**Journalism Cultures in Egypt and Lebanon: Role Perception, Professional Practices and Ethical Considerations**

Zahera Harb

City, University of London

This chapter explores journalism cultures in post-Arab uprising contexts (post 2011). It begins with the assumption that changing socio-political contexts may not only have been a factor in the increase in the number of media organisations in the region, but may also be influencing journalistic practices and norms. The paper uses semi structured interviews and personal observations to explore journalism practices, roles and approaches in two Arab countries: Egypt and Lebanon. It assesses norms and tendencies that may have shaped journalism cultures. It aims at identifying similarities and differences in Arab journalism practices and values and questions whether we can speak of a universal journalism culture in the Arab world or several.

A number of studies have examined journalism in the Arab world, but most of these have been either country-focused (Sakr, 2013; Sakr 2007; Mellor 2005), broadly designed (for example Pintak 2011; Mellor 2007), or restricted to address the political economy and media systems with little attention to journalists’ practices, values and principles (see Gunter and Dickinson 2013, Lahlali 2011, Rugh 2004 and Sakr 2001 and 2007). This paper seeks to address the deficit, focusing on practices, norms and codes while also paying attention to the relationship between the cultural and the political as well as the political and economic.

The paper draws on the study by Hanitzsch et al (2011) to explore journalism practices in two Arab countries, using journalism culture as an analytical concept and object of inquiry. Such a conceptual approach provides ‘a more intuitive way of looking at the diversity of journalistic practices and orientations (Hanitzsch et.al, 2011, 273) because it produces ‘a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful’ (Hanitzsch, 2007: 369). The chapter will examine these practices and ideas under the following three themes: social responsibility; ethics of journalism practice and level of professionalism.

The countries this chapter aims to explore are: Lebanon (plural and diverse model, but still bound by confessional system and ideologies) and Egypt (a country of media freedom contradictions post Arab uprisings with general tendencies among journalists to express loyalty to those in power. The largest in the Arab world in terms of population and area).

As mentioned earlier, this study adopts interviews and observations as research approach to study journalism culture/s in two media savvy centres in the Global South, Egypt and Lebanon. The select journalists chosen will be those confined within organisational structures, which means that those working in media organisations, are salaried workers and bound by organisations norms.

**Journalism culture as a tool of inquiry**

The concept of journalism culture integrates diverse scholarly discourses, most notably discussions of professionalism, objectivism, professional role perceptions and ethical standards (Hanitzsch, et.al. 2011 p.274). According to Hanitzsch et.al the concept is as culture itself is a process of continuous change, renegotiation and redefinition (2011, p. 274).

Hanitzsch (2007) proposes studying journalism culture through exploring culture as a set of ideas (values, attitudes and beliefs), Practices (of cultural production), and artefacts (cultural products, texts), Journalism culture as Hanitzsch (2007, p. 369) put it, ‘becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others’.

This chapter investigates through thematic interview analysis Journalism cultures in Lebanon and Egypt at three levels: journalism and journalists’ role perception, professional practices and performances and ethical considerations. It follows loosely Hanitzsch (2007) three levels of analysis in the chain of news production. According to him journalism cultures are articulated at three ‘basic levels’ of analysis:

At the cognitive level, they shape the foundational structure on the basis of which the perception and interpretation of news and news work take place […] At the evaluative level, they drive the professional worldviews of journalists (e.g.) role perceptions) as well as occupational ideologies (e.g., “objective Journalism,” “investigative Journalism”)[…]

At the performative level, they materialise in the way Journalists do their work (e.g., methods of reporting, use of news formats). Journalistic practices are shaped by cognitive and evaluative structures, and journalists – mostly unconsciously – perpetuate these deep structures though professional performance (ibid, p. 369).

Hanitzsch also identifies ‘three essential constituents: institutional roles, epistemologies, and ethical ideologies’ (p.371). He divides these further into ‘seven principal dimensions: interventionism, power distance, market orientation, objectivism, empiricism, relativism and idealism’ (ibid). Not all these dimensions will be applicable to this chapter, but it is good to present them and use the framework as a contextual tool for the three main areas this study is concerned with role perception/social responsibility; ethics of journalism practice and level of professionalism.

Thomas Hanitzsch and Claudia Mellado, (2011) study on ‘what shapes the news around the world’ confirm that political and economic factors are ‘clearly the most important denominators of cross-national differences in the journalists’ perceptions of influences’ (p. 404). The study asserts that ‘the way political and economic influences are perceived by journalists is highly dependent on the national context’ (p. 416). This chapter considers the political and economic factors in exploring journalism cultures and how they are shaped in Both Lebanon and Egypt.

**Egypt and Lebanon: the journalism scenes**

William Rugh, in his book *The Arab Mass Media* (2004), divided the Arab media into four categories:

1-The mobilising media, which is characterised by the almost total subordination of the media system to the political system;

2- the loyalist media system, which is privately owned, but follows the line of governments, as those regimes can still control their resources (like paper or transmission rights) and persecute journalists through legal systems;

3-the diverse media system, where the press is described as free, and

4-the transitional system, where the media begin to move from the mobilised and loyalist systems to being diverse (Rugh 2004, p.252-253).

Rugh situated Egypt within the transitional media and Lebanon within the diverse media systems. William categorisations need to be re-visited as a whole, which is not in the scope of this chapter, but when it comes to Egypt and Lebanon the categorisation no longer apply. As this chapter will indicate Egypt is within the framework of polarised loyalist press as introduced by Hallin and Mancini (2004). As one interviewee put it ‘we don’t have independent media, but independent journalists’ (M, interview with author, 2016). In case of Lebanon on the other hand, Rugh’s categorisation is not fully representative because, as I argued elsewhere, ‘while the Lebanese media system is diverse and free from government and state control, it is not free from political and economic affiliation’ (Harb, 2013, p.39). One of the Lebanese journalists interviewed for this chapter summarised the case of Lebanese press emphasising that in Lebanon ‘we have freedom of speech, but we don’t have free press’ (N, interview with author, 2016).

Egypt witnessed an influx of newly established TV channels post January 2011, among those were channels financed and supported by the Muslim Brotherhood. There had been a time where we started seeing a shift in moving away from the one homogenised message in support of the government and the country’s leaders in both print and broadcast media (Diab, *the Guardian*, 2011). That didn’t last long. Following June 30th revolt and the military forces steady movements to control the political scene in Egypt the media at large were used as a mobilising tool in the hands of the army led by Abed Al Fatah al Sissi. Journalism notions of fairness and balance in covering events vanished. The country’s media was divided into two extreme media clusters; one in support of the brotherhood (Ikhwan in Arabic) including *Aljazeera Misr* (stands for Egypt in Arabic) and the other in support of the military. Hate speech against ‘the other’ on both sides became dominate until the military led authorities closed down channels affiliated to Muslim brotherhood and other Salafi affiliated religious channels.

The message became one across the board the terminology became one. Slogans like the people want to execute the Muslim Brotherhood followers became a celebratory message. There has been several attempts to balance the scene in Egypt including a satire program produced and presented by what became to be known as Jon Stewart the Arab World Bassem Yousef, a current affairs program produced and presented by Reem Majed and one produced and presented by Yousri Fouda. Within two years, the increase of private satellite TV stations in Egypt stopped being a celebratory move towards media diversity; instead print and broadcast media ended up at large singing from the same hymn sheet, that of the military rule. The three programs mentioned above were put off air for presenting what was assumed to be critical voices against the political and military elite.

Hallin and Mancini (2004) argue that political parallelism between media organisations and political organisation generates low level of professionalism in journalism. They maintain that a high degree of professionalism in journalism means that journalism is differentiated as an institution and form of practice from other institutions and forms of practice—including politics (ibid: 38).

This lack of autonomy tends to be a dominant feature among a majority of Egyptian journalists; journalists became tied to the political actor with which they support. To borrow Hallin and Mancini’s term, the media in Egypt became “instrumentalized.” (ibid, 37). Journalists in Egypt (mainly broadcasters) identify themselves with particular points of view, which meant not serving the public (even though they claimed they are), contradicting their own standards of practice as specified in the Code of the Profession ratified in 1986, which, as this chapter will demonstrate later, none of the journalists interviewed for this chapter use as a reference in their daily work.

During Mubarak there was no claim of independent media. Egyptian airwaves are now dominated with hours and hours of one man or one woman shows, talking heads claiming they possess the truth, the wisdom and that their audiences should be grateful for sharing those with them. As prominent broadcast journalist Reem Majed put it in a paper presented at a conference in Berlin, ‘the media is playing the lapdog role rather than the watchdog role, keeping an un-informed populace, that can be easily confused, deceived and directed’ (Majed, 2015).

Fabrications and counter fabrication, hatred and counter hatred is what dominates the Egyptian media scene these days and it seems it is going to be the ruling scene for some time to come with Abed Al Fata7 el Sissi telling the Egyptian people in an exclusive interview with Egyptian OnTV and cbc channels on May 5 2014 before he took power, ‘the state should contribute in "correcting" people’s ethics through using mechanisms such as the media, the family and religious institutions’ (Darweesh, *Ahramonline*, 2014).

Lebanon on the other hand is characterized by the *interwoven* relationship between the media and the political elite. This polarised media system went through different phases and engendered different media models since Lebanon gained its independence in 1943. The civil war (1975–1990) witnessed an influx of illegal TV and radio stations which were later regulated in the post-civil war Lebanon. The regulation mirrored the confessional political system. Even though the law specified that no political party or politician should own a dominant majority in any of the newly licensed TV station, the practice came to echo the socio-political structure of the Lebanese society (Dajani, 2001).

This makes it closer to what Hallin and Mancini (2004) identified as the “Polarized Pluralist Model,” which applies in Mediterranean countries of southern Europe and is characterised by a politically polarized media, closely associated with political parties and a plurality of media, representing the diversity of political interests. According to Hallin and Mancini, the media of the Mediterranean countries in many ways, seem close to “Curran’s (1991) model of ‘radical democratic’ public sphere,” in which the media function as a “battleground between contending social forces” (ibid, p, 29). The media in Lebanon follow closely these function patterns. Within the pluralist polarised media module, there seems to be a tendency towards low levels of professionalism (Harb 2013).

This lack of autonomy tends to be a dominant feature among Lebanese journalists became tied to the political actors with which they are affiliated. Here also as in Egypt, the media became “instrumentalized” (Hallin and Mancini’s, 2004). The media is being controlled by outside actors, parties, politicians, social groups or movements, or economic actors seeking political influence (ibid: 37). Most journalists in Lebanon in the years that followed the assassination of former Prime Minister of Lebanon Rafic Hariri in 2005 (See Harb, 2013 for more context on post 2005 media scene in Lebanon), identified themselves with particular political points of view, which meant contradicting the Lebanese ‘Code of the Profession’ ratified in 1974 and adopted by the Press Federation in Lebanon, and which again as in the Egyptian case none of the journalists interviewed for this chapter use as a reference in their daily work.

Lebanon’s broadcasting scene has always been well-developed, lively and diverse, reflecting the country’s pluralism and political divisions. Lebanese media feature diverse opinion, aggressive question-and-answer television shows with government officials and politicians, and lively criticism of authorities and policies (see Boulos, 1994 and Dajani, 2001). However, political affiliation, thus self-censorship, remains a problem. Authorities, owners and editors are quick to clamp down on journalists who cross both un-stated and stated boundaries on sensitive topics. There always existed an *interwoven* relationship between the media and Lebanese politicians. Politicians had a strong appetite for owning and even running media organisations. Many prominent politicians own shares in private broadcasters and publications (Harb 2013).

In his book *Disoriented Media in a Fragmented Society: the Lebanese Experience* (2001),

Professor Nabil Dajani of the American University of Beirut argued that the Lebanese press was characterised by a general tendency to oppose the national government. However, “this did not mean that it played the ‘watchdog’ role safeguarding public interest.” Its opposition to the government, the analysis revealed, was usually a result of its support for, or bondage to, another authority that was “politically and/or militarily active on the Lebanese scene” (ibid: 127). In addition, the fact that a Lebanese media supported a particular authority did not necessarily mean that it would continue in its support for this authority. The country went through a long period of civil war, “during which new political authorities appeared, and several others changed positions” (ibid: 127).

This situation did not change much in post-civil war Lebanon. Despite the fact that newspapers readership is not as widespread in Lebanon or the Arab world as Dajani (2001) suggests, some journalists and writers are viewed as “opinion leaders,” while their ideas and writings are used as starting points during several political or social debates. In Lebanon, being a journalist and a political activist at the same time are functions that complete each other and do not contradict each other. There are several examples of journalists who pursued political careers after working in journalism for several years. Journalism has turned out to be a route to becoming MPs or Cabinet Ministers.

In the case of Egypt and Lebanon, journalism seem to fit with Staab (1990) functional model, where journalists are seen as political actors ‘due to the expected effects of news, they select certain events for publishing that might possibly cause the anticipated effects in reality’ (Staab, 1990, p.428).

**Expert Interviews as method**

Fourteen in depth interviews were conducted for this study. For Wimmer and Dominick (1997) this kind of interviewing is unique as it ‘generally uses small samples […] provides detailed background about the reasons why respondents give specific answers [and] Obtains elaborate data concerning respondents’ opinions, values, motivations, recollection experiences, and feelings’ (p. 100).

For this study, the semi-structured and structured interview were used. As a form of structured and semi-structured interview, the ‘expert’ interview was applied, since my interviewees were of less interest to me as people than in their capacity as experts in the field of journalism. It is said that ‘If concrete statements about an issue are the aim of the data collection, a semi-structured interview is the more economical way’ (Flick, 1998, p. 95). By this it can be seen that such an interview basis accords with the aims of this chapter.

Seven Journalists from Lebanon and seven from Egypt were interviewed. They are spread across print, broadcast and online mediums. Their expertise range from very senior to senior and mid-career journalists. Twelve of them were asked a set of fixed open ended questions and two (the more senior, one in each country) were asked contextual questions relating to current and future state of journalism in Egypt and Lebanon.

Interviews were conducted via email, Skype and face to face. Some of the email interviews were complemented by face to face interviews. The two interviews with more senior journalists were deemed necessary after conducting the first 12 structured interviews. There was a need for at least one voice from each country to conceptualise what came across as dominant features in the journalists’ responses.

The small number of the journalists interviewed (14) should not affect the validity of the method since the in-depth interview is the appropriate method to gather detailed information from a small sample of respondents, as stated by many researchers (Wimmer and Dominick 1998; Seale 1998; Flick 1998, Flick 2009).

The selection of these journalists were not random. In Egypt these are, en masse, journalists that have been critical of what has become of Egyptian journalism and have voiced their opinions publicly. In Lebanon, some of them I worked with as a journalist in Lebanon, others were selected as fairly newly comers to the profession and had made their way up in the popularity scale mainly on social media. Journalists selected were defined as those who had at least some “editorial responsibility” for the content they produce.

They have all granted the researcher consent to be quoted and named, but to free this research from any risk of potential harm that might in the future cause these journalists, mainly in Egypt, for sharing their views here, I have decided to anonymise interviewees’ names and affiliations and will be quoting them using random first letters. As one Egyptian interviewee put it, ‘journalists live in a state of fear… Big Brother is watching…’ (M, interview with author, 2016). There are up to 35 Egyptian journalists in detention right now for ‘publishing offences’ (S, interview with author, 2016). The latest clamp down on journalists took place in November 2016, when ‘Egyptian court sentenced the head of the country’s journalists union and two further board members to two years in prison while additionally handing each of them fines of around $650 for harbouring two wanted journalists’ (*The New Arab*, 2016).

