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The influence of Arabic media coverage on the formation of public opinion

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the media content of Syrian TV channels which support and against the Syrian regime in addition to the political opinion of viewers who watch such channels via the descriptive research methodology. The results showed there is no statistical significance in forming the political opinion about the Syrian crisis due to the demographic as well as personal variables. In conclusion, frequent viewers, who believe that such channel programs convey valid different crisis details, are influenced by watching such TV channels clearly.

Keywords: Media, Coverage, Syrian, Crisis, Issues.

La influencia de la cobertura mediática árabe en la formación de la opinión pública

Resumen

El propósito de este estudio fue identificar el contenido de los medios de los canales de televisión sirios que apoyan y en contra del régimen sirio, además de la opinión política de los televidentes que ven dichos canales a través de la metodología de investigación descriptiva. Los resultados mostraron que no hay significación estadística en la formación de la opinión política sobre la crisis siria debido a las variables demográficas y personales. En conclusión, los

espectadores frecuentes, que creen que tales programas de canal transmiten detalles válidos de crisis diferentes, se ven influenciados por ver claramente dichos canales de televisión.

Palabras clave: Medios, cobertura, sirio, crisis, problemas.

1. INTRODUCTION

The spark of revolts which have become known as the Arab Spring, which initially emerged from Tunisia then Egypt considered the most famous event of the century, extended its repercussions that included various Arab countries such as Libya, Yemen and Syria which witnesses the largest political abortion in the region and the social protest which was launched in the first months of the year 2010, and continued strongly throughout the year, behind endless the victims, the dilemma and questions (KASHGARI, 2013).

The Arab Spring has surprised many, the extension of its roots of the fertile ground of resisting corruption, injustice and persecution, where the past is pivotal and important for many countries, in particular from the Arab Spring, has brought a strong resistance by men, women, and children of this wave of change, where the transformed these uprisings of dialog between the state and its people (AL-NATOUR, 2013 ; SHABBIR, ABBAS, AMAN, & ALI, 2019).

It was not anticipated when the first sparks of acts of change in Tunisia and Egypt, to get all that happened, the way it happened, and if it is certain that the revolutionary act was in some of its assumptions is

spontaneous, it is also certain that it is spontaneous did not exceed the moment the Spark, as soon filled with public squares in cities, crowds of demonstrators of the proponents of the departure of the tyrants, each carrying what attitudes and positions within society (CORM, 2011).

The media and social networking sites have played an important role in the political events against the regimes and governments, especially in the Arab region, which appeared in the Arab Spring starting from Tunisia when pictures spread and news about Bouazizi, who burned himself in protest against what he suffered by the police, through what happened in Egypt till spreading the news about the Assad forces killed five protesters in Daraa city (AHMAD & HAMASAEED, 2014).

Insight of the size of the Syrian crisis, which exceeded all the crises occurred in the Arab world during the Arab Spring, whence the time period and the size of the victims and destruction, it has gained greater media coverage, whether Arab or international, and the realignment of some active states supporting the Syrian regime against other states opposed to it (QADDOURA, 2015). |This led to the emergence of media with-and-against of the regime, in addition to a media war that is not less contemptuous than the actual war on the ground. The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1)　　　Identify the media content of the supporting Syrian regime channels and channels against.

2)   Identify the differences in political opinion to those who follow the pro-Syrian regime channels and channels against the Syrian crisis.

3)   Identify the impact of each of the pro-Syrian regime channels and channels against the formation of political opinion on the Syrian crisis.

The hypotheses of the study:

The first hypothesis is:

There is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the extent of follow-up to the news channels and the formation of political opinion on the Syrian crisis.

The second hypothesis:

There is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientation of the media channel and the political position toward the Syrian crisis.

• There is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientations of the Orient Channel and the political position toward the Syrian crisis.

• There is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientations of Al Alam the World Channel political position on the Syrian crisis.

The third assumption:

There is no statistically significant difference in the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the formation of political opinion on the

Syrian crisis due to the recipient demographic and personal variables (age, sex, educational level) (MAHMOUD, 2013).

2. METHODOLOGY

The study follows the descriptive research methodology, depending on a questionnaire tool that will be directed to the study channels' followers. Analyzing all collected data through answering the questionnaires, and using the appropriate statistical methods to be engaged in the midst of the Syrian crisis media coverage and their impact on the formation of the political situation (AL-SHARAFI, 2012).

