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Media Framing and Financial Journalism in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of Capital Market Coverage Across Newspaper Types

Charles Okonji[1,2], Department of Mass Communication, Anchor University, Lagos, Nigeria
Oluwole Alabi, Department of Media Studies, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, Nigeria

Abstract

Financial journalism plays a critical role in shaping public understanding of economic realities and investor confidence. However, the framing of capital market news in Nigeria remains underexplored, particularly in the decade following the global financial crisis. This study examines how selected Nigerian newspapers reported and framed issues relating to the capital market between 2011 and 2021. Anchored on Framing Theory, the study adopted a mixed-method content analysis of 1,181 capital market stories drawn from six national newspapers—*The Guardian, The Punch, This Day, The Nation, Business Day,* and *Vanguard*. Quantitative analysis assessed the extent and structure of coverage, while qualitative thematic analysis examined dominant frames and narratives. The findings revealed varied levels of coverage, with *Business Day* and *This Day* showing the highest concentration of capital market stories. General-interest newspapers relied largely on episodic framing, whