Constructive Journalism in the Egyptian Context: Roles and Challenges

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Abstract

The Arab Spring, with the political instability and economic crises it brought, had a significant impact on the nature of news in the Arab region. Instead of empowering citizens with information, the media have been controlled by political and commercial forces that left the public misinformed and disengaged, and the media's credibility undermined. Research suggests that constructive journalism, which focuses on progress and encourages engagement, improves the well-being of the society. Through conducting in-depth interviews with Egyptian journalists, this study aims at understanding the role of constructive journalism in transitional countries, the main challenges for implementation, and the practice of constructive journalism in a transitional system. The findings show that journalists' definition of constructive journalism does not differ from its core values, yet they believe that government power, commercial influence, and lack of audience trust are among the main challenges for practicing constructive journalism. They see that the utilization of the social media platforms is the best strategy to ensure the practice of constructive journalism within its socially responsible role.

Keywords: Constructive Journalism, Neo-authoritarian Media, Transitional Egyptian Media, Protocol News.

Constructive Journalism in the Egyptian Context: Roles and Challenges

Journalism has a profound impact on the development of societies, as it has the power to influence the public opinion and affect people's attitudes and behavior (Lewis, 2012; Ward, 2015; Peters & Broersma, 2017; Hautakangas & Ahva, 2018). Research found that during transitional periods people depend more on the media as a source of information and reassurance compared to periods of stability, and they turn to be heavy users of the media and seekers of information (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976; Loveless, 2008; Voltmer & Schmitt-Beck, 2006).

The Egyptian uprising in 2011 brought along major political shifts that had an impact on the media landscape and news consumption trends. After the ouster of former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, many private satellite TV stations were launched. In addition, most newspapers developed dynamic online news websites to feed audiences with instant news and the technological developments increased the use of the Internet in general and the social media platforms in particular (Abdulla, 2014; Webb, 2014). However, different political and economic pressures have been practiced over media organizations, which affected the coverage of news, undermined their credibility, and affected the quality of journalism. As a result, audiences' consumption for news dropped compared to the first years after the uprising (mideastmedia.org, 2017; Allam, 2018).

Unprofessional news coverage is caused either by the political practices of supporting a specific agenda of news or the economic pressures to shape message on the media and increase the profits of business tycoons (Issawi, 2015; Abdullah, 2014; Jebril & Loveless, 2017). Therefore, new concepts such as constructive journalism are introduced to hold on to the core of the social responsibility of journalism. This responsibility calls on the media to be an active participant in enhancing the societal well-being and aiming to bring back professional

coverage and better journalism (Glydensted, 2015; Mclntyre & Sobel, 2017; Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018).

Research on the role of constructive journalism has been mainly conducted in the developed, democratic countries, while fewer studies about this concept were conducted in less developed countries that are still suffering from various political and social struggles. The present study suggests that it is important to study the role of constructive journalism in areas other than the Western democracies. Based on the idea that constructive journalism is an attempt to move into the direction of quality journalism to enhance the society's well-being, this study explores the role that constructive journalism could perform in the Egyptian transitional context; it also looks at the obstacles that would challenge the constructive journalism practice and the best strategy for its implementation.

Egyptian Media in Transition

The Egyptian media is classified as a transitional media system because of the political changes that affected its landscape. However, it is difficult to predict the exact form and pace of such changes (Rugh, 2004; Khamis, 2011; Webb, 2014; Jebril & Matthew, 2017).

Although the Egyptian media landscape has witnessed many developments, it still holds many features of the neo-authoritarian system that it used to embrace under the former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak (Pioppi et.al, 2011). As Becker (2004) explained, neo-authoritarianism falls under the broad rubric of the authoritarianism concept where the media act as a vehicle that transports state messages and plans to the common people. Structural factors such as ownership concentration and the legal framework affect the classification of the media system as neo-authoritarian (Becker, 2004).

The shift that took place in the Egyptian media due to political changes and technological developments was not enough to grant them independence. As in other

transitional countries, governments will always try to regain their control over media performance (Abduall, 2014; Webb, 2014; Issawi, 2015).

