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THESIS RESEARCH

Violations in Professional Journalism Practice in Algeria. Opportunities and Obstacles

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ABSTRACT

There are regulations and guidelines for every practice in the world. The absence will lead to anarchy and violations of law in any society. Journalism without professional standards cannot be realised. The art of gathering and dissemination of news can be done by anybody but the key role of the professional can be fulfilled only by people with particular training, skills, and judgment.

This paper intends to look at the practice of professional journalism from the Algerian perspective, highlighting the ethical elements and standards that make journalists professional. By exposing the unprofessional behaviors and violations in media sphere, the extent of compliance with the ethics in Algeria was reflected.

The results of the study prove that the journalists do not reach the professional level as a result of the violations of journalistic standards in Algerian media. The survey showed that the media sphere suffers from a low level of academic standards for journalist practitioners and the lack of training courses. Some articles in media Codes, established by the Algerian political system, are ineffective.

KEYWORDS: Journalism Profession; Journalism Ethics; Journalism Practices.

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Порушення професійної журналістської практики в Алжирі. Можливості та перешкоди

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Резюме

Існують правила та вказівки для кожної практики у світі. Їх відсутність призведе до анархії та порушень закону в будь-якому суспільстві. Журналістику без професійних стандартів неможливо реалізувати. Мистецтвом збирати та розповсюджувати новини може займатися будь-хто, але ключову роль професіонала можуть виконувати лише люди, які мають певну підготовку, навички та судження.

Ця стаття має намір розглянути практику професійної журналістики з алжирської точки зору, висвітливши етичні елементи та стандарти, які роблять журналістів професійними. Викриваючи непрофесійну поведінку та порушення в медіасфері, було відображено ступінь дотримання етики в Алжирі.

Результати дослідження доводять, що журналісти не досягають професійного рівня внаслідок порушень журналістських стандартів в алжирських медіа. Результати показали, що медіасфера страждає від низького рівня академічних стандартів для журналістів-практиків та відсутності навчальних курсів. Деякі статті у медіакодексах, встановлені алжирською політичною системою, неефективні.

Ключові слова: професія журналіста; журналістська етика; журналістські практики.

Баджи Я., Такиеддин Я. Нарушения профессиональной журналистской практики в Алжире. Возможности и препятствия

Существуют правила и указания для каждой практики в мире. Их отсутствие приведет к анархии и нарушениям закона в любом обществе. Журналистику без профессиональных стандартов невозможно реализовать. Искусством собирать и распространять новости может заниматься кто угодно, но ключевую роль профессионала могут выполнять только люди, имеющие определенную подготовку, навыки и суждения.

Эта статья рассматривает практику профессиональной журналистики с алжирской точки зрения, осветив этические элементы и стандарты, которые делают журналистов профессиональными. Разоблачением непрофессионального поведения и нарушений в медиасфере, было отражено степень соблюдения этики в Алжире.

Результаты исследования доказывают, что журналисты не достигают профессионального уровня вследствие нарушений журналистских стандартов в алжирских медиа. Результаты показали, что медиасфера страдает от низкого уровня академических стандартов для журналистов-практиков и отсутствия учебных курсов. Некоторые статьи в медиакодексах, установленные алжирской политической системой, неэффективны.

Ключевые слова: профессия журналиста; журналистская этика; журналистские практики.

1. Introduction

Media and society are closely related to each other. The extensive impact of media on society can be easily seen these days, especially with the recent protests in Algeria. Media professionals have to follow their code of ethics, however, it is not mandatory according to the law. It is all about moral issues and values. Since journalism is a socially responsible profession, it also has its distinct code of ethics. Truthfulness, fairness, accuracy, balance, and neutrality are professional standards which are the foundation of quality journalism. An indispensable concept in discussions on the ethics of journalism is the social responsibility of journalists, which implies that a journalist needs to serve responsibly every individual and society as a whole. This study addresses the legislative and ethical controls in an attempt to highlight the forms of deviation from these controls, and to highlight the most important forms of violations of Professional journalism practice in Algeria.

2. Definition and literature review

2.1. Professionalization of journalism:

A professional is a person who was trained in his particular field. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines professionalism as "the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterise or mark a profession or professional person". As well as Wikipedia defines profession as "a vocation founded upon specialised educational training, the purpose of which is to supply objective counsel and service to others" [1, 57]. Professionalism also describes the skills, competence, and behaviours that are expected of a person in a given profession, according to Egbujor the identity of every profession is based on standard principles, ethical values coexist with the professional ideology of an occupation.

Considering journalistic professionalism as a set of attributes esoteric knowledge, training and expertise, salary, and a specific set of values, among other factors which can be used to differentiate professionals from non-professionals, Egbujor sees journalistic professionalism as "norms and standards that constitute the kind of outputs that are generally recognized as quality journalism" [2, 18–45]. These definitions expand the scope of journalistic professionalism to include contextual issues, assessing the performance of the media and the quality of the information they convey to the public.

In addition, the basic principles of ethics and professionalism in the media sector can essentially be described by common elements, which include the principles of fairness, accuracy, truthfulness and objectivity, as ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough, with integrity.

The international organization Society of Professional Journalists based in Indianapolis in the United States of America declares four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media: seek truth and report, minimize harm, act independently and be accountable and transparent [3, 3]. Professionalism in journalism becomes a necessity to act as it becomes the way to balance between the personal vendetta and media power.

Moreover "Fab-Ukozor" posits that in the field of journalism, the professional who believes in this theory accepts in principle that there are absolute and universal journalistic ethics which should guide the practicing journalist everywhere in the world and which should equally form the basis for the articulation of a universal and eternal code in journalism. The ethical moral universals are truthfulness, fair play, accuracy, balance, and objectivity [4, 15].

2.2. Ethical Guidelines for professional journalism

Ethics is a behaviour and moral guides, principles as well as codes which a person or group of people in a profession voluntarily choose to observe in the course of carrying out their day to day activities, that deals with the decision to do good or bad [5, p 25].

Journalism like any other profession has ethical codes that guide in the activities. This code of ethics consists of moral principles, guidelines, and rules that controls the behaviour of journalists in their practice as well as their relations with the public, Furthermore, "Mfumbusa" sees the codes of ethics as being expected to enhance the status of the members of the profession, providing a "benchmark for desirable behaviour, helping to eliminate crooks and quacks, as well as helping to set boundaries of legitimate activity within a profession" [6, 43].

According to Stephen J. A., the aims of journalism ethics are: "understanding – deepen our understanding of journalism's ethical functions and its principles; ethical reasoning improve the ethical reasoning of journalists, reforming re-define existing standards and construct new ones; promoting ethical behavior and decision-making in news media and discussion – promote public discussion of journalism ethics" [7, 10].

That's why the ethical code ensures that news organizations take responsibility for what they report. In the situation of increasing public distrust to the media, the ethical code provides a foundation for accuracy, balance, fairness, and openness, news organizations that abide by the ethical codes and encourage open dialogue of their reporting practices generate more trust and credibility with the public [8, 211–212].

McQuail explained that: "a journalistic code of ethics refers to a set of principles of professional conduct that are adopted and controlled by journalists themselves". The scholar is of the opinion that the opinion reflects the general process of professionalism of journalism, but also the wish of the media industry to protect itself from criticism and especially from threat of external intervention and reduced autonomy. From a general point of view, the codes of ethics of one country may differ in many ways from the codes of ethics of another country as a result of differences in such things like: culture, religion, governance and other peculiar situations [9, 43].

The Media Codes of ethics in Algeria work to promote ethical standards among journalists, and it plays a crucial role in establishing the rule of law for the journalists. This role is a refinement of benchmarks that aims to professionalize the media and journalists as well as discusses the accuracy and fairness, independence, integrity, accountability, opportunity to reply, unnamed sources, confidentiality, misrepresentation obscenity, taste and tone in reporting, paying for news and articles, covering ethnic, religious and inter-communal conflict, regardless of the existing code of conduct, audit and gather information on malpractices, controversial issues [10, 64]. The following are some of the general ethical issues or guidelines that will help media practitioners provide the public with facts.

2.2.1. Trust and credibility

Trust and credibility are the most important resources of the media, it plays a vital role in the democratic order and form the foundation of social cohesion. It has been frequently associated with the idea of credibility, at times where trust begins and credibility ends is unclear. Gaziano (1988) appeared to have used credibility, believability, and trust almost synonymously when she wrote, "Credibility is an important issue to study because public inability to believe the media news severely hampers the nation`s ability to inform the public, to monitor leaders and to govern [11, 451–465].

Trust is "the foundation of the social relationship that we call citizenship" and an informed citizenry is central to a well-functioning democracy. In order for the public to engage effectively in civic life, people need access to reliable shared information about the activities of their public

institutions and events in their communities. It is necessary on both an interpersonal level and a societal one. Without trust, a person cannot neither rely on another for support, nor can they be confident that the information they receive from the others is credible as transparency permits quality evaluations by the audience and thus can strengthen credibility [12, 87].