**Role perception: Journalists as educators versus journalists as advocators**

[El Issawi](http://0-jou.sagepub.com.wam.city.ac.uk/search?author1=Fatima+el+Issawi&sortspec=date&submit=Submit) and [Cammaerts](http://0-jou.sagepub.com.wam.city.ac.uk/search?author1=Bart+Cammaerts&sortspec=date&submit=Submit) (2016) studied how Egyptian journalists perceive their role in what they called ‘democratic transitions’. They interviewed more than 50 journalists as part of a bigger study. Most of the journalists interviewed expressed ‘their difficulty in drawing a line between their personal political positioning and their professional role (p. 559). Their analysis showed that the radical/oppositional role against the Muslim Brotherhood government suited those interviewed better than the normative facilitative role ‘after which most Egyptian journalists re-assumed their traditional collaborative role in the service of the ruling (military) regime’ (p. 562). However, those interviewed for this chapter have identified the importance of the normative facilitative role that journalism should play. They recognised the need for journalism to inform the public on all issues that matter to them. Also they all agreed on the importance of journalism in fulfilling people rights to know and to be heard. Journalism role perceptions varied from informing the public factually and accurately, to being the voice of the people, to monitoring power and hold it to account, to educate and enlighten the public. Saying that, the advocator and adversarial roles aiming for social and political change was not an issue among Egyptian journalists interviewed as was the case with the Lebanese journalists.

All Egyptian journalists interviewed for this chapter emphasised the importance of reporting factually and inform the public. Some felt that it is their role to educate and enlighten the public, which resonates with the Egyptian President Abed el Fatah el Sissi understanding of the role of the media, mentioned earlier, as a tool to help ‘correcting people Ethics’.

Journalist D states: ‘My role as a journalist is to report events impartially and expose corruption in Society. To educate and enlighten the public with factual reporting of events (D, Interview with Author, 2016).

To be the voice of the people, to Investigate corruption and misconduct by powerful people in Society (A, interview with author, 2016), was another theme that emerged.

Seeking the truth was one aspect that got contested by some of the interviewees as Journalist M put it:

I don’t think finding truth is journalism role. I believe that truth is like a puzzle, and the facts are like the tiny pieces of the puzzle, and I believe the role of journalism in any society should be the tiny pieces that can help the society making its own puzzle. A journalist is the “digger” in pursuit of these tiny pieces of the big puzzle. (M, interview with author, 2016).

Journalists as opinion leaders, is another theme that was disclosed. Journalist E believes that ‘Journalists need to search for all information so they can themselves form an opinion than pass it to the public. They need to collect info from different sources, so their work could be identified as balanced and fair and not bias or propagandist (E, interview with author, 2016).

These journalists are fully aware of the ideals of journalism role and see them as universal like informing the public on issues that matter to them and that an informed society is more capable of governing itself. However, many of them are also aware that it is difficult to practice this role in Egypt at the time being. Equally important is the role journalism plays in independently monitoring power. ‘A reporter should be conscious of the power and the value of generating news’. However, as Journalist W says, it is hard to achieve that since ’there is no free press in Egypt’ (W, interview with author, 2016).

The Lebanese journalists interviewed for this chapter identified the role of journalism in slightly different terms with common tendency towards emphasising the importance of its role to inform the public, and create informed public opinion to achieve common public good.

Role perception varied from being an advocator and campaigner for human rights and bringing change to society, to being a medium to transfer information fairly and impartially, to apply meaning and analysis to information, to educate the public and to hold power to account.

However, role of Journalism differed to when it came to identifying role of journalists, where being an educator and advocator for change and building public opinion became more dominant.

Journalist K does not believe in Journalism as a message, ‘especially when it comes to reveal important cases like in corruption cases and human rights abuses. Journalists’ role is to create informed public opinion and enhance public knowledge about an issue to establish public debate about it’ (K, interview with author, 2016).

Journalist L, who is one of Lebanon’s prominent journalists covering human rights issues, strongly believe in journalism role to

Engage in campaigns to advocate social change and try to give the readers and audiences what they need not what they want. Journalists should highlight public’s concerns and endorse change for better societies. Journalists should be biased towards their publics and not towards politicians and those in power (L, interview with author, 2016)

Having the journalists advocating for the common good was also expressed by journalist F, who is a print political journalist. F believes that with social media informing the public, journalists role is to add contexts, background and analysis to stories, which help audiences’ and readers to form an opinion on one issue or another, without it becoming ‘propaganda’. ‘My goal would always be to fight corruption and those in power attempts to get away with it’ (F, interview with author, 2016).

Nevertheless, Journalist O expressed his doubts in achieving role definition saying:

Journalism role is different depending on what the journalist is allowed to do in different political and social contexts. The main principal is not to use or abuse my role as journalist to achieve personal benefits. The role of Journalists in society is not to be a tool in the hands of those in power (interview with author, 2016).

**Universal professional values hailed, but hard to implement**

Egyptian journalists interviewed for this chapter identify fully with what they call universal values of objectivity, impartiality, neutrality, fairness and balance in the coverage. They say they try to achieve some of these practicing journalism, but they don’t always succeed.

They see these notions as the notions of professionalism that distinguish what they do from other professions. Journalist D, despite recognising these notions as features of the profession, she points to the fact that ‘Egyptian journalism lacks these notions these days’ (D, Interview with Author, 2016). Others have agreed. When they were asked what notions they apply and fulfil in their work among those listed there was an agreement on accuracy and credibility. Many have asserted that these two notions have gone missing from much of Egyptian journalism these days, especially broadcast ones.

One of the journalists interviewed has been put out of work, because of her questioning the political status quo. Journalist M says: ‘we are terrorised to stop asking questions. They want to forbid us not from just the act of asking, but from the act of thinking that leads to the question’ (interview with author, 2016). Another one resigned because someone senior was fiddling with the accuracy of his reporting. A third one said:

My current job title is deputy editor in chief, but I don’t exercise any editorial authority. In practise, I’m a ‘senior journalist’ […] I try to apply these principles. Some stories are rendered “unpublishable” by editors because of political considerations and where impartiality is not tolerated (W, interview with author, 2016).

However, journalist W draw the attention that on the other hand

some stories do not serve their purpose if reported and written entirely neutrally (like doing injustice to victims of war, occupation, violence, genocide etc, by giving voice to the culprit and weaving their defensive argument in the story (W, interview with author, 2016).

Most of the journalists interviewed here, have received International journalism training, hence identifying with the principles mentioned above, or have the language skills to read and follow international media, which, in their words, has informed their way of practicing journalism. These journalists are abiding by their social responsibility role, but are either stopped by their superiors or by the authorities through direct prosecution as happened with Hosam Bahgat, the investigative journalist from *Mada Masr* online news website (M, interview with author).

Journalist B was clear in stating that any story that has to do with the Egyptian army and the military is a red line, not to be crossed (interview with author 2016). Self-censorship is highly practiced according to Journalist B. Journalist W complements this picture by confirming that Egyptian journalists ‘operate now in a climate of fear’ (W, interview with author, 2016).

Egyptian journalism do not share common ideology as all journalists interviewed here asserted. Journalism body is divided into two categories: those interviewed here, who aspire to report independently, accurately and credibly trying to abide by the social responsibility model of the press and those who are fully acting as political actors, propagating to those in power and as Journalist M put it, ‘constructing the notion that Big Brother is a faultless and God like leader’ (M interview with author).

In the mid of the gloomy situation that these journalists find themselves in (an environment where journalism values and principles are neglected) Journalist E, sees a good sign in that ‘journalists are trying to search and assess local issues from an international perspective and this didn’t use to happen before’ (E, interview with author, 2016). Journalist B, a senior editor, sees hope in the new generation of journalists that he has been involved in training. He believes that they have the knowledge to differentiate between good and bad journalism (interview with author 2016).

Lebanese Journalists interviewed for this chapter, as their Egyptian colleagues, believe in the notions of objectivity, impartiality, neutrality, balance and fairness as universal. Lebanese journalists interviewed observe these principles as a clear indication for professionalism. These notions were agreed as being the emblem of professionalism. They aspire to apply it, but the two principles that mattered most were honesty and accuracy. There is a sense of social responsibility that came across all journalists interviewed, a sense of obligation to play a role in achieving social justice and equal rights to all. These were mostly evident in Journalist F and journalist L

Honesty, accuracy, don’t fall under source manipulation and try to achieve as much objectivity as possible. The source of these principals is my own belief in my right to live in a better and fairer society, where people don’t need to beg for their basic needs and civic rights. I gained these from my own conscience, readings and my cultural social and family background (F, interview with author, 2016).

Objectivity, accurate reporting from the field, be ethical and work on improving and developing my skills at all times. Readers and their issues are my priority. To be accurate and credible. Some of it comes from what I learned at university, some from the organisation I work for and some from my own readings and working and talking to people. Of course there is the background of morality I journalist was raised to follow (L, interview with author, 2016).

However, O, who is of a younger generation to the two above and believe in true and credible reporting, does not believe in objectivity. For him journalists cannot be separated from their society.

My main principle is truth and not to hide or masquerade truth and cause harm to society. Journalism’s responsibility is to protect the public from any harm. The only principal and value for me is to be responsible for what I publish, be professional and accurate in the information and news I report. I don’t believe in objectivity (O, interview with author, 2016).

Being an activist, campaigner and working for what the journalists believe is the common good are mostly shared by the journalists. They, similar to the Egyptian journalists, believe that journalism in Lebanon and the Arab world is these days very low on professionalism.

It should be universal but sadly they are not applied universally. Very big reputed organisation in different part of the world and the Arab world in specific these principles are not applied. We see lots of propaganda and biased reporting. Neutrality has vanished or almost vanished. War are being fought on the media front (L, interview with author, 2016).

Asserting that these principles should be universal and that every journalist should work hard aspiring to achieve them, journalist K ‘try to be accurate and abide by objectivity and balance’, for her ‘clarity in writing news is important’. She believes that ‘every person has the right to information and the right to freedom of speech without fear of persecution and harm’ (interview with author, 2016).

The fear factor that has been dominating the Egyptian journalism scene apply to Lebanon too, but fear in the Lebanese context is fuelled by different motives. The fear factor that shadows Lebanese journalism these days is economic in nature. Journalist are afraid of losing their jobs because of current market trends. Especially in the print sector where many Newspapers are struggling and number of journalists put on redundancy list is increasing. Journalist R says that she is living in fear of losing her job, now she has a daughter. She says ‘now I have to think of providing for my daughter and offer her good education and better life’ (interview with author, 2016).