On December 26, 2016, the Egyptian President ratified a new media law, creating three new bodies that would regulate the Egyptian print, broadcast and electronic media. This was in response to demands after the political uprising to eliminate the Ministry of Information and replace it with regulatory bodies.

The new law, which was approved by the Egyptian parliament, introduces three main articles in the Egyptian Constitution: Article 211 which provides for the establishment of the Supreme Council for Media Regulation replacing the Ministry of Information, Article 212 establishing The National Press Council (NPC), and Article 213 establishing the National Media Council (NMC).

Based on this, the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU), the official media apparatus, was converted in 2016 into a public service broadcaster namely The National Media Council (NMC), and the Supreme Council of the Press was replaced by the NPC to regulate the national print media sector.

Yet, this conversion is considered a theoretical one that exists just on paper only as the state radio and TV service still fall short in adopting the principles of public service broadcasting as well as the policies that enact the independence of the public media from government interference (Allam, 2017).

The national media still have limited independence and the government still maintains control through providing the main source of funding to this public service, which forces the national media to limit itself to the protocol news framework and function as a news reporter for state activities and ignore pressing domestic issues (Webb, 2014; Abdullah, 2014; El Shaer, 2015; Jebril and Loveless, 2017). The same is true for the print media which is facing a severe budget deficit and depend mainly on the government for financial support amounting to two

billion Egyptian pounds a year to cover running costs and pay salaries (Eissa, 2016). This gives the government controlling stocks which again influences the news agenda and keeps it within the protocol news framework.

Neo-authoritarian features can also be found in the private media landscape. Even though access to private ownership is allowed, messages are controlled. For example, although there has been an increase in the number of private satellite channels, licenses are still issued by the government, and frequencies are assigned through the General Authority for Investment (GAFI) which is affiliated to the Ministry of Investment. More private radio stations started to operate after 2011, but the criteria of obtaining a license to launch a radio station are not publicly known yet.

Under the neo-authoritarian media system, the state does not resort to pre-publication censorship, yet it can depend on broadly worded laws which criminalize journalists for threatening the country's national security and tarnishing the image of the head of state (Becker, 2004; Price and Krug, 2000). In Egypt, the new constitution guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the press. It also enables the launching of more private newspapers and websites as it eased the process of obtaining a license. However, the process is hurdled by laws issued more than 80 years ago, such as the Publication law enacted in 1936, and the Penal Code in 1937, among others.

Changes in the Egyptian Media Landscape

Digital media in Egypt has witnessed a remarkable increase in popularity in the past few years according to recent reports on the usage of social media platforms. It is worth mentioning that the rates of Internet users and mobile penetration have risen significantly since 2011. The Internet penetration in Egypt has reached up to 40 million people, the mobile broadband subscriptions also reached 31% of the population. Internet users through mobile phones are

estimated at 32 million subscribers. The families who have access to house Internet are 46.5 % of the population, while social media users (Facebook & Twitter) come to 30.5% of the population (mideastmedia.org, CAPMAS, 2017; ICT, 2017).

The average time spent online per week in Egypt has increased from 18 hours in 2013, and 23 hours in 2015 to 26 hours in 2017. Using smartphones to connect to the Internet is rising and computer use is declining. The usage of smartphones increased from 32% in 2015 to 47% in 2017 and the use of computers went down from 34% in 2015 to 20% in 2017.

The Egyptian national media nearly lost its credibility after 2011 and fell into oblivion because of its unbalanced coverage of the political happenings, ignoring pressing domestic issues that affect Egyptian citizens, and maintaining its protocol news framework where it highlights officials' activities (Khamis, 2011; Abdullah, 2015; Abdel Baky, Al Ahram weekly, 2015). Despite the introduction of the media regulatory body, the structure of the national media and the political pressure practiced from the government's side continued to influence the content and keep it in favor of its agenda (Allam, 2018).

