



A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Factors Influencing News Coverage: Studying the Impact of State Interests on News Portrayal

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Abstract

Purpose: To explore the factors related to journalism, which have significant influence on news coverage.

Methods: The research has incorporated a cross sectional as well as quantitative approach, which focused on a variety of news content including newspaper media, television, and the internet. The data have been gathered from 47 journalists (Males and Females) from the Egyptian Journalists Federation.

Results: The government encouragement for biasness and organizational factors ($r=0.612$) have been found positively associated and appears as an influential factor for the news coverage. Personal morals of the journalists have been found associated with the medium of advertisement ($r=0.715$) and organizational factors ($r=0.395$).

Conclusion: The interest of State in portraying the news plays a major role in its coverage. There is a need to raise the awareness of public about particular events as the audiences are affected by the news what journalists produces.

Keywords: News coverage; Influence; State interests; Factors; Egypt

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Introduction

The study intents to discuss the factors, which influence the news coverage. It discussed the diverse issues and perspectives in an appropriate and collaborating fashion. The electronic media includes television, internet, radio, fax, and all other mediums that need digital coding or electricity to access the contents, unlike the static/print media that is although created electronically, but does not need electricity to access. The publications in the form of newspapers, magazines, journals are included in print media. This study has mainly focused on the analysis of factors that influence the news coverage by the journalists. Furthermore, it aimed to evaluate the impact of state interests on news portrayal and also the factors that are affecting it.

Aim and Significance of the Study

The study has aimed to understand the role of journalism in the coverage of news within Egypt. Moreover, to analyze certain factors, which have influenced news coverage. Specifically, the

focus is on the impact of state interest on news portrayal. The study is significantly necessary in the Egyptian boundaries, as the journalism domain is still in a growing phase. Therefore, the journalists need to know the factors, which have a direct influence on the coverage of news. The government and organizational factors, interest groups, advertisers and other media have been considered as the influential factors that may impact the coverage of news with Egypt.

Theoretical Background

The news is generally declared as the soul of democracy, as endowing integral resources for the mechanisms of collecting, assembling, and speculating the information. It materializes many things to different people. In the present era, examining the category of news journalism seems to become one of the most persuasive challenges that are encountered in describing the interests of public [1]. Wirth provided the discrimination among two dimensions through which procedures of mass communication, especially news, is adequate in endowing the

implementation of social adherence in an aspect through which modern analytical debates are expected. On the contrary, there is an uncertainty in making a picture news audience while making this distinction. The news has been witnessed as a fundamental and pre-eminent system of disseminating the information. It has been observed that news can be a key component to expedite the transfer of information and ideas as a consequence of which, impartial political discourse is required to be established [2].

Journalist is identified as a responsible personnel, who have authority to cover different events without any biases [2]. However, as reported by Alexander, news is observed to be more extensible and can accommodate moderate regulating changes in public opinion, which seems to be more receptive in contrast with other normative associations, for instance, law [3]. On the other hand, biasness in the journalism is directly associated with the development of conflicts and lobbies at the media houses. Considering the execution of foreign-policy, journalism seems to have an ambiguous impact on the news coverage. Journalists are observed to reflect the searchlight on events. At times, it occupies the concentration of the politicians and public, and sometimes it is disregarded. News reports may stimulate the decision taking or compose a little issue all of a sudden to emanate comprehensively. The policy is usually observed to be determined by the events themselves, instead of their indemnity [4].

Considering the case of Egypt, journalism is found to be a developing domain in Egypt. It has undergone major developments by the time span of the 1990s, as an outcome of the initiation of CNN to the Arab world, the occurrence of the internet and Al Jazeera. During the time period of 1993, the internet was introduced as a medium in Egypt, instead of its commencement in any other country of the Arab world. Internet played an imperative role in the enhancement of the news content coverage. Currently, the scenario of Egyptian journalism is typically inadequate. The Egyptian rulers have executed the priority and relevance of news concerning the position of the state as cultural and political leader, and also to the capability of tenure to regulate the masses during early 1950s; since, the Egypt acquired freedom from the British [5].

For a number of decades, journalists have pursued to determine some fundamental variables that configure the complex procedure of choosing the international news, as analyzed by Golan [6]. The findings of Golan provide numerous fundamental determinants with respect to the coverage of international news which includes; discrepancy, pertinence, cultural compatibility, and position in the chain of command of nations [6] (**Figure 1**).

The analysis of outcomes has determined compelling associations among the international news agenda of three news programs broadcasted on television in the evening, and international news agenda of the morning New York Times. Research into the factors of the International news coverage has recognized different key variables that are linked with the newsworthiness of the global and international events. These might comprise the relevance, deviance, location in the hierarchy of nations and cultural affinity [6]. Most of the studies conducted in past have focused on numerous aspects that have an impact on the news coverage. Some researchers also focused on determining the extent to

which news media is likely to be perceived and distinguished on a structural basis [3,7]. This study has primarily focused on exploring the factors, which influence the news coverage by considering the cross sectional analysis technique.

Methodology

The information that is provided within media accounts could facilitate the transformation at the collective level and legalize the actions of the authoritative. It can also shape and limit the individual behaviors, which are dominant to the broader social change. The study presented the collective opinions of the journalists in the fields of broadcast television, broadcast radio, and news editorial. Journalism has always been considered as an important domain within a country to provide coverage in regards of the events. For this purpose, media houses are developed to promote the level of journalism within the country. Similarly, there are many other factors, which are observed and implemented during the news coverage for better journalism.

The factors, which are found to have an impact on the coverage of news, include advertisers, the government, interest groups, and the involvement of the community [8]. The study has incorporated 47 journalists as the study participants from which the data collection process has been conducted. Both male and female journalists were included as participants to gather the data. A demographic questionnaire has been developed, which included the information regarding the Age, Educational background, Professional background and Years of experience in the journalism as a profession of the participants. Another questionnaire has been structured, which included the questions regarding the influential factors (Government, Advertisers, Interest groups and other media) that enable journalists for the news coverage in Egypt. The data were collected from the Journalist federation in Egypt and analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The Pearson correlation test has been applied on the data and evaluated the two-tailed significance value and the Pearson correlation value to examine the relationships between the influential factors of news coverage (**Table 1**).

Findings and Discussion

The study has evaluated the correlation matrix to examine the relationship between the influential factors for the news coverage. The responses of journalists have assisted to evaluate the influential factors of news coverage. **Table 2** below shows a detailed analysis of association between various influential factors.

Government

According to the results obtained from the present study, there is a strong correlation between the government encouragement for biasness and organizational factors ($r=0.612$) and the p -value has also indicated statistically significant results (p -value=0.00). It concludes that government emphasis on social demonstration and encourages an advanced level of biasness in journalism. It can be concluded that journalists make moral decisions regarding wrongdoing then abandon objectivity for the public

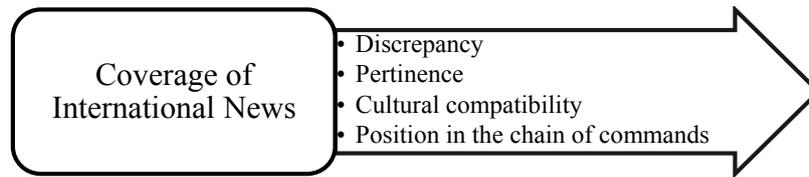


Figure 1 Fundamental determinants of the International news coverage.

Table 1 Demographic profile.

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	29	61.7
	Female	18	38.3
Age	25-30 years	5	10.6
	31-35 years	15	31.9
	36-40 years	10	21.3
	40 above years	8	17.0
Educational Status	Intermediate	3	6.4
	Graduate	14	29.8
	Masters	13	27.7
	PhD	8	17.0
	Others	9	19.1
Professional Background	Broadcast Television	9	19.1
	Broadcast Radio	16	34.0
	News Editorial	22	46.8
Years of Experience	0-1 Year	14	29.8
	2-3 Years	12	25.5
	3-4 Years	12	25.5
	5 Above years	9	19.1

Table 2 Pearson correlation matrix.

		Organization and other factors	External factors	Awareness of Public	Personal Morals	Government encourage biasness	Advertisement negative Egypt
Organization and other factors	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	47					
External factors	Pearson Correlation	0.285	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.052					
	N	47	47				
Awareness of Public	Pearson Correlation	.399**	.918**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005	0				
	N	47	47	47			
Personal Morals	Pearson Correlation	.395**	.865**	.915**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006	0	0			
	N	47	47	47	47		
Government encourage biasness	Pearson Correlation	.868**	.399**	.485**	.488**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0.005	0.001	0.001		
	N	47	47	47	47	47	
Advertisement negative Egypt	Pearson Correlation	.612**	.576**	.685**	.715**	.640**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	0	
	N	47	47	47	47	47	47

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

good. Similarly, Gehlbach and Sonin investigated the control of government on the journalism and broadcast associations [9]. Qualitative research design has been used by the researchers, as the study comprised of content analysis. The outcomes of the study showed that the governments, which are likely to place an emphasis on social demonstration and encourage an advanced level of biasness in journalism. Under such governments, a very low discrepancy has been observed among the private as well as state media, but governments can socialize the private news channels as a means to redeem the cost of causing the bias. In terms of the large advertising market, both the state and journalism seems to be illustrated less bias. On the contrary, it is found to have a greater influence on the journalism. It is suggested that the government should embrace restriction of journalism in response to an amplifying advertising market. This study has been performed by constituting a theoretical framework to evaluate the government control of the journalism. The model suggested, that this research indicated a significant restraint that any government can face, which anticipates controlling the content of news. This strategy inducement can be dependent on both the organizing nature of the government and also on the size of the advertising market.

This study can also be compared with the study conducted by Tella and Franceschelli in which the government advertising and the coverage of news regarding the scandals of corruption have been examined [10]. The quantitative design of research has been used and the technique of regression analysis has been applied to generate the outcomes. The research has been performed by considering two newspapers, i.e.; La Nacion and Clarin. Results of the study showed that a significant and positive association exists between the coverage of corruption and dissemination. The news, which are likely to grab front pages of newspaper, can be prostrate to reduce the quantity of front pages and the capacity, concerned with the scandal of corruption by the government. They might be reluctant to postpone the publishing of a scandal as they fear it might cause greater loss of readership. It is obvious that the journalism should be awfully depressed regarding an establishment with peculiarities as discussed in this study, due to reason that it includes the coverage of favoritism for financial advancement. An enhancement in the standard deviation with respect to government advertising on monthly basis is correlated with a decline of coverage given to the corruption scandals of government. The researchers concluded that journalism is probably substantial, corruption is observed to be very high, and the legal systems are weak.

Government emphasis on social demonstration encourages an advanced level of biasness in journalism. Subsequently, the governments usually endeavor to have an impact on media by the way of behaviors that range from unmitigated restriction and coercion to assistance and variation. The results of the study provide certain benefits to focus on the corruption in the news events which can be surely classified as enthusiastic or inexpedient to the government. It is a topic, which emerges with corresponding prevalence on the front page, with significant variation in the space capability committed to it, in terms of both over time and throughout the newspapers. The overall results of the study conducted by Tella and Franceschelli have been

found pertinent. It is a condition where the government and newspapers conspire; alternating biased reporting (in benefit of the government) in the transference of the money to the newspapers, beyond immense financial costs originating from a diminished distribution of the newspaper [10].

Advertisers

In the present study, it has been observed that journalists feel that coverage of news as a medium of advertisement is more negative in Egypt in regards with the external factors and public awareness. Personal morals have also been found associated with the medium of advertisement ($r=0.715$). It concludes that the content of media affects the attitudes of public towards advertising. In this context, Keenan and Shoreh determined the mechanisms through which the advertising has been covered by the Egyptian Press [11]. This study served as a longitudinal analysis of the content. Qualitative research approach has been used to find out the mechanisms which were used. From the results of research, it has been revealed that with respect to the advertisements, many of the columns, letters to the reporters, and reviews are observed to be pessimistic in modulation. However, majority of the news stories were determined as impartial. The outcomes of the research also showed that the proceedings and social facets of international and domestic industry with respect to the advertising seem to be ordinarily enclosed. The researchers have focused on the probability of Egyptian perspectives in the vicinity of advertising, which is likely to be influenced by a revelation of media depictions of advertising in connection with civilization effects. The study has concluded that the advertising in terms of outdoor and television appears to be criticized more frequently. The concerns, which are typically signified include culture, integrity, and duplication. It has been observed that in comparison with the United States, the coverage of news as a medium of advertisement is more negative in Egypt. The researchers recommended that future studies should place an emphasis on evaluating the strong connections among the content of media and the attitudes of public towards advertising.

Interest Groups

Personal morals are also linked with the organizational factors ($r=0.395$) as the statistical results have been found significant ($\alpha=0.006$). There is a positive and strong correlation between the influential factors (Public awareness and External factors). It concludes that there is a need to raise the awareness of public about particular events by considering the organizational and other external factors as the content of media affects the attitudes of public towards advertising.

Petrova conducted a study related to the broadcast houses and the groups of special interests [12]. A qualitative design of research has been used, as the study comprised of determining the mass media through previous studies. The data analysis has been conducted by considering one special interest group with respect to one media outlet. It was assumed that a special interest group generally favors the policy of media without any deprivation of principle. It was found through analysis that the special interest group appreciates the inclusion of largest potential audience by news with conventional bias. The researcher has also examined that what will be the outcomes in

the case if various special interest groups attempt to influence the policy of media as selected by a specific media outlet. The analysis shows that if the desires of distinctive special interest groups are adjusted, then the resulting bias, on average, seems to be greater than for the circumstances in which the propensity of particular special interest groups is not aligned. The outcomes of research suggested that special interest groups are observed to have a provisional advantage in terms of news recognition. They retain adequate knowledge concerning relevant policies and issues in contrast with the society or policymakers in general. It was also recommended that, an independent and free mass media deprived the convention of special interest groups, as well as impedes their impact on the consequences of policy by communicating the information [13].

Another study has been performed by Hackett and Gruneau, concerning the missing news: filters and blind spots in the press of Canada [14]. The researchers have primarily focused on special interest groups to explain their impact on the coverage of news. In terms of news media, people who are associated with numerous advocacy firms and interest groups are usually observed as the most vocal interpreters. Generally, the interest groups dislike steadily inducing and begging journalists for propaganda and beneficial coverage. Besides this, journalists are also found to possess an assimilated perspective about the impact of interest groups. For instance, a survey was carried out in which most of the journalists indicated that interest groups bear the responsibility for the penetration of news in a considerable manner. However, the journalists who generally accepted that interest groups frequently produced an imperative case for the controversy, which is specifically the sources of an interest group that are principally competent, traditional, and standardized sources. They regulate what becomes news on a regular basis. The interest groups are observed to attain a positive attention and attempts to administer the depiction of their organizations in the media.

Other Media

Table 2 shows that there is a significant correlation between all the external factors like employers, organization, or any other type of external factor that influence to cover the news as the p-value (p-value=0.052) obtained is equal to the level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$). There is also a moderate and positive association between the external factors for the news coverage ($r=0.399$). Awareness of public is also associated with the external factors as the p-value (p-value=0.005) is less than level of significance ($\alpha=0.05$). It has concluded that journalist finds the news remarkable enough to cover while taking into consideration the organization and other factors ($r=0.918$).

Riaz conducted a study in which the agenda-setting role of the mass media has been examined [15]. The study has been performed through the usage of qualitative analysis. The findings have showed that the content of news media constitutes an indicative situation by devoting more attention (in terms of more time, more elevation, etc.) to peculiar people, events, or a group of people as compared to others. Hence, the contemporary research considers the active performance of media and endures

media as an effective component of the society. Most of the media organizations are observed to have a dominant role in earning profit. With an enhanced intricacy of the corporate organizational structure of the media organizations, some of the interests aroused regarding the freedom of media and the journalistic sovereignty in the entire universe. Considering the media content, ideology is also observed to play a fundamental role in agenda setting. This study has been performed by considering the case of Pakistani media to determine the performance of setting an agenda with respect to mass media. It has been observed through this research that media institutions and organizations occupied thousands of employees to scrutinize and report the events that seem to occur globally. There are numerous other sources of media outside the media organizations that are likely to impact the content of media. Some of these sources include campaigns of public relations, special groups of interest, sources of revenue which are audiences and advertisers, technological environment, etc. The outcomes concluded that the mass media can play an essential role to change the minds of the people. With the passage of time, the agenda of media appears to be the public agenda due to the agenda setting performance of mass media. This theory has been determined to place a responsibility on the organizations of media because their irresponsible attitude can destruct the national relevance. As the present study concluded that audiences are affected by the news what journalists produces, which is directly associated with the external factors. Journalists believe that their personal values or personal subjective mind is totally going to influence what they do but there are reasons that as journalists they are supposed to follow a value system.

A detailed investigation has been done by Carroll with respect to the journalism and its associated factors [16]. The researcher has focused on agenda-setting within the business news. The researcher gave an extension to the study of Sriramesh, in which both researchers have carried out a significant interaction among the news media and public relations, and re-examined the approach towards conventional media systems for analyzing the media environments [17]. For evaluation of journalism, the researchers have recommended a framework, which is comprised of three fundamental components, i.e.; journalism outreach, journalism control, and journalism access. Through journalism control, the researchers imply even if the news media in a state are directly or indirectly possessed by the government, or either they are a component of the private sector.

Golan has studied that the New York Times identifies many newsworthy events covered around the world including Egypt. It is possible that Fox News, CNN or CNBC covers the Egyptian events more accurately. Considering the case of Egypt, it has been observed that in some particular industries, the tendency regarding privatization has not incorporated journalism, which was state-controlled or state-owned. Results of the study showed that the businesses pursuing to use journalism as an ambition of corporate eminence should distinguish the exclusive prospects they face. The information that public are provided with in media accounts could facilitate the transformation at the collective level and legalize the actions of the authoritative. It can also shape and limit the individual behaviors, which are dominant to the

broader social change. There is a need to evaluate and identify the association between the beliefs about the political conclusion drawn by the public, the association between the political actions and conclusions. The research conducted by Happer and Philo has indicated that media play a dominant role through policy actions by reinforcing and repeating the media messages and also shapes behavior, particularly where these are associated to other kind of structural encouragement [18].

Contribution of the Study

Conversely, influential factors, which might affect journalists and their work fluctuates between each individual. Consequently the present study has recommended for a better understanding of how to recognise which influential factors are affecting the news coverage. The study has also served as an educational tool for attainment of an understanding regarding the factors that influence a journalist to cover the news.

Conclusion

This study has aimed to focus on some of the aspects which are found to have an impact on the journalism in the context of Egypt. From a variety of sources, it has been determined that the government, interest groups, advertisers, and other media are the most significant variables that influence journalism or news coverage. The examination of news content is a fundamental aspect as it suggests the groundwork to scrutinize the impact of journalism along with its effects. It has been observed that with respect to the present political environment, it is crucial to

evaluate the future of Egyptian journalism. In general, journalism in Egypt is directly distinguished by their apparently consistent support for the reign and a stretched depiction of tremendous prospects. Online news coverage or journalism in Egyptian context has been observed to play a vital role to disclose the news, which will not be revealed by the state-owned media.

Future Recommendations

The media platforms seem to administer insufficient conventions, in which advocates ensuing the intermediate ground raise voice about their viewpoints, beliefs, and document the negligence of human rights. Although, the government has demonstrated to hold the failing on differing opinions in almost all forms of media, the social media is observed to prevail as an autonomous strength in Egypt. There is a need to evaluate and identify the association between the beliefs about the political conclusion drawn by the public, the association between the political actions and conclusions. As the research conducted by Happer and Philo has indicated that media play a dominant role through policy actions by reinforcing and repeating the media messages and also shapes behavior, particularly where these are associated to other kind of structural encouragement [18].

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