Besides, newspapers are facing the ghost of closing down for financial reasons. *Assafir* Newspaper is one of those papers struggling financially, which led to its publisher declaring the closing down of the paper because of financial difficulties (*the New Arab*, 2016). The paper did not close at that time due to what was reported as ‘last minute funding’ (*The New Arab*, 2016). However, few months later I witnessed first-hand the roll out of *Assafir’s* last issue on 31st December 2016. The newspaper *terminated* its operations, after 42 years in the business, due to financial and funding woes. Similarly, *Annahar* newspaper, established in 1933, has ended 2016 with major cuts in budget and staff, laying off more than 60 people according to the Lebanese media (Karam, *Arab News*, 2016).

Prominent journalist and writer, Wasef Awada, explained that newspapers in Lebanon had never depended on circulation for revenue. Awada, who is board member of the Lebanese journalists syndicate in Lebanon, stated that Lebanese media has never been independent of the political scene, ‘it has always been a mirror of the political division in the country and it has always supported itself financially from outside political sources be it internal or external state funding’ (Awada, Interview with author, 2016).

**Professional means ethical**

Ethics follow closely the discussion of professionalism. Almost all journalists in Egypt and Lebanon relate between level of professionalism and Ethics. Being honest (the number one principal for most of them) is seen as being Ethical. Ethics is learned through university journalism education and training or by reading ethical codes from around the world, or by editorial standards set by the organisation they work for. None of the journalists interviewed from either Lebanon or Egypt have mentioned the code of ethics adopted by their respective journalists’ unions and syndicates long time ago. In the case of Lebanon, it resonates with a previous study I conducted in at the beginnings of the millennium, when the majority of journalists surveyed didn’t know an ethical code exists (Harb, 2013). In both countries there is high emphasis on one’s own conscience to decide what is ethical and what is not.

In Egypt journalist E put it clearly: ‘I follow my conscience in trying to apply these norms. I read other international code of principles and those are my source of what I view as professional’ (interview with author, 2016). Journalist E however, does not believe in balance as a principle, but believes in ‘practicing or managing my bias in a professional and objective way’ (interview with author, 2016).

Journalist M is a clear example of how thinking ethically means thinking professionally.

Professionalism, independence, objectivity, transparency, integrity, accuracy, diversity, accountability, respect of the personal freedom and privacy of individuals, respect of the inviolability of the human body, harm limitation principle, respect of the law, no absolute reality, relativity, raising questions rather than giving exemplar answers, respect of the norms and the ethics of dealing with victims and survivors, respect of all human rights and after all having recourse to my professional and human conscience. These are the professional and ethical norms and values of journalism as a profession, I learned and experienced them throughout the different phases of my formation and my career as a journalist (M, interview with author, 2016).

Lebanese Journalists interviewed are aware that values and principles of the profession are being undermined and breached by several institution. However, they are also asserting that being Ethical means being professional. Journalist L lists what being unethical means, mirroring what is currently practiced by many Lebanese journalists.

Not falling for the temptations of being unethical for the sake of achieving personal benefits is essential for keeping your moral and ethical obligation in this profession. Objectivity and credibility are important factors to keep your reputation as an ethical and professional journalist (L, interview with author, 2016)

Journalist K, highlighted another aspect of the scene that currently dominates Lebanese journalism practices. She lists what it means to be ethical for her as a journalist: ‘to avoid sensationalism, respect individual privacy and not to intrude and invade people’s privacy. Additionally, to avoid including my own view or opinion when presenting information to the public’ (K, interview with author, 2016).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter these journalists interviewed here from both Egypt and Lebanon are representative of a certain calibre of journalists that are trying hard to abide by what they see as professional and ethical practices, based on their education, training, experience and ability to access international news platforms from around the world.

**Discussion**

Even with this selective sample of journalists who defends professional and ethical norms there did not seem to be a contradiction between advocating for objectivity and impartiality and being an advocate for human rights, social change and bringing reform into the political system. This mirrors to a certain extent what Pintak (2009) reported in his work Inside the Arab News room. He concluded that ‘Arab journalists thus see no contradiction between objectivity and overt support for political and social reforms or balancing reporting and respect (p.173). However, what this study has shown is that journalists believe that those notions are universal, but understanding what do they stand for is contextual, hence they are practiced differently. This contextual understanding of such notions differs also between journalists in Lebanon and Egypt. In Lebanon journalists interviewed saw themselves as ‘advocators’, ‘missionaries’ (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 373) and actors of change for the common good, with journalists taking a more active and assertive role in their reporting, while journalists in Egypt interviewed focused on finding and reporting the ‘truth’ accurately and factually as their main objective in order to achieve an informed society that will hold people in power to account.

The journalists were explicitly asked if they believed these notions they abide by are western notions or universal ones and it was clearly stated they are universal or in very few cases, both. The answer to that recognition is the fact that Lebanese students study western philosophies and cultures and as Jad Melki (2009) explains, relates to the variety of academic traditions practiced in Lebanese universities campuses. Most Lebanese and Egyptian journalists interviewed have gone through training with international news organisation either inside Lebanon and Egypt or outside. Bedsides, the universality of access to stories and information has introduced the Journalists with models of practice they appreciated. When it comes to understanding professional standards and ethics territoriality become negligible and globalisation made it easier for journalists in both nations to adhere to what they identify as universal values of Journalism. . However, as the interviews have revealed territoriality does exist in when assessing dominant practices versus roles within national borders.