On the other hand, the private media found an opportunity with the ouster of Mubarak to increase the ceiling of government criticism, yet with the introduction of many private media organizations and the absence of media regulations, many private organizations shifted their focus towards negative news in an attempt to attract a larger number of audiences and higher traffic (Jebril & Loveless, 2017; El Hadidi, 2018).

Many private media organizations were launched in the past few years, such as Cairo Broadcasting Corporation CBC (2011), Sada El Balad (2015), Al Nahar (2015), On E (2016), and DMC (2017) network, beside other satellite channels like Dream TV (2001), and El Mehwar (2002), Al Hayat TV (2008). Other newspapers were launched after 2011, such as *Al Youm7*, and *Al Watan* newspapers, in addition to news websites that belong to media networks, such as *Mobtada.com*, *Sada El balad*, and *Masrawy*. Radio stations were launched as well later

such as Radio 9090 (2011), Radio NRJ and Radio DRN (2017), in addition to Negoum FM and Nile FM in 2003.

Each of these private media organizations was owned by individual businessmen until late 2017, when transfer of ownership to some private media organizations took place through two financial investment companies: Eagle Capital and Falcon Company that control now most private media outlets. Yet, news coverage remains the same: some political criticism is tolerated, while remaining keen on proving their loyalty to the regime to protect their business interests. Other private media outlets go to extreme lengths to provide sensational coverage to attract high viewership and, consequently, advertisers (Saeed, Personal Interview, 2017; afte,2018;). This unprofessional coverage has led to a credibility crisis, which affected news consumption trends (mideastmedia.org, 2017; Mostafa, 2018).

In this unrealistic representation of news in Egypt, the tenets of constructive journalism foreshadow workable solutions. In a country with a historical and social background such as that of Egypt, it is useful to explore the role of constructive journalism as a shift towards a higher quality and responsible journalism.

Role of Constructive Journalism in Transitional Periods

Scholars criticized the two most prevalent types of journalism in the Egyptian media. Taylor (2008) said that protocol news compromises media professionalism as it is merely a regurgitation of politicians' speeches and activities without in-depth reporting or interpretation. On the other hand, Edgerly (2015) and Jackson (2016) found that the excessive coverage and the redundancy of negative news push audiences to avoid such news that paints an inaccurate image of reality and perhaps lead to desensitizing the public (Lewis and Rowe, 1994).

Since audiences depend on the media for understanding the news, there is a direct relation between what is broadcast on the media and audiences' behavior (Makrem, 2003; Zagheeb, 2006), with an indication that biased stories lead to public confusion (Farag, 2006). Al Dagher (2012) suggested in his study on Arab media that the media should raise citizens' awareness and establish values and principles that lead to social building and encourage interaction with issues that are related to the current issues.

Haagerup explained that in times of crises or instability it is important to offer meaningful news stories from a perspective that gives alternatives and broadens the scope of understanding. Constructive journalism aims to provide a balanced story, not promote specific agendas or cross the line between journalism and politics. It provides unbiased coverage instead of supporting governments, officials or organizations. It does not focus on scandals or sensational topics, nor does it try to polarize audiences. Constructive journalism puts the news in an appropriate context that could benefit the public and facilitate a well-informed debate about solutions (Haagerup, 2014).

Recent studies found that constructive journalism has a role in regaining audiences' engagement, promoting social and economic development, promoting social stability and unity (McIntyre & Sobel, 2017; Rotmeijer, 2018; Kovacevic & Perisin, 2018), and restoring the core values of journalism through contextual reporting, which is also part of the socially responsible role of the media. (Haagerup, 2014; Mclntyre & Gyldensted, 2017).

Other scholars have defined the practice of constructive journalism as news that improves, enhances, builds something up and energizes audiences, which helps them to be more positive towards their society (Gyldensted, 2011), and increases their level of engagement (Kinnick, Krugman and Cameron 1996; McIntyre & Sobel, 2014).

Shocking news must be reported if journalists are to fulfill their core functions of alerting the public to potential threats and serving as a watchdog of the government. However, given that the media play a key role in the well-being of both individuals and their societies at large, scholars argue that the negativity and conflict in the news can be excessive and counterproductive which can ultimately lead to desensitization. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that the reputation of the media has been declining (Pew Research Center, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2012)

Considering the recent findings of the impact of constructive journalism in transitional countries, and the vital role of media during transitional periods, it is important to examine the possible role of and challenges for constructive journalism within the Egyptian transitional context given the political, economic and media changes, and to propose the best strategy to implement the practice of constructive journalism. It is with this purpose that interviews were conducted with fourteen Egyptian journalists about this topic.

Method

The present researcher conducted multiple semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather qualitative data that reflect the interviewees' insights on the role of constructive journalism in the socio-political and economic context of Egypt after the 2011 uprising. Each interviewee answered to both a core set of pre-determined, structured questions and follow-up impromptu questions based on her/his responses and experiences. A thematic analysis was employed to code the interviewees' answers and have a proper pattern of analysis.

A purposive snowball sampling technique was adopted, and interviews were scheduled based on the time suggested by the interviewees. Fourteen journalists were interviewed over a period of three months in summer and fall of 2017. Unlike the larger samples used in quantitative survey studies, this study used a qualitative method for an in-depth understanding through a purposive sample of journalists and media professionals. Interviews were divided

between state owned and private media to gain insight about their interpretations of constructive journalism.

Table 1

Distribution of the Interviewees According to Occupation and Type of Media Organization

Interview	Occupation	Outlet	Organization Type
1	Former Editor in Chief	Print	Government-run
2	Digital Media Manager	Print+ Online	Private
3	Senior News Manager	Print+ Online	Private
4	Former Editor in Chief	Print + Online	Government-run
5	Editor in Chief/Content Manager	Print+ Online/ TV	Private
6	Editor in Chief	Print	Government-run
7	News Editor	TV	Private
8	News Producer	TV	Government-run
9	Editor in Chief	Online News Website	Private
10	Reporter	Print+ Online	Private
11	News Producer	TV	Government-run
12	News Editor	TV	Private
13	Senior News Producer	Print+ Online	Private
14	Executive Manager+ Journalist	Print+ Online	Private

All interviewees have more than 15 years of experience in either government-run media and or private media. This helped in obtaining an insightful vision about media performance and journalism quality before and after the political uprising of 2011. Most of the interviewees have experience in the different fields of journalism: print, broadcast and digital. Interviews were conducted either by phone or face-to-face. Only two interviews were conducted by email. There was no limit set to the number of the interviews, yet interviews continued until data started to be repetitive and could be integrated and categorized.

Journalists were introduced to the concept and definition of constructive journalism and its origins and they were then asked a range of questions that pertained to the three major research questions of the present study: the role of constructive journalism in Egypt, the main obstacles that would challenge the adaption, and the best framework to implement constructive journalism.

Research questions

RQ1: What is the role of constructive journalism in the ongoing transitional period in Egypt?

RQ2: What are the factors that may challenge the adoption of constructive journalism in the current Egyptian transitional period?

RQ3: How could journalists practice constructive journalism in Egypt?

Findings

RQ1: Role of Constructive Journalism in Transitional Period

The first research question centers on the role that constructive journalism could have during transitional periods, given the context of the Egyptian media landscape. The roles identified by the interviewed journalists fall mainly within the realm and scope of social responsibility.

Promoting developmental behavior and societal well-being

Constructive journalism in Egyptian media organizations can have a role in promoting citizens'

developmental behavior. According to interviewee 1, a former CEO of a government-run, "Part

of the role of constructive journalism during transitional times and difficult economic periods

is to strengthen the values of work and production and encourage the values of wise

consumption."

This interviewee elaborated that the media could be a source of enlightenment at the

same time when it covers domestic concerns, or it could be a source of enlightenment through

offering solutions that would enhance the well-being of the society. For example, while

covering the water shortage crisis in Egypt, the media can teach farmers about modern farming

and irrigation methods that would help them in getting better quality of crops and lowering

their levels of water consumption. Teaching a new method/idea or promoting a positive

behavior is part of being constructive, which enhances the well-being of the citizens and the

society. This kind of journalism is beneficial, compared to the press that focuses on sad tidings

and spread worries among the citizens.

Journalist 3, a senior news manager for a private newspaper, seconded the above

opinion and added that focusing only on crisis and painting a dark picture without offering

solutions or pinpointing opportunities leads to audience frustration and disengagement instead

of being part of developing their societies.

This role that constructive journalism could perform in Egypt matches with

Gyldensted's (2011) definition for constructive news, which highlights a socially responsible

role in improving the well-being of the society.

Have a core mandate that focuses primarily on serving the public interest

One of the main roles identified by the interviewees is serving the public interest. It is

interpreted from the interviewees that serving public's interest means empowering audiences

with information.

Journalist 5, an editor-in-chief of a daily, private newspaper and content manager of a private satellite TV channel identified the role of constructive journalism according to "serving the public's interest through giving them information beyond the traditional news reporting. It is a purposeful kind of press where goals cannot contradict the professional standards of journalism." As an example, he explained that Egyptian journalists have a responsibility during this period not only to report on current issues, but also to explain how these news stories would have an impact on the public. specifically, when the media report about the inauguration of the electric power plants, which are said to be ranked the second largest worldwide, they should explain how these plants will affect the economy, and how they might open opportunities for employment. Yet, what is happening now in magnifying the importance of the piece of news or throw it with heavy criticism does not help the audience and leads to disinterest

Journalist 2, a digital content manager of a private newspaper, said that the social, economic and political environment in Egypt is unlike that in Denmark where constructive journalism was developed. Egypt is facing many challenges, such as high inflation rate, high unemployment rate, etc. Unprofessional coverage leads to confused views, in addition to the spread of the fake news phenomena that makes the situation worse. Thus, reporting on developmental projects should be the beginning and not the end of a story because keeping audiences updated with progress, facts and information integrates them into the society.

This role enforces the idea of socially responsible reporting that is a main feature of constructive journalism and resonates with the idea of Peters and Broersma (2017), and Hautakangas and Ahva (2018) that journalism should not be only a distant observer, but should have also a role in social development through contextual reporting that serves audiences and societies.

Having Engaged Audience

The interviewees generally agree that the unprofessional coverage of many media organizations has negatively affected the reputation and credibility of the media industry. Journalist 11, a news producer at a government-run TV channel, said:

> No one can overlook the amount of violations that happened in the past few years in many of the news coverage; and audiences have become very smart in understanding the intention of the message, and that is why their trust in these outlets has been affected and pushed them to migrate to other platforms.

> Journalist 2, digital media manager at a daily private newspaper, said that constructive journalism can fix the relationship between audience and media organizations. He said:

> I believe that constructive journalism is the only way to regain the audience back to the media. He referred to one of the initiatives that was done by an independent newspaper in June 2017, in collaboration with 50 newspapers worldwide. The issue focused on some problems in the Egyptian society, such as education in rural areas, green environment, renewing automobile exhaust, new methods of irrigation, and provided solutions that based from experiences from countries that share similar economic and social circumstances. We found high interactivity, and people started to send emails and interact through writing suggestions on our social media accounts.

This confirms the findings of Andresen et. al (2017), Perisin & Petra (2018) who found the constructive journalism have a responsibility towards providing stories that help and engage audience.

RQ2: Challenges of Implementing Constructive Journalism in Egypt

After defining the role of constructive journalism in transitional countries, the second research question aimed to identify the challenges that would stand against the adoption of constructive journalism in the current Egyptian transitional period. Three main predictors came out from the interviews: Government power, Commercial Pressure, and lack of audience trust.

Government Power

Journalists from the national and the private media organizations argued that remnants of the authoritarian system in Egypt can be challenging to the practice of constructive journalism.

Journalist 4, a former editor in chief of a government-run newspaper, said that the organizational structure of the national media enforces a vertical type of communication inside the news room as the directions come from the top-level (editor-in-chief) to the middle and lower managerial levels in a strict way to make sure that the news promotes the national policies of the government. He added that this type of vertical communication enforces a frame of protocol news that focuses more on officials and their activities, which will challenge the constructive journalism approaches.

However, it is worth mentioning that some journalists see a chance through social media platforms where people share their concerns which can challenge such vertical communication and influence the mainstream media's news agenda.

Journalist 12, a senior news editor at a private TV channel, referred to the government power not only on national media organizations but also on the private ones, which makes them practice self-censorship as they become meticulous about the wording of the news to avoid being exposed to any kind of penalties. He mentioned a recent incident when a story was published by *Al-MasryAl-Youm, a private newspaper,* during their coverage of the presidential elections when one of the headlines read "Presidency is mobilizing citizens to participate in the elections." The newspaper was accused of being unprofessional and that the headlines doubt the integrity of the elections process. The newspaper editor in chief was called for questioning and a fine of LE 150,000 was imposed. The interviewee said that such acts make everyone practice self-censorship as he or she will think twice before criticizing or talking about negatives, and this might challenge the practice of constructive journalism where a journalist is to cover the story with its positives and negatives.

He elaborated that the current government practices over the content affect the quality of journalism and affect the media's credibility.

Commercial Pressure

Journalists believe that the news coverage of the private media organizations is highly influenced by the advertisements' revenue because it is their only source of funding, which most of the time keeps it away from professional coverage and accordingly challenge the idea of constructive journalism.

Journalist 4, a former editor in chief at a government-run newspaper, discussed the fierce competition between the private media entities that depend mainly on advertisements for revenue. This leads some organizations to provide sensational coverage to attract audiences and advertisers. As an example, he mentioned an incident where a talk show presenter on a private satellite channel focused on the slum problem in Egypt for two hours, ignoring completely the recent developments that were made in restructuring some slum areas. He said:

> Covering people's sufferings and problems is one aspect of the story, however if the negative coverage went on for two hours without offering solutions or referring to the solutions that are taking place, then it is providing an imbalanced story for the sake of commercial benefit and I can guarantee that people will become bored and desensitized by time because they don't see hope.

This resonates with previous research that found that the excessive coverage of negative news makes people lose interest and become disengaged. (Mclntyre & Sobel, 2014; Edgerly, 2015; Jackson 2016).

Journalist 12, a news editor at a private satellite TV channel, who said that the pessimistic picture that is drawn by many private organizations that are running after commercial gains, will lead to audiences' disappointment and disengagement which challenge

one of the main functions of constructive journalism which is engaging audiences in the well-being of the society.

Lack of Audience Trust

Although most of the interviewees believe that constructive journalism will have a role in regaining audience engagement, they believe also that it will take time because of the media's credibility that was deeply affected in the past few years.

Journalists 7, a news editor at a private satellite TV channel said that audiences are the victims of unprofessional coverage that leads to dissatisfaction with the quality of news. She said that the flaws in the news coverage range from relying on anonymous sources and reporting unbalanced stories, to providing opinionated news. According to her, this shaken trust will require patience and efforts to regain the audiences' trust back.

Most of the interviewees said that intensive training are required while introducing the concept of constructive journalism not to be perceived as another kind of propaganda.

RQ3: Practicing Constructive Journalism in Transitional Periods: The Utilization of Social Media Platforms

Social media is widely popular in Arab countries, with the number of users growing exponentially every year (Mideast media, 2017). Amidst the current challenges that the mainstream media face, journalists suggest that constructive journalism can be effectively implemented in Egypt through the utilization of the high usage of social media platforms and through the integration of traditional media with social media to have a constructive-interactive communication model that would guarantee audiences'' engagement and promote society's well-being. One of the private media journalists noted:

> I believe that both content and social are important, yet we can get best results when we combine them. Good content helps in building audience through social media platforms, and a good social media strategy can enhance audiences' level of engagement.

The proposed strategy of providing constructive news through the integration of traditional media with social media platforms is a key feature to guarantee audiences' engagement and regain trust through creating three main tactics: engaging content, horizontal communication, and audience segmentation.

