6
How would you rate the role of the local media in contributing to peacebuilding and reconciliation	Very positive	65	15.3
	Positive	42	10.0
	Neutral	93	21.9
	Negative	151	35.6
	Very Negative	73	17.2
What challenges do media practitioners face when reporting on peacebuilding efforts in Somalia?	Threats and violence	103	24.3
	Lack of access to information	59	13.9
	Political pressure and censorship	49	11.6
	Limited resources and funding	119	28.1
	Public mistrust	94	22.
Which of the following issues will be useful to cover by media in promoting peace	Providing reliable information	98	23.1
	Educating the public	79	18.6
	Facilitating dialogue and understanding	64	15.1

Exposing corruption and injustices	97	22.9
Promoting reconciliation and unity	86	20.3

Table 3: Role of media in peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The qualitative findings of the study align with the quantitative results. During interviews with the heads and members of media organizations, it was revealed that the media's potential role in conflict resolution is not being fully harnessed. Respondents were asked about the media's role in both fueling and resolving conflicts. As one respondent noted.

“Most journalists do not receive sufficient training on conflict-sensitive reporting. Often, they unintentionally broadcast sensitive statements that incite conflict. For example, during clan conflicts in Marka, a journalist reported that one of the clans had been massacred, which led to prolonged conflicts” (IDI-02, Radio Director)

One of the challenges that emerged from the qualitative data is that certain Somali media outlets, through their reporting practices, are inadvertently fueling conflicts. This issue stems from the absence of a well-defined media policy to guide their operations.

Yes, the way the media reports can influence conflict resolution or fuel conflict. Unfortunately, our media often fails to use this opportunity positively. Most of Somali media outlets has no policies and guidelines for reporting on conflicts and peacebuilding. Media outlets do not have conflict sensitivity reporting guidelines, leading reporters to broadcast stories that may harm the community without proper editorial oversight.” (IDI-24, General secretary of media organization)

3.3 Media Consumption Habits and Trust

This table provides an overview of the media consumption habits of the participants, including whether they are media consumers, the types of media they use most frequently, their level of trust in local media, and their perceptions of the media’s role in exacerbating conflicts. The data offers a snapshot of how the participants interact with media, their trust in its content, and the potential influence of media on public opinion and conflict dynamics. This understanding is crucial for evaluating the media's effectiveness as a tool for peacebuilding in Somalia.

Variable	Categories	Number (424)	Percentage (%)
Are you a media consumer?	Yes	185	43.6
	No	239	56.4
Which types of media do you use most frequently for news and information?	Television	92	21.7
	Radio	139	32.8
	Newspapers/Magazines	0	0
	Online news websites	72	16.9
	Social media	121	28.5
How much do you trust the local media to report accurately on peacebuilding issues?	Completely	67	15.8
	A lot	54	12.7
	Somewhat	71	16.7

	A little	144	33.9
	Not at all	88	20.8
Have you ever felt that the media has played a role in worsening conflicts or tensions?	Yes	272	64.2
	No	152	38.8

Table 4: Media consumption habits.

The qualitative data collected through interviews corroborates the quantitative findings, highlighting critical issues related to the role of the media in conflict resolution in Somalia.

“Occasionally, unintentionally, the people being interviewed call for peace, which facilitates dialogue, but most media outlets do not have a plan or goal to facilitate dialogues to reduce conflicts” (IDI-04, TV Director)

This statement underscores a significant gap in the strategic use of media for peacebuilding, where the lack of intent and planning often results in missed opportunities for fostering dialogue.

“The effectiveness of media in promoting dialogue largely depends on the intent and capacity of the journalists involved. When they have the right support and training, they can make a real difference.” (IDI-23, General secretary of media organization)

This response emphasizes the importance of proper training and resources for journalists, affirming that media can play a crucial role in conflict resolution when adequately equipped.

There is no media policy that focuses on peacebuilding. When we tried to understand the policies of Somali media, we found that no written policies exist. Without editorial policies or conflict reporting policies, many mistakes occur” (IDI-22, General secretary of media organization)

This reveals a systemic issue within Somali media, where the absence of formal policies on peacebuilding and conflict reporting contributes to errors and exacerbates tensions.

3.4 Media Ethics and Practices from media practitioners

The below table presents the results of a survey conducted among 305 media practitioners, focusing on their training experiences, encounters with ethical dilemmas, and methods for verifying source credibility in the context of reporting on peace and conflict. This data provides insights into the challenges and practices of media practitioners in conflict reporting, highlighting areas where further training and ethical guidelines may be necessary.

Variable	Categories	Number (305)	Percentage (%)
Have you received any training specifically focused on reporting in conflict and post-conflict contexts?	Yes	104	43.6
	No	202	56.4
	Very Often	49	16.1
	Often	99	32.5

How often do you encounter ethical dilemmas while reporting on peacebuilding issues?	Somewhat	53	17.3
	Rarely	41	13.4
	Never	63	20.7
How do you verify the credibility of your sources when reporting on peace and conflict?	Cross-checking information with multiple sources	42	13.7
	Consulting experts in the field	59	19.3
	Verifying the background and reliability of the source	81	26.6
	Using only sources that have been previously reliable	45	14.8
	I do not verify the credibility of my sources	78	25.6

Table 5: Media ethics and practices

The qualitative interviews further reinforce the challenges identified in the quantitative data, particularly in how financial pressures, educational shortcomings, and the absence of guiding policies shape the practices of media outlets in Somalia.

"Another challenge is the financial pressure on media outlets. The need to attract viewers or listeners often leads them to prioritize sensational stories over those that encourage reconciliation." (IDI-11, TV admin and finance)

This quote highlights the commercial imperatives that drive media content, often at the expense of fostering peace and dialogue, as sensationalism tends to overshadow more constructive reporting.

The issue of educational quality among journalists also emerged as a significant barrier, impacting the ethical standards and professionalism within the media industry.

I believe the biggest challenge is the low educational quality of journalists. Additionally, the focus of media on profit-making is a challenge; this means that if someone wants to speak, they can pay and say whatever they want" (IDI-08, TV editor)

This statement underscores the dual challenges of inadequate journalist training and the monetization of media platforms, which can lead to the dissemination of unchecked and potentially harmful content.

The absence of a robust media policy in Somalia has been identified as a critical gap, leading to the establishment of media outlets that may serve narrow, self-interested agendas rather than the public good.

There is no guiding media policy, and it's possible that the person establishing the media outlet has an agenda to promote their own views. Many media outlets may be established to defend clan interests and work for clan benefits" (IDI-28, Freelancer journalist)

This observation points to the underlying issues of bias and the potential misuse of media platforms for clan-based interests, further complicating the role of the media in promoting peace and unity.

4 Summary of Findings

The study's quantitative and qualitative outcomes provide a comprehensive understanding of the media's role in peacebuilding within the Somali context. While both sets of data highlight significant challenges and opportunities, they offer different perspectives on the media landscape in Somalia.

The quantitative data reveals that a large portion of media practitioners and the community perceive the media's role in peacebuilding negatively. Specifically, 33.5% of respondents viewed the media's contribution as negative, and 11.6% as very negative. This sentiment reflects a general dissatisfaction with how the media handles peace and reconciliation efforts. Additionally, the data shows that many participants do not trust the local media to report accurately on peacebuilding issues, with 33.9% trusting the media "a little" and 20.8% "not at all." These findings suggest that media practitioners in Somalia face significant credibility challenges, which hinder their ability to effectively contribute to peacebuilding.

Furthermore, the quantitative results highlight key challenges faced by media practitioners, such as threats and violence (24.3%), lack of access to information (13.9%), and political pressure and censorship (11.6%). These obstacles are compounded by limited resources and funding (28.1%), which restrict the ability of journalists to carry out in-depth and impartial reporting on peacebuilding efforts.

The qualitative data, derived from in-depth interviews with key informants, provides a more nuanced understanding of these challenges. Interviewees consistently pointed out that Somali media often sensationalizes conflict, focusing on the most dramatic aspects rather than offering balanced reporting. This approach not only exacerbates tensions but also undermines the potential for media to foster peace and reconciliation. Many respondents emphasized the lack of training and editorial oversight as critical factors contributing to this issue. For example, interviewees noted that most journalists do not receive adequate training in conflict-sensitive reporting, leading to the unintentional broadcast of content that could incite further conflict.

Another key insight from the qualitative data is the media's limited role in facilitating dialogue and reconciliation. While there are instances where the media has successfully promoted dialogue, these are exceptions rather than the norm. The lack of strategic planning and a focus on profit-driven sensationalism were identified as major barriers to the media's effectiveness in this area. Interviewees also highlighted the influence of political and clan interests, which often compromises the independence of media outlets and limits their ability to promote unbiased dialogue.

The comparison between the quantitative and qualitative findings underscores a consistent theme: the media in Somalia is currently perceived as failing in its role to contribute positively to peacebuilding. While the quantitative data provides a broad overview of the public's dissatisfaction and the challenges faced by media practitioners, the qualitative data offers deeper insights into the root causes of these issues, such as the lack of training, editorial oversight, and media independence.

The quantitative data quantifies the extent of the negative perceptions and challenges, while the qualitative data contextualizes these findings, offering detailed explanations and personal experiences that illuminate the complex dynamics at play. Together, these outcomes paint a comprehensive picture of a media landscape that is struggling to

navigate the delicate balance between reporting on conflict and promoting peace, highlighting the urgent need for systemic changes to enhance the media's capacity for peacebuilding in Somalia.

5 Discussion

The study reveals that the role of media in peacebuilding within Somalia is fraught with challenges, both in terms of public perception and operational realities faced by media practitioners. Quantitative data shows a significant portion of respondents perceiving the media's contribution to peacebuilding negatively, with 33.5% rating it as negative and 11.6% as very negative. Additionally, a large percentage of respondents expressed limited trust in the local media's ability to report accurately on peacebuilding issues, with 33.9% trusting the media only "a little" and 20.8% "not at all." The qualitative findings further corroborate these results, highlighting systemic issues within the Somali media landscape. Key informants emphasized the media's tendency to sensationalize conflict, focus on dramatic aspects rather than balanced reporting, and the lack of sufficient training and editorial oversight as critical factors exacerbating these challenges. The absence of strategic planning and the influence of political and clan interests were also identified as significant barriers to the media's effectiveness in fostering peace and reconciliation.

Similar challenges have been documented in other parts of the Horn of Africa. For instance, a study on the role of media in conflict resolution in South Sudan found that media outlets often exacerbated tensions due to a lack of professional training and the influence of political interests (Deng, 2018). In Ethiopia, research by Woldemariam (2020) highlighted that ethnic-based media outlets played a role in fueling ethnic tensions, pointing to the absence of a national media policy that promotes peacebuilding. These studies resonate with the findings in Somalia, where the lack of a guiding media policy and the influence of clan interests similarly hinder the media's role in peacebuilding. The study highlights the critical yet complex role that media plays in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in Somalia. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the media's contribution to peacebuilding is perceived negatively by a significant portion of the population. Specifically, 33.5% of survey respondents rated the media's role in peacebuilding as negative, while 11.6% viewed it as very negative. This sentiment reflects widespread dissatisfaction with how the media handles issues of peace and reconciliation.

Qualitative interviews with media practitioners further elaborate on these perceptions. Many respondents pointed out that Somali media often sensationalizes conflict, prioritizing dramatic and attention-grabbing stories over balanced and constructive reporting. This approach not only exacerbates tensions but also undermines the potential for media to serve as a platform for dialogue and reconciliation. For example, one media director noted that journalists frequently lack training in conflict-sensitive reporting, leading to the unintentional dissemination of inflammatory content that can incite further conflict. Moreover, the study reveals that the media in Somalia has failed to capitalize on opportunities to facilitate peacebuilding efforts. While there are instances where media outlets have successfully promoted dialogue, these are exceptions rather than the norm. The lack of strategic planning and a focus on profit-driven sensationalism were identified as significant barriers preventing the media from playing a more active role in fostering peace. Furthermore, the influence of political and clan interests often compromises the independence of media outlets, limiting their ability to promote unbiased dialogue and reconciliation.

These findings are consistent with other studies conducted in the Horn of Africa. For instance, research in South Sudan and Ethiopia has similarly found that media often exacerbates conflicts due to a lack of professional training and the influence of political interests (Deng, 2018; Woldemariam, 2020). These regional parallels highlight the broader challenges faced by media in conflict-affected areas and underscore the need for comprehensive reforms to enable media to contribute positively to peacebuilding and reconciliation. The study's exploration of media consumption habits and trust among Somali audiences provides valuable insights into the complex relationship between media use and public trust in the media. According to the quantitative data, 43.6% of respondents identified as regular media consumers, with television and radio being the most frequently used platforms, followed by social media. However, the study also reveals a significant lack of trust in local media, with 33.9% of respondents indicating that they trust the media "a little" and 20.8% stating they do not trust the media "at all."

This distrust is partly rooted in the perception that the media plays a role in worsening conflicts or tensions. A substantial 64.2% of respondents acknowledged that they believe the media has exacerbated conflicts at some point. These findings suggest that the media's credibility is severely compromised, which undermines its potential role in peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. Qualitative data further supports these quantitative findings, with respondents citing concerns over sensationalism, political bias, and the lack of editorial oversight as key factors contributing to the erosion of public trust. The study highlights that many media consumers are wary of the content they encounter, perceiving it as driven by profit motives rather than a genuine commitment to accurate and balanced reporting. In comparison with other studies in the region, similar trends are observed. For example, in Ethiopia, research has shown that ethnic-based media outlets have significantly undermined public trust due to their biased reporting on ethnic conflicts (Woldemariam, 2020). These findings emphasize the importance of addressing issues of media credibility and trust if the media is to play a constructive role in promoting peace and reconciliation in conflict-prone regions like Somalia.

The study sheds light on the ethical challenges and practices of Somali media practitioners, particularly in the context of reporting on peace and conflict. Quantitative data indicates that a significant number of media practitioners (56.4%) have not received any formal training on reporting in conflict or post-conflict contexts. This lack of training is reflected in the frequent ethical dilemmas encountered by journalists, with 32.5% of respondents stating that they often face such challenges while reporting on peacebuilding issues. One of the most concerning findings is the inconsistency in verifying the credibility of sources. According to the survey, only 13.7% of media practitioners consistently cross-check information with multiple sources, while a notable 25.6% admitted to not verifying the credibility of their sources at all. This lack of rigorous verification processes not only compromises the accuracy of reporting but also contributes to the dissemination of potentially harmful content that can inflame conflicts.

Qualitative interviews provide further context to these challenges. Media practitioners cited financial pressures, educational shortcomings, and the absence of guiding policies as key factors that negatively impact their ability to adhere to ethical standards. For instance, one respondent highlighted how the need to attract viewers or listeners often leads media outlets to prioritize sensational stories over those that encourage reconciliation. Another respondent

pointed out that the low educational quality of journalists, combined with the profit-driven nature of the media, allows individuals to pay for airtime to promote their own agendas, regardless of the content's impact on public discourse. These ethical challenges are not unique to Somalia. Studies in other parts of the Horn of Africa have documented similar issues. In South Sudan, for example, media practitioners face intense political pressure and censorship, which hampers their ability to report objectively and ethically (Deng, 2018). These regional parallels underscore the need for targeted interventions, including the development of comprehensive training programs and the establishment of clear editorial guidelines, to enhance the ethical standards and practices of media practitioners in conflict-affected areas like Somalia.

In conclusion, the study highlights the significant challenges faced by the Somali media in fulfilling its potential role in peacebuilding and reconciliation. The findings underscore the need for systemic reforms, including the development of robust media policies, enhanced training for journalists, and measures to safeguard media independence. Addressing these challenges is crucial for transforming the Somali media into a more effective tool for promoting peace and unity in the region.

6 Limitations of the Study.

While the study provides valuable insights into the role of media in peacebuilding in Somalia, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The study's reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, as respondents may present themselves in a more favorable light. Additionally, the challenging security environment in Somalia limited the scope of data collection, particularly in conflict-affected regions where access was restricted.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a comprehensive analysis of the challenges and opportunities for media in peacebuilding, providing a foundation for further research and action in this critical area.

7 Implications of the study

The agreement between the quantitative and qualitative analyses strengthens the study's conclusions, providing a comprehensive view of the limitations facing media in peacebuilding. The consistent findings suggest that while media practitioners are dedicated to fostering peace, their efforts are hindered by significant external constraints.

The study concludes that enhancing the media's impact on peacebuilding in Somalia requires addressing these external challenges. This includes implementing safer working conditions, offering training on impartial reporting, and fostering transparency to build public trust. By aligning the quantitative and qualitative findings, the study offers a cohesive understanding of the current limitations and potential pathways for improving the media's role in peacebuilding efforts.

8 Recommendations.

The study explores the critical role of media in peacebuilding and reconciliation within the conflict-ridden context of Somalia. Despite the potential of media to foster dialogue and unity, the Somali media landscape is plagued by challenges such as political interference, limited resources, threats to journalists, and the lack of conflict-sensitive reporting skills. These obstacles often lead to sensationalized reporting, which can unintentionally fuel tensions rather

than promote peace. The study highlights the need for systemic reforms to enhance the media's contribution to peacebuilding, offering the following recommendations:

1. **Media Practitioners:**

- **Training on Conflict-Sensitive Reporting:** Journalists in Somalia often lack the training necessary to report on conflicts in a manner that is both sensitive and balanced. Many inadvertently publish content that inflames tensions rather than diffusing them. To address this, media practitioners must be provided with comprehensive training in conflict-sensitive journalism. This includes understanding the power of language, the ethical implications of reporting during times of crisis, and the importance of providing balanced perspectives.
- **Source Verification Protocols:** One of the study's critical findings is that many journalists fail to verify their sources adequately, leading to misinformation that can escalate conflicts. Journalists need clear protocols on how to verify information from multiple reliable sources to ensure that their reporting is factual, balanced, and not manipulated by interested parties.
- **Constructive Journalism:** Media practitioners should be encouraged to shift focus from sensational stories to those that build understanding and promote peace. By highlighting peacebuilding efforts, exposing the causes of conflict with accuracy, and promoting reconciliation narratives, journalists can contribute to societal cohesion.

2. **Media Institutions (Universities and Training Centers):**

- **Specialized Curriculum:** Academic institutions that train journalists should introduce courses on peace journalism, focusing on the ethical and practical challenges of reporting in conflict zones. This curriculum should also address the local context, ensuring that students understand the dynamics of clan conflicts and political divisions that influence Somali society.
- **Hands-on Training:** Practical skills are critical in preparing future journalists. Media institutions should provide opportunities for students to engage in internships, simulations, and case study analysis that equip them with the skills needed to report responsibly in conflict situations.
- **Collaboration with Media Houses:** By partnering with media organizations, universities can help bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world practice. Students could benefit from mentorship programs where experienced journalists guide them on ethical reporting and peace journalism.

3. **Media Regulators (Councils, Associations, and Press Watchdogs):**

- **Development of Media Policies:** The study highlights the absence of clear editorial policies guiding conflict-sensitive reporting. Media councils and associations should collaborate to create and enforce these policies across all media platforms, ensuring that journalists follow strict ethical standards when reporting on conflict and peacebuilding initiatives.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Media regulators must actively monitor how media outlets handle conflict reporting. Any violations of ethical standards, such as the publication of inflammatory or

unverified content, should be met with penalties. This will ensure that media houses prioritize responsible reporting over sensationalism.

- **Support for Media Independence:** Political interference in the media is a major obstacle to peacebuilding. Regulatory bodies should work to ensure that media outlets remain independent, free from political and clan influences. Protecting journalists from external pressure will allow them to report impartially, focusing on stories that promote peace rather than conflict.

4. Lawmakers (Governments and National Assemblies):

- **Legislation for Journalist Protection:** Somalia is a dangerous environment for journalists, with many facing threats, violence, and censorship. Laws that protect journalists and ensure their safety while covering conflict zones are crucial. These laws should hold accountable those who target journalists and provide legal avenues for journalists to report freely and without fear.
- **Funding Public Service Media:** To reduce the financial pressures that drive sensationalist reporting, governments should provide funding to public media outlets. This funding can help media organizations focus on stories that promote societal cohesion rather than those designed to attract viewers through shock value.
- **National Media Policies:** Lawmakers should develop comprehensive national policies that define the media's role in peacebuilding and hold media outlets accountable for the content they publish. This could include guidelines for conflict reporting, the promotion of reconciliation stories, and ensuring that media outlets serve the public good rather than private or political interests.

Conclusion:

The recommendations offered are designed to address the systemic issues identified in the study. Media practitioners must receive the necessary training and resources to report responsibly, while media institutions need to prepare future journalists with the skills required to cover conflicts sensitively. Media regulators and lawmakers must ensure that the media operates independently and ethically, with clear guidelines to follow and the protection they need to do their jobs without fear. Together, these actions can transform the media in Somalia into a powerful tool for peacebuilding, reconciliation, and long-term stability.

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