



BBC and VOA Credibility Among Listeners in Somalia.



Somali Researchers Association (SRA) & Qalam College

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Abstract

BBC and VOA reach almost the entire Somali population and they are the most widely used source of news in the country both online and offline. Somali Researchers Association (SRA) estimates that one-in-five of the Somali adults listen to BBC or VOA. This study aims to investigate BBC and VOA credibility among listeners in Somalia.

This study was conducted from 10-Nov-5 Dec. 2020. Target respondents were BBC and VOA listeners in Somalia. 485 respondents participated in the study, 20% of the target respondents were journalists operating different news agencies in Somalia. For the data collection, SRA and Qalam College enumerators visited radio stations, public gatherings such as restaurants, and hotels, data were also collected through telephone. Data analysis was used for descriptive analysis for the SPSS tool.

Introduction

Somali people are an oral society, radio is the most effective channel for communicating news and information to those living in both urban and rural areas. According to media associations, there are 81 radio stations in the country. Most of these radios are located in Mogadishu. However, each regional state has a minimum of 5 radio stations. Most, if not all, local radio stations affiliate with BBC or VOA programs.

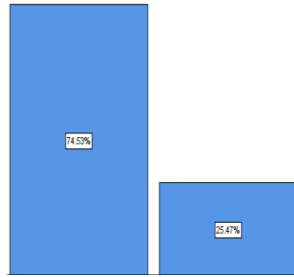
The collaboration with local radios rendered BBC and VOA to reach higher coverage with audiences. BBC and VOA are aired three to four times a day, each program runs 30-60 minutes. SRA estimates that one-in-five of the adult population listens to BBC and VOA because of their coverage and accessibility to offline and online audiences. We summarize here the key findings from recent empirical work from the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) and Qalam College.

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Gender

During the data collection, participation was voluntary, our enumerators approached both males and females equally. However, female respondents were more likely to say we don't listen to the BBC or VOA.

This is due to the fact that the BBC and VOA are politically oriented media.



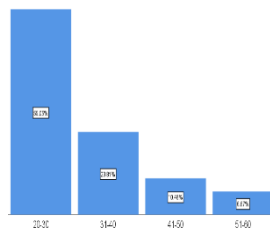
Men are more likely to listen to politics than women. This makes up men a majority of the respondents, about seven-in-ten (75%) were male respondents and only a quarter (25%) were female respondents.

Age

According to the survey, the respondent's age was different, there was no age discrimination, and chances were given to all respondents;

however, youth make up 70% of the nation's population; thus, the youth age category was higher, their

participation 20 to 30 were 58% and those aged 31 to 40 were 25%. Only 10% and 7% were aged 41-50, 51-60 respectively.



Education

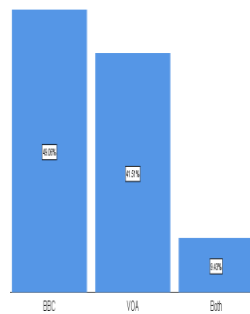
Respondents were asked their profile in terms of educational attainment. Responded journalists were more likely to have a bachelor's degree. Old age respondents tend to have lower levels of education. Unskilled respondents were the lowest educational attainment level of respondents. Journalists have been included in the study because they are experienced with the media. The level of education was not correlated with respondents' views on the BBC or VOA.

Listeners

Data collection conducted in different regional states in Somalia, namely Jubaland, Southwest, Banadir, Hirshabelle, Galmudug, and Puntland. Respondents were asked if they listen to BBC, VOA, or both. Total respondents were 548, however, to avoid bias the study excluded those who listen to one radio station and only analyzed the view for the respondents who listen to both BBC and VOA which totals 485.

Quick News Broadcasting

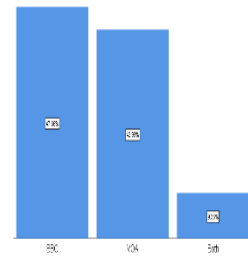
Political stalemate, state, and federal elections, fighting among groups, and explosions are the common events in Somalia; thus, quick news broadcasting is an important factor for many Somalians. Respondents were asked which media “BBC or VOA” broadcasts the most updated news/events soon after it happens. Respondents were different; to begin with, about ten-in-five (49%) indicated that the BBC quickly broadcasts the news. However, about four-in-ten (42%) stated that VOA reports earlier news. However, the study found 9% of the audience believe that both radio stations broadcast the news quickly.



On the other hand, different respondents stated “rather than waiting for news from BBC or VOA, we subscribe to the reporters’ pages on Facebook, and we get the news/events before we get the official pages of BBC or VOA, so we don’t demand to seek BBC or VOA”. Others said, “among BBC and VOA reporters, they compete for subscribers and followers; so they post the news on Facebook before the BBC or VOA”. SRA & Qalam also found that “Online news report reduced the demand for offline radios”

Prime Time

Audiences are radio customers; considerations are given prime times to broadcast the news. With this regard, BBC and VOA are not far behind airing their news, and their programs run a minimum of 30 minutes, a maximum of an hour. For instance, VOA becomes on-air at 6:30-7:00 am while BBC becomes on-air 7:00 -7:30 am similar in the afternoon VOA becomes on-air at 4:00-5:00 pm and the BBC becomes on-air at 5:00-6:00. BBC TV was not included in this survey. The survey asked people which media BBC or VOA air an appropriate time to the audiences?



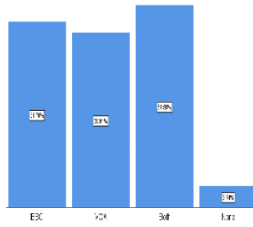
BBC received positive believability ratings of 48% while VOA received 43%. However, 9% stated that both had prime time.

During the data collection, our enumerators recorded some respondents’ point of view. As different respondents stated “6:30 am either we are sleeping or were are busy for getting ready to go out, thus it is not an appropriate time to listen to VOA” with regard to BBC respondents in regional states argue that “We use to listen to BBC evening program 9:00-9:300 because the day time we are busy either agriculture, fishing or livestock,” some said “BBC lost prime time when it’s stopped evening program.

News Credibility

BBC and VOA have the most listened to radios in Somalia; currently, the public is questioning their media credibility.

To know more about it, SRA has asked respondents which media had more reliability according to the news report. Approximately close

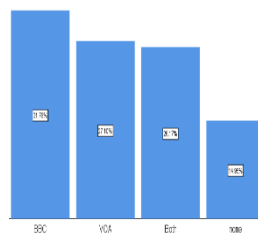


percentages give them ratings of BBC and VOA. 32% stated that BBC news is more accurate and reliable, However, slightly less than one-third (30%) stated that VOA is also reliable than BBC. There were respondents who stated that both BBC and VOA are reliable and accurate 34%. Meanwhile, a small share of 4% stated that both were not reliable.

The Neutrality on the Somali Issue

This time, there's an election campaign around the country.

BBC & VOA are the two major news outlets in Somalia. They compete with their influential news and

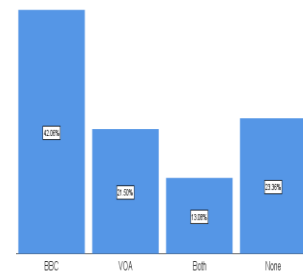


program sources. We aim to know which outlet the audience believes more neutral than another one. Respondents overall are

fairly split between BBC and VOA; however, the BBC receives 32% slightly higher than VOA 27%. The respondents also take a mediate response. 26% stated that both radios are neutral when it comes to Somali issues. However, public views of media credibility are not always one hundred percent, there are 15% who believe that the BBC and VOA are not neutral on the Somali issue.