Arguably, for some in both Lebanon and Egypt, forming an opinion and reflecting on that opinion in the stories journalists produce, were not put in contradiction with notions like balance and impartiality, hence taking us back to contextualising of how the norms are understood and practiced. In Egypt online media has been seen as an alternative space to the traditional format, which relates to what De Angelis (2015) identify as ‘Renegotiation the boundaries of the journalistic profession’ (p. 107). Nevertheless, the dominant influencer is still traditional media formats, mainly TV. De Angelis, notion of ‘New opinion journalist’ that had an impact between 2012 and 2015 have phased out now according to Journalist E (interview with author, 2016).

According to Hanitzsch (2007) ‘A shared occupational ideology is believed to serve as the “cultural cement” that holds Journalists together as a profession and that, therefore forms the foundation of Journalism identity’ (p. 370). Journalists interviewed unanimously said that journalists in both countries don’t share common occupational identity. It comes clear that one at least of the interviewees didn’t share common ideology with their peers. It is also evident that journalists interviewed don’t share the same values as those peers that are dominating the mainstream media scenes in both countries. If we take the power distance role (Hanitzsch, 2007) as an example, journalists interviewed position themselves at the high end within ‘the adversary pole of the continuum’ which ‘captures a kind of journalism that openly challenges the powers that be’ (p.373). The other end of the pole is where the mainstream is mostly situated. According to (Hanitzsch, 2007)

This kind of journalism is bluntly loyal: taking on a “propagandist role” practicing “agitator journalism” being defensive of authorities, routinely engaging in self-censorship, and serving as a mouthpiece of the Government or the party (p.374).

It is a hybrid identity where some journalists are struggling to maintain what they believe is universal professional roles and those carrying the ‘loyal’ banner where they ‘pay disproportionately high attention to the authorities and rarely question the official sources as authoritative, credible and trustworthy’ (Hanitzsch, 2007, p.374).

The loyalist position seems to be more commonly adopted and dominant in Egypt than in Lebanon. However, this mix of professional ideologies exists in both countries. These professional ideologies, which according to Hanitzsch ‘can be understood as crystallizations of distinctive arrays of journalism-related values, orientations, and predispositions that articulate themselves as dominant professional culture’ (2007, p. 370) is not distinctive and is a mixture of different ideologies that emerge based on political, cultural, social and intellectual differences. Media in Lebanon is politically and ideologically bound with certain political groups, hence the ‘participant’ role model is associated with several and different political powers within the country. In Egypt the political power is assigned within the state, the regime and the ‘loyal’ role becomes associated with the regime and its military apparatus.

Hanitzsch says ‘Journalism culture is a fast—changing object of inquiry’ (2007, p. 371) and that is true in both cases discussed here, Lebanon and Egypt.

Lebanese journalists interviewed fit mostly within the ‘interventionist’ role which is ‘socially committed, and motivated’ while the Egyptian journalists interviewed seem generally to be advocating ‘truth’ and factual reporting with tendency to be detached in matters of politics and holding those in power to account when detachment could be applicable.

Market driven fear seem more evident within the Lebanese journalism scene, while fear in Egypt is generated by the state and its military apparatus.

In relation to Ethics and ethical ideologies, hybrid and mix ideologies are also evident here. Some base their ethical consideration on personal and moral philosophies, some on what they studied and read, some on editorial and ethical guidelines set by their institutions and others on a mixture of all. However, journalists interviewed speak that practices in the main stream are less idealistic and more outcome-oriented, which translates to ‘harm will sometimes be necessary to produce good’. These according to (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 379) are low on oriented ethical considerations.

Journalism cultures in Lebanon and Egypt share some common journalism values, and differs on others. The sample interviewed here is representative of a segment of the journalism communities in both Lebanon and Egypt. It highlights the hybridity of roles and professional norms and understanding of them. These norms albeit being seen as universal, have localised to fit with different understanding of what is Journalism role in societies that is witnessing rapid and constant political change. This segment of Journalism communities in both Lebanon and Egypt believed in the idea of ‘universal journalist’ following a set of ‘universal values’, discussed here, despite the fact these values are of Anglo American origin. What matter to them, is seeking an identity that differs from what the mainstream media content in both Egypt and Lebanon advocate. The main configuration they believe in amounts to ‘to be professional is to be ethical’. Accuracy and Integrity are at the top of their list.

**Bibliography**

Boulos, J.-Claude (1995), *Television History and Stories*, FMA, Lebanon.

Dajani, Nabil (1992), *Disoriented Media in a Fragmented Society: The Lebanese Experience*, AUB Beirut.

Dajani, Nabil (2001), “The Changing Scene of Lebanese Television,” *TBS Electronic Journal*, No. 7 (Fall/Winter). Accessed: 9 January 2005

URL: www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Fall01/dajani.html

Darweesh, Passant (2014), Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi gives first ever TV interview, *Ahramonline*, 6 May 2014. Accessed on 30 October 2016 URL: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsPrint/100549.aspx>

De Angelis, Enrico (2015), The New Opinion Journalism in Egypt”, *Afriche e Orienti*, 1-2, 2015, 103-120.

Diab, Osama (2011) New Egypt, new media, *the Guardian*, 10 March 2011.

Duffy, Matt, (2013), 'Cultures of Journalism' in Arabic- and English-language Newspapers within the United Arab Emirates, [*Journal of Middle East Media*](javascript:__doLinkPostBack('','mdb~~cms%7C%7Cjdb~~cmsjnh%7C%7Css~~JN%20%22Journal%20of%20Middle%20East%20Media%22%7C%7Csl~~jh','');). Fall 2013, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p24-45. 22p.

[El Issawi](http://0-jou.sagepub.com.wam.city.ac.uk/search?author1=Fatima+el+Issawi&sortspec=date&submit=Submit), Fatima and [Cammaerts](http://0-jou.sagepub.com.wam.city.ac.uk/search?author1=Bart+Cammaerts&sortspec=date&submit=Submit), Bart (2016), Shifting journalistic roles in democratic transitions: Lessons from Egypt, Journalism, July 2016 vol. 17 no. 5549-566

Flick, Uwe (1998), *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, London.

Flick, Uwe (2009, edition 4), *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Sage, London.

Gunter, Barrie and Dickinson, Roger (2013), *News Media in the Arab World, A study of 10 Arab and Muslim Countries*, Bloomsbury Academia, London, New York.

Hallin, Daniel, and Mancini, Paolo (2004), Comparing Media Systems, Three Models of Media and Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York.

Hanitzsch, Thomas (2007), Deconstructing journalism Culture: Toward a universal Theory, *Communication Theory*, 17, 367-385

Harb, Zahera (2013), Mediating internal conflict in Lebanon and its ethical boundaries, in Matar, Dina and Harb, Zahera (2013), *Narrating conflict in the Middle East: Discourse, Image and Communication Practices in Lebanon and Palestine*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Jad, Melki (2009) JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES IN LEBANON, *Journalism Studies*, 10:5, 672-690

Karam, Joyce (2017), [As lights go out at As-Safir, dark times ahead for Lebanese press](http://www.arabnews.com/node/1033221/media), January, 3, 2017. Accessed February, 2, 2013. URL: [http://www.arabnews.com/node/1033221/media#](http://www.arabnews.com/node/1033221/media)

Lahlali, El Mustapha (2011), *Contemporary Arab Broadcast Media*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Lawrence Pintak & Jeremy Ginges (2009) INSIDE THE ARAB NEWSROOM, *Journalism Studies*, 10:2, 157-177

Majed, Reem, Paper presented at Freie Universität conference, Berlin, November 2015.

Matt J. Duffy, Arab Media Regulations: Identifying Restraints on Freedom of the Press in the Laws of Six Arabian Peninsula Countries, 6 Berkeley J. Middle E. & Islamic L. 1 (2014). Available at: <http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/jmeil/vol6/iss1/2>

Mellor, Noha (2005), *The Making of Arab News*, Rowman and Littlefield publishers, London.

Mellor, Noha (2007), *Modern Arab Journalism Problems and Prospects*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Pintak Lawrence (2011), *the New Arab Journalist, Mission and Identity in a Time of Turmoil*, IB Tauris, London.

Pintak, Lawrence (2014) Islam, identity and professional values: A study of journalists in three Muslim-majority regions, *Journalism*, Vol. 15(4) 482–503.

Rugh, William (2004), *Arab Mass Media*, Praeger, London.

Sakr, Naomi (2001), *Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization & the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, London.

Sakr, Naomi (2007), *Arab Television Today*, I.B.Tauris, London.

Sakr, Naomi (2013), *Transformations in Egyptian Journalism*, I.B.Tauris, London

Seale, Clive (1998), *Researching Society and culture*, Sage Publications, London.

Staab, Joachim Friedrich (12/01/1990). "The Role of News Factors in News Selection: A Theoretical Reconsideration". *European journal of communication* (London) (0267-3231), 5 (4), p. 423.

*The New Arab*, (2016), Last minute Funding saves iconic Lebanese Newspaper from closure, March, 28, 2016. Accessed 30 October 2016. URL: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/3/28/last-minute-funding-saves-iconic-lebanese-newspaper-from-closure>

*The New Arab*, (2016), Lebanese newspaper to close after decades in print, 24 March 2016. Accessed 30 October 2016. URL: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/3/24/lebanese-newspaper-to-close-after-four-decades-in-print>

*The New Arab*, Egyptian press union chief sentenced to two-year jail stint, 19, November 2016. Accessed 20 November 2016. URL: <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2016/11/19/egyptian-press-union-chief-sentenced-to-two-year-jail-stint>

Thomas Hanitzsch , Folker Hanusch , Claudia Mellado , Maria Anikina , Rosa Berganza , Incilay Cangoz, Mihai Coman , Basyouni Hamada , María Elena Hernández , Christopher D. Karadjov , Sonia Virginia Moreira , Peter G. Mwesige , Patrick Lee Plaisance , Zvi Reich , Josef Seethaler , Elizabeth A. Skewes , Dani Vardiansyah Noor & Edgar Kee Wang Yuen (2011) MAPPING JOURNALISM CULTURES ACROSS NATIONS, *Journalism Studies*, 12:3, 273-293

Thomas Hanitzsch and Claudia Mellado (2011), What Shapes the News around the World? How Journalists in Eighteen Countries Perceive Influences on Their Work*, International Journal of Press/Politics* 16(3) 404–426.

Wimmer, R., Dominick, J. (1997), *Mass media research: an introduction*, Belmont, California.