The study society includes all Orient channel's and Al Alam channel electronically followers. Since the size of the study society is unlimited and uncountable, the researcher adopted the electronic distribution of the study tool for the two subjected channels followers (AL LABBAN & IBRAHIM, 2015).

The study tool includes two sections as follows:

The first section includes the characteristics of the study sample.

The second section includes information about the extent of following up on the channels supporting and opposing the Syrian regime. It also deals with the political opinion towards the Syrian issue and explores whether that opinion was influenced by the nature of the political orientation of the channel that is followed up.

Likert Scale will be used to determine the weight questionnaire's paragraphs as follows: (Strongly agree = five degrees), (Agree = four degrees), (Not sure = three degrees), (Disagree = two scores), (Strongly disagree = one degree), where there will be the adoption of the following scaling in assessing the level of the study sample member's evaluation towards of the study paragraphs.

The Arithmetic Average	The Agreement Degree
From 1.00 - less than 2.334	Low Degree
From 2.334 - less than 2.667	Medium Degree
From 2.667 – less than 5.00	High Degree

Statistical Methods:

The program will rely on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The test will be the following:

- The Descriptive Statistics Measures: to describe the characteristics of the study sample, and answer their questions.

- T-test: and Regression test.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aimed to identify the media coverage of the Syrian crisis (State media, opposition media) and its impact on the formation of the political position of the followers - practical study (Orient Channel and Al Alam the World Channel). In order to reach this goal,

the questionnaire has been developed to be applied electronically in the study sample. The total number of received questionnaire forms is (160) and the invalid for Analysis forms are (7), therefore, the number of valid questionnaires is (153) after unloading. Table (1) summarizes the distribution of members of the sample study, according to the variables.

Table 1: Summary of the sample size

The sample	No of distributed questionnaires	No of invalid for analysis questionnaires	The distributed questionnaire	Valid Questionnaire Percentage
The followers of the two channels	160	7	153	95.6%

Study Reliability Test Tool: The meaning of the stability of the study tool is the stability of the results, how far is compatible/consistent with the questionnaire results if applied more than once in similar circumstances. The internal consistency of Cronbach's Alpha has been used to measures the extent of consistency in the respondents' answers to all the questions on the scale. The alpha could be interpreted as the coefficient of internal consistency between the answers. Its high value indicates the degree of high stability,

ranging from (0 and 1) and the value will be acceptable at (60%) and above, where the value of the test (84.9%), which confirms the validity and the significance of the questionnaire to test the hypotheses (ABU ZAID, 2012).

The Description of the study sample characteristics:

1) The Description of the study sample characteristics:

The study dealt with a range of demographic variables for the study sample towards (sex, age, qualification) derived from the information contained in the questionnaire based on the description of the study sample, as follows:

Table 2: The Study Sample Description According to the Demographic Variables of the Study Members

The variable	The level/Category	The number	The Percentage %
Sex	He said	63	41.2
	Female	90	58.8
	The total	153	100.0
Age	21- 30 years.	60	39.2
	31- 40 Years	45	29.4
	41- 50 Years	36	23.5
	51 years of prints	12	7.8
	The total	153	100.0
Qualification	What is the secondary school without	12	7.8
	Degree	118	77.1
	Master	17	11.1
	Ph.D.	6	3.9

The variable	The level/Category	The number	The Percentage %
	The total	153	100.0

Analyzing the views of the study sample to understand the phrases of the Syrian crisis media coverage and their impact on the formation of the political position of the watcher's practical study, where calculating the mathematical averages and the standard deviations of each paragraph of the study, the results were as follows:

Table 3: The Mathematical Averages and the Standard Deviations of Responses of the Sample Study On the Followers of the Studied Channels

Paragraph No.	Paragraph	The mathematical average*	The Standard Deviation	The evaluation degree
1	Orient Channel	3.647	1.019	High
2	Al Alam The World Channel	3.882	0.678	High

It is noted in Table (3) that the mathematical average of responses of the study sample on the follow-up of the Orient channel amounted to (3.647) the standard deviation was (0.907), and the evaluation degree was high. The mathematical average of the responses of the study sample on the followers of Al Alam channel

reached (3.882) and its standard deviation was (0.678), and the evaluation degree was high.