Furthermore, trust should be based on solid evidence. Any doubt should be disclosed in the story. Accuracy in this case is one underlying concept of truth. Another basic concept of the notion of truth is the promotion of understanding. The story should contain adequate relevant information to enable the consumer understanding of the facts as well as the context of the facts. Finally, reporting should be fair and balanced, avoiding biased reporting.

The majority of research regarding trust in journalism has revolved around the concept of credibility, Tsfati and Cappella largely assessed trust or mistrust by using parts of the 12-item news. Credibility Scale by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) and Cappella and Jamieson [13.p 507]. The items of these scales include fairness, bias, accuracy, privacy invasion, considering readers interest, separating fact from opinion, self-interest or public interest, well-trained reporters, telling the whole story, and whether the news media can be trusted, they also assessed perceptions of speedy news coverage and solution-based news coverage, Meyer (1988) reduced these twelve point to five: fair, bias, telling the whole story, accuracy, and trust. Also, he suggested that credibility should be assessed in terms of believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias, and completeness [14, p 211–212].

According to the Article 40 of 1990. and Articles 83, 84 of 2012 Algerian Media Codes, it is necessary to publish correct news and information, keeping away from all forms of falsification and dissemination of incorrect news that harms the Algerian audience. [15, 16–21]

2.2.2. Objectivity and Accuracy

The history of accuracy and objectivity is closely related to other central concepts of journalism such as truthfulness, factuality and credibility because it rises epistemological questions of whether and how journalism is capable of depicting reality accurately, truthfully and based on facts.

Objectivity is one of the values that is an essential part of honest journalism. The journalist is supposed to give their audience an honest picture of events that take place. In order to do that, they should be as objective as they can in order to give the public an accurate picture of the events [16]. Michael Schudson, a prominent sociologist and media critic, argues that "the belief in objectivity is a faith in 'facts,' a distrust in 'values,' and a commitment to their segregation" [17, 111] .It does not refer to the prevailing ideology of newsgathering and reporting that emphasises eyewitness accounts of events, verification of facts in multiple sources and balance of viewpoints. It also implies an institutional role of journalists as a fourth estate, a body that exists apart from government and large interest groups, and which does not exist in most of the countries of the world.

According to Tuchman, objectivity refers to routine procedures which may be exemplified as formal attributes (quotation marks, level of significance, legal precedence, etc.) and which protect the professional from mistakes and from critics. Objectivity, on the other hand, refers to the time-honoured principles of impartiality, fairness and truthfulness in the handling and dissemination of news. Objectivity as a principle of journalistic practice can be further understood by contrasting it with blatantly biased one-sided or partisan reporting, sometimes known as the "yellow" press. [18, 21]

Andrén Hermánus also attempts to develop an operational concept of objectivity when the following conditions are fulfilled:

(I) it contains true assertions.

(II) it is not misleading.

(III) it contains essential assertions.

(IV) it is thorough.

Regarding to accuracy, it plays a particularly important role in a regard with the factuality of the journalistic discourse, as it forces journalists not only to ground their reporting on facts, but to check whether presented facts are true or not, which is reflected both in the description of the journalistic profession as the discipline of verification as well as the central relevance of accuracy for instruments of media self-regulation like press councils and codes of ethics.

Accuracy involves verifying and checking your facts thoroughly using more than one source. Reporting facts before confirmation is a violation of one of the basic principles of journalism. This means that if a journalist leaves out one important detail of a particular story, the story will not be accurate. Another essential thing is to concentrate only on all the relevant facts. Irrelevant facts will not only lack space (newspaper) and time (radio and television) but will also distort the balance that is so important for accurate reporting

Articles 42, 121, 125 of Algerian Media Code in 1982 and the Article 40 in 1990, and the Article 2 in 2012 all underscored the needs to be accurate and objective during gathering information and publishing as well as to avoid spreading non-verified news [19, 246]*.*

2.2.3. Insult and Defamation

The media should represent the world accurately, including as many aspects of human experience and reality as possible. They are obliged to balance between the right to publish new, informative and stirring content and the responsibility to protect the vulnerable from harm and insult. The media and journalists should be mindful of their audience, particularly in content concerning child welfare.

The definition of insult is given in the Law stating that, "The person who, with the intention to belittle, with his statement, behavior, publication or in some other way expresses an undermining opinion that insults the honor and reputation of another person will be responsible for insult." [20, 24-25]

The defamation is considered the most serious act that violates the honor and reputation of a citizen. Defamation is defined as the transmission to a third party, either orally or in writing, of information that could damage the reputation of another person. It is the publication of a statement, which exposes a person to hatred, ridicule, contempt and/or causes him to be shunned or avoided by right thinking members of society; Scholars in the field of media agreed that, for a statement to be defamatory of a person, the following statement must be false and targeted towards:

(a.) Lowering his morale in the estimation of right-thinking men or

(b.) Causing him to be shunned or avoided, or

(c.) Expose him to hatred, contempt or ridicule, or

(d.) Conveys an imputation on him disparaging or injurious to him in his office, profession, calling, trade or business.

(e.) injures his financial credit. [21, 5–6]

The Penal Code for journalists in Algeria has established several legal articles concerning defamation and insults, and the most of the penalties are fines and imprisonment ranging from 1 to 12 months. The most important of these articles is 70 of 1990, Article 298 of 2006 and Article 144 of 2001 [22, 22–25]**.**

2.2.4. Privacy and the common good

Journalists find it hard to balance: they must respect privacy, but they must also be rigorous and robust in their investigation about the issues that are in the public interest. This means that in some cases it will be necessary for a journalist to carry out an investigation that interferes with someone's privacy. A system of privacy is vital for the democratic process: democracy

assumes that the individual citizen will actively and independently participate in making decisions and in operating the institutions of the society. An individual is capable of such a role only if they can at some point separate themselves from the pressures and conformities of collective life [23, 546]**.**

According to Warren and Brandeis, defines privacy as the right of a person to be alone and free of unwarranted publicity. Privacy has also been viewed as "the right of the individual to be protected against intrusion into his personal life or affairs, or those of his family, by direct physical means or by the publication of information." [24, 193]

In addition, "samuel and brandeis" stressed that privacy still matters because it provides the space to withdraw from the gaze of others and to rest from the need to perform socially [25, 203]. Moreover, it matters politically and democratically because it is intimately connected with how we are seen, represented and treated by the people, organisations and institutions that hold influence and power over us.

We can see the compatibility of privacy and journalism also in the role of privacy as an instrumental freedom. The right for privacy appears in the basic human rights instruments, alongside with other rights of critical significance for the journalistic practice. What is often neglected is the role of privacy in facilitating the practical enjoyment of other rights. It is important to consider freedom of expression, freedom of belief or conscience, and freedom of association.

Furthermore, the common good consists of those social conditions that allow both communities and individuals to flourish. Surely, promoting individual fulfilment should be included in any concept of the common good – but that requires paying attention to what all need to thrive, not just survive. So, besides respecting collective rights, communitarianism urges us to pay more attention to positive rights. What is needed to motivate meaningful civic participation is a deep sense of the link that exists between our own well-being and that of others, based on a strong mutual connection grounded in solidarity over a weak cooperative connection grounded in tolerance. Solidarity makes us willing to give up some personal advantage if needed so that everyone can have the chance to flourish [26, 193–220].

The authorities in Algeria have paid great attention to the public interest of the nation and everything related to national sovereignty and has set up many legal articles as 49 and 125 of the Media code 1982 and articles 03, 36, 40, 93, 36 of the Media code of 1990, the Article 40. Confirmed that a professional journalist should respect these following principles:

- Respect for citizens' constitutional and individual rights.
- Refrain from racial incitement and violence.
- Calling for peace, tolerance and rejection of all forms of violence.
- Refrain from slandering, cursing and all kinds of insults.
- Integrity, objectivity and honesty in commenting on events.
- Refrain from using the journalism profession for personal purposes.
- correct what has been found wrongs.
- The journalist is also entitled to reject any instruction from a source other than editorial officials [27, 11].

3. Research Methods

The research is divided in two main parts. The first part gives a description of the Ethical Guidelines for professional journalism. And the second part is the analysis of the state of violations in the professional journalism practice in Algeria. as to find out those Violations in Algerian journalism we made a survey which conducted through Facebook, we distributed a survey to Algerian journalists working in Arabic and French media, which numbered 50 respondents. We attempted to highlight the violations of journalistic ethics in the Algerian

media, regarding how they evaluate the standards of professional journalism in their practice. The method of online survey was selected due to its main features

1) Ease of data gathering (Google Forms templates were used to create a questionnaire)

2) Automatisation in data input and handling, the flexibility of design (the responses are automatically stored in a survey database, providing hassle-free handling of data and a smaller possibility of data errors)

3) High reliability, validity, and generalizability (including a high level of privacy and anonymity of respondents) [28, 1–8].

4. Results and Discussion

The violations in the professional journalism practice in Algeria

The journalists have acknowledged that several violations of professional ethics occur daily and they monitor them through contact with their colleagues inside the editorial rooms or in the field coverage, this confirms figure (1) that represents **the opinion of journalists on the availability of integrity and ethics in the Algerian media**.
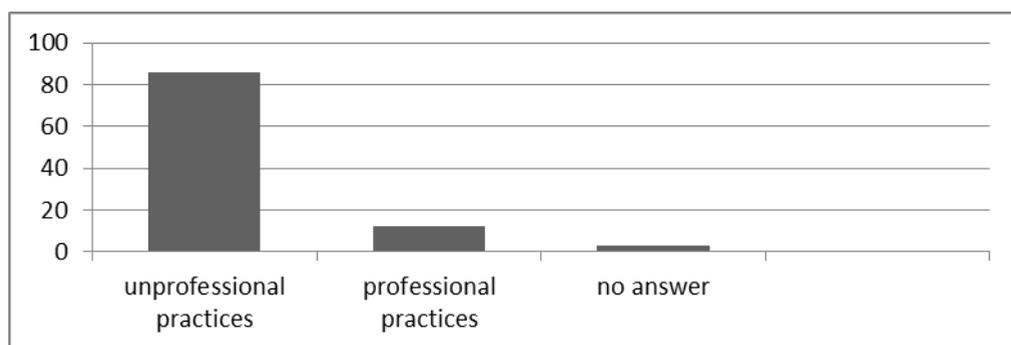

Figure 1. The availability of integrity and ethics in the Algerian media.

The results obtained from the field study have a very high percentage of 86%; this was confirmed by the behaviour of journalists who do not respect the ethics of the profession or the integrity of the media practice. This is evidenced by the fact that there are many deviations and abuses in the media sphere. In general, near 12% denied that as they see the professionalism among the Algerian journalists, while 3% of the respondents declined to answer. It is concluded that there are negative and dangerous indicators and many violations in the professional practice in the Algerian media. Most journalists' responded that it can be considered a pre-justification for their mistakes and abuses in the media sphere.

According to the respondents in this research, Algerian journalists have ranked the most unprofessional manifestations of violations in journalism. 38% have ranked the lack of accuracy and objectivity as the most popular.

The defamation and insult came at the second place. 24% defined the failure to comply with the right to reply, 15% defined the ignorance of the news and information, 12% defined the violation of common good and deviation from the general ethics of the society. The lack of respect for the legislative and ethical controls of professional journalism practice, was also added to the survey.
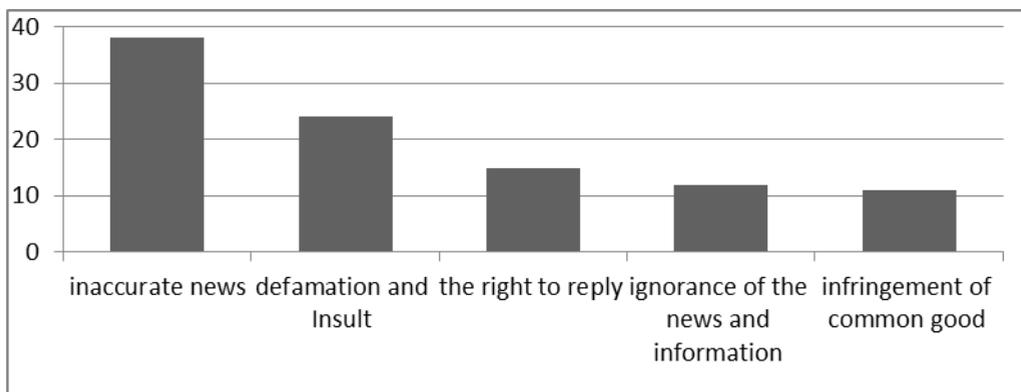
Figure 2. The violations in the professional journalism practice.

By analysing the data of the field study, it was recorded that most of the irregularities occurred due to the poor level of educational and cultural training in 48.05% of the cases. Others respondents believe that 25.07% are based on the ambiguity of the media sphere codes, as 19.10% is given to the lack of experience in the media sphere. 7.78% confirm that most of the violations occurred in the media sphere because of the political system and the absence of laws that guarantee all the rights to journalists. However, the poor level of journalists' education, the ambiguity of the media sphere and the excesses of the limits of media practice are the fundamental reasons that have led to a lack of respect for legislative, ethical and professional practices.

5. Conclusion

The Algerian authorities should review media codes by opening academic discussion symposia and media experts to develop new laws, refocusing on the ways journalists are trained in Algeria by updating the new curricula at the universities and developing the practical aspect of the junior journalists.

Algerian journalists are obliged to act responsibly in support of the information accuracy as well as to oppose those who violate human rights or promote any kind of discrimination, hate speech and incitement to violence while respecting the public's right to know the truth.

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