The Neutrality of the World Issue

Geo-politics and the economics of the world are changing. The US and the UK play a role in these changes, and they belong to the BBC and VOA. Among listeners, BBC and VOA are criticized for the relatively poor presentation of the world issue and this has changed public perceptions towards



BBC and VOA. Therefore, the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) asked respondents whether they believe that these media are neutral world issues or they are biased to their countries. If so, which media is more biased and which one is neutral. Positive believability ratings for the VOA are lower than BBC ones. The majority of the respondents expressed that the BBC was more neutral at 42%. While about two-in-

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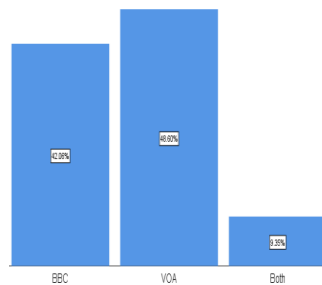
ten (22%) say VOA is a neutral world issue. Another 13% stated that both were neutral but 23% stated that both are not neutral.

Different people say that “They can never be neutral on foreign affairs or the world issue”. They argue “if the US or UK has a conflict with Turkey, will not report neutral news rather they will become biased towards their countries”. Others say “There’s no free lunch, the reason they are investing these media is they want to dominate the news and air what is a favor to them only”.

Quality Journalist

Referring to Somali journalist’s associations currently, there are about 950 to 1000 professional journalists in the country. Somalia is categorized as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists; however, Somali Journalists are popular and branded among society. Public debates centered on who has a quality journalist BBC or VOA becomes an increasing question.

According to the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) that provides the

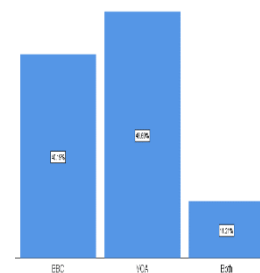


first-ever comparison found that about five-in-ten (49%) believe that the VOA has good

quality journalists than BBC while four-in-ten (40%) stated that the BBC has good quality journalists than VOA. There are other audiences 11% who believe both BBC and VOA both have good quality journalists. During the data collection, our enumerators recorded some respondents’ point of view. “Experienced and better quality journalists either retired, left the job or joined other news stations, and BBC fails to fill the gap,” Other said “BBC mainly employs Somali Kenyan who speak a different dialect than the local one”. “Quality journalists retired from BBC and there were no successors”.

Quality programs

Getting news from BBC or VOA is a common experience; nearly one-in-five Somali adults do it so often. Apart from the news, there are routine programs; production of the quality program plays a role in the attraction of audiences.



Therefore, the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) asked respondents which media BBC or VOA produces quality programs. Nearly half of the respondents (49%) reported that VOA produces quality programs while 40% stated that the BBC produces quality programs;

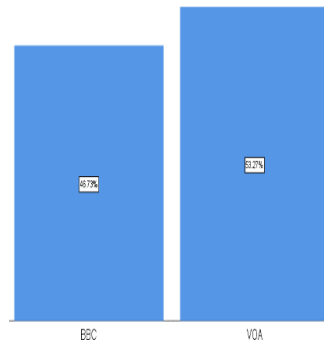
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however, a smaller share of one-in-ten (11%) of the audience believe both of them produce quality programs. Respondents were asked if there are programs they are interested to listen rather than the news?

Most of the respondents, about six-in-ten (62%) indicated that they listen to different programs including “Galka Baarista & Caways ka” from VOA. About 23% stated that they listen to a “radio drama and sports” from the BBC. Meanwhile, 15% of respondents stated that they only listen to the news, not the programs.

Vote for One “BBC or VOA”

Seeking the general opinion of the listeners, the Somali Researchers Association (SRA) asked the respondents to vote for BBC or VOA based on the media’s overall performance, accuracy, fairness, and other aspects of quality. About five-in-ten (53%) voted for VOA. While 47%. Voted for BBC.



About SRA

Somali Researchers Association (SRA) is an association that brings together Somali researchers and provides a platform to exchange knowledge, experience, and ideas. SRA is a registered association founded in 2017, its mission is to promote excellent research in Somalia. This objective can be achieved through Academic Networking, Conferences, Workshops, Projects, Research Publications, Academic Awards, and Scholarships.

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