Table 4: The Mathematical Averages and the Standard Deviations of Responses of the Sample Study towards creating knowledge

Paragraph No.	Paragraph	The mathematical average*	The Standard Deviation	The evaluation degree
3	The news channel that I follow is matching with my thoughts and political convictions.	3.588	0.334	High
4	I follow the news channel which is compatible with my political views.	3.529	0.980	High
5	I avoid following-up on the news channel, which is not compatible with my political views.	3.588	1.036	High
6	The news channels contribute to influencing public opinion.	4,294 at	0.668	High

7	The news channels contribute to providing the audience with details of the various events.	3.882	0.320	High
8	The news channels guide the public opinion to the vague truth in the news media.	3.688	0.986	High
9	The news channels contribute to clarifying the media site's messages and their compatibility with the actual.	3.647	0.970	High
10	The news channels contribute to formatting a correct public opinion.	3.588	0.847	High
11	The news channels contribute to clarifying the misinformation in order to form a definite public opinion.	Reached 3.529	1.225	High
The average axis		3.704	0.933	High

* The Lowest degree is (1) & the maximum degree is (5)

It is noted in Table (4) that the mathematical average of the sample study responses on the Axis of (3.704) and the standard deviation was (0.933), and the evaluation degree was high, which indicates that the members of the study sample see that those channels are working extensively on formatting public opinion.

Table 5: The Mathematical Averages and the Standard Deviations of Responses of the Sample Study towards the situation of the Syrian crisis

Paragraph No.	Paragraph	Orient		Al Alam	
		The mathematical average*	The Standard Deviation	The arithmetic average*	The Standard Deviation
12	The Syrian crisis started as the right revolution to achieve the rights of the Syrian citizen.	3.353	0.686	3.136	0.909
13	The Syrian regime violently treated in with the	3.471	1.353	2.136	0.320

	peaceful political opposition at the beginning of the crisis.				
14	The Syrian army worked on using weapons against the opposition without good reason.	3.529	1.112	2,500	0.878
15	The Syrian regime defends the homeland against terrorism.	2.922	0.334	3.818	0.795
16	The Syrian regime is exposed to cosmic conspiracy because of its attitudes supporting Arab	2.843	1.020	3.727	0.640

issues.				

* The Lowest degree is (1) & the maximum degree is (5)

The results indicate that there is a difference in the point of view of the members of the study sample on the Syrian crisis between the opposition channel watchers, the pro-Syrian regime channels.

Hypothesis testing:

The first hypothesis:

Ho1: There is no statistically significant relationship on the level indication ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the extent of follow up news channels and political opinion formation towards the Syrian crisis. For testing the study hypothesis, the searcher performed regression testing to demonstrate a statistically significant relationship on the level indication ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the extent of follow up news channels and political opinion formation towards the Syrian crisis at the level of significance ($\alpha \geq 0.05$).

Table 6: Model summary table (Model Summary) b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.919a	.845	.844	.32894

a. Predictors: (Constant), Following1

It is shown in table (6) that the value of the correlation coefficient between the independent variable and dependent variable as its value (.

919), as described and limited by selection coefficient (2R) worth (.
845), and the independent variables were able to explain (84.5%) Of
changes in the dependent variable and the rest is attributable to other
factors.

Testing the total moral of the multiple regression model:

Table (22) shows the results of the variance analysis ANOVA
for testing the regression of the model moral:

Table 7: The results of the analysis of variance b

Model		Variance Source	Total Squares	Degree Of Freedom	F	Significance Level
	Regression	89.307	1	89.307	825.356	.000b
1	Residual	16.339	151	.108		
	Total	105.645	152			

a. Dependent Variable: Formation
b. Predictors: (Constant), Following1

Table (7) clarified the variance analysis that aims to identify the
explanatory force of the independent variable model for the follow-up
to the news channels and the dependent variable of the political
opinion formation on the Syrian crisis through statistical data (F). The
hypotheses were formulated as follows:

As shown in table (7), it is clear there is high morale to test (F)
Estimated (825.356) at a level of significance estimated (Sig = 0.000)
and less than the level of significance ($0.05 \leq \alpha$), thus the regression

model is suitable to measure the causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

The second hypothesis:

There is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientation of the media channel and the political position towards the Syrian crisis.

For testing the study hypothesis, a multiple regression testing was carried out to demonstrate the existence of a statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientation of the media channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis, at the level of significance of $0.05 \geq (\alpha)$.

Table 8: Model Summary b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.343a	.118	.106	.33281

a. Predictors: (Constant),Al Alma Channel & Orient Channel

Table (8) shows that the value of the correlation coefficient between the independent and dependent variables at a value of (0.343), as shown in the parameter value specifically identifies with (R^2) Value (0.118), therefore, the independent variables were able to explain (11.8%) of the changes in the dependent variable.