Engaging Content

The first step is creating content on social media platforms that would drive traffic. In light of the huge popularity of social media, and the increase in the number of users and their participation in the process of transmitting messages about various political, social, and economic concerns, it makes sense for news outlets to create social media accounts to attract a high number of followers.

A national media journalist noted that having a social media presence to get a bigger outreach is only the first step; mainstream media should be integrated with their social media platforms. He suggested the following:

> Traditional media need to build strong social media platforms and maintain a strong presence. Constructive journalism is not only about creating and posting content on social media platforms, or about promoting content and driving traffic. We don't want people who would land on the page, read content and log out, we need to provide engaging, trustworthy content which audiences can interact with.

This idea was reinforced by a private media journalist who said that social media has the power to provide the overall picture as it combines problems, solutions and ideas.

Horizontal Communication

Journalists agree that social media is a golden opportunity for mainstream media as it will disturb the vertical model practiced inside several newsrooms. Voices of audiences can be heard through analyzing their feedback and hearing their proposals in solving society's problems and implementing the suitable one.

Journalist 9, an editor-in-chief of a news website, said that audiences' reactions to social media are very powerful. She referred to a story that took place on a satellite TV channel when the anchor leaked photos of her interviewee who was sexually harassed. Such an action arouses dissatisfaction among the audiences who tend to share their dissatisfaction on their social media platforms. This led the CEO of that channel to ban the program for one month. He said that through the social media, audiences were able to share their opinions and open a two-way communication channel, which enables them to be integrated into the mass communication process. Accordingly, the idea of constructive journalism gets reinforced.

Audience Segmentation

The third feature that was pointed out by the interviewees is the targeting and segmenting technique to increase audience engagement with the content to in order to increase interactivity, build trust, and achieve community growth. The social media platforms of the mainstream media should adopt the latest audience analytical tools in order to study their behavior, comments, and interests and start creating stories that tackle their concerns.

This proposed strategy enforces audiences' integration and considers it essential in regaining their trust and implementing a successful constructive journalism; it is based on the idea of open channels with citizens, media, and the different institutions for the sake of society's development.

Discussion

This study showed that journalists believe in the necessity of implementing constructive journalism in the Egyptian media as most of the issues that challenge journalism in Egypt, in terms of unprofessional coverage and audience migration, are issues that constructive journalism is concerned with.

Journalists believe that constructive journalism is important in the current transitional periods in order to promote developmental behavior, serve public's interest, and increase

audience engagement, yet it is constrained by the different kinds of control that are still practiced over the content, in addition to the lack of audiences' trust.

Through the in-depth interviews conducted, it was evident that journalists from both the government-run and the private media organizations believe in the role that constructive journalism could perform in the current transitional period, especially in fostering development. However, journalists from the private sector focuse more on audiences' engagement and interactivity.

Journalists see that the ideas of constructive journalism as an opportunity to improve the quality of journalism, yet the specific context in which the Egyptian media function demands a unique strategy for implementation. Journalists believe that constructive journalism will be effective when it is implemented through the utilization of the social media platforms and their high number of users. They believe that audience interaction through the integration of traditional and social media platforms will guarantee direct feedback from the audience and will avoid the misusage of the term constructive.

The adoption of the proposed strategy will take different pace in different media platforms depending on the readiness of each media organizations to have an actual interactive presence on the social media platforms.

There is no one perfect way to implement the proposed strategy in all newsrooms, yet it requires a transformation in the methods of news gathering, planning, and production, and it requires the exploration of the potential of introducing constructive ideas with a strategy that would fit the newsroom culture and communication structure.

Although one of the limitations of this research is being based only on interviews, it is an important starting point for further research on constructive journalism in Egypt and similar Arab countries that share similar media and political systems.

The challenges that the Egyptian media system faces in its transitional period call for a "constructive-interactive" model of journalism that responds to the current social and political milieu. Such a model would have to be socially responsible by encouraging communication between decision makers and the people, bringing communities together and improving the media's performance rather than simply following traditional structures and commercial, business models.

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