Testing the total moral of the multiple regression model:

Table (9) shows the results of the variance analysis ANOVA regression model moral test:

Table 9: The results of the variance analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.219	2	1.110	10.019	.000b
	Residual	16.614	150	.111		
	Total	18.833	152			

a. Dependent Variable: The opinion
b. Predictors: (Constant), Al Alma Channel & Orient Channel

Table (9) shows the variance analysis which aims to identify the explanatory force of the model of the political orientation and media channel (supporting and against the regime) and the political position on the Syrian crisis through statistical data (F).

As illustrated in table (9), it is clear there is high morale to test (F) estimated (10.019) at the level of significance (Sig = 0.000) less than the level of significance (0.05 ≤ α), thus the regression model is suitable to measure the causal relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

According to the aforementioned, the zero hypotheses are rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Subsidiary hypotheses:

• No statistically significant relationship to the level of significance (α≤0.05) between the political orientation of Orient channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis.

• No statistically significant relationship to the level of significance (α≤0.05) between the political orientation of Al Alam channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis.

Testing the moral equivalent transactions multiple regression:

Table (10) shows the values of the regression parameters to estimations and statistical tests as shown in the following:

Table 10: Table of transactions (Coefficient) [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.946	.158		18.644	.000
	Orient Channel	.164	.037	.423	4.385	.000
	Al Alam (The world) Channel	-.097-	.050	-.187-	-1.944-	.054

a. Dependent Variable: the opinion

• The first sub-hypothesis: there is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientation of the Orient channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis.

It is clear from the table (10) that the value (T) estimated (4.385). It is the highest of the tabular trend at the level of the moral value (0.000), which is less than the specified value (0.05 $\geq \alpha$). Therefore, it is accepted the alternative hypothesis while rejected the zero. Therefore, there is a statistically significant relationship to the level of significance (A$\leq$0.05) between the political orientation of the Orient channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis.

• The second sub-hypothesis: there is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the political orientation of Al Alam (the world) channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis.

It is clear from the table (10) that the value (t) estimated (1.944), which is less than the tabular value when the moral level (0.091), and higher than the specified value ($0.05 \leq \alpha$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is rejected while the zero is accepted. Therefore, there is no statistically significant relationship to the level of significance ($A \leq 0.05$) between the political orientation of Al Alam (the world) channel and the political position on the Syrian crisis.

The third hypothesis

Ho: there are no statistically significant differences in the level of significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$) in the formation of political opinion on the Syrian crisis due to the respondent's demographic and personal variables (age, sex, qualification).

To test the hypothesis, One Way ANOVA was carried out to learn whether there were statistically significant differences in the formation of political opinion on the Syrian crisis to the respondent's demographic and personal variables (age, sex, qualification), to the level of statistical significance ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), and the following table No. (11) Shows the test results:

Table 11: One Way ANOVA

The Variable		Total Of The Squares	The Freedom Degree	Squares Rate	F	Level Of Significance
Sex	Between Squares	9	3.410	.379	1.610	.118
	Inside Squares	143	33.649	.235		
	Total	152	37.059			
Age	Between Squares	9	5.613	.624	.644	.757
	Inside Squares	143	138.387	.968		
	Total	152	144.000			
Qualification	Between Squares	9	1.887	.210	.609	.788
	Inside Squares	143	49.224	.344		
	Total	152	51.111			
	Inside Squares	9	3.410	.379		
	Total	1 43	3 3.649			

Table (11) points to the absence of statistically significant differences in the political opinion formation on the Syrian crisis due to the respondent's demographic and personal variables (age, sex, qualification), where the value of F is less than its tabular trend value

(1.5173), and the level of statistical significance is higher than the specified value (0.05).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The researcher believes that this difference in opinion toward the Syrian crisis is due to the fact that the study was on the channel watchers/followers through the Internet where the electronic follow-up is more effective than of the follow-up TV shows on the opinion formation, due to the available electronically interactivity which allows for the follower to receive and send, which contributes to learning the views of many observers who normally meet their views with the views of the channel they are following.

The researcher also recommends working on influencing the public opinion through electronic news sites to reduce the problems of the Arab States, and among the most important are the terrorism and the sectarian conflict, which spread in the Arab communities; and is reflected remarkably in electronic interaction in the news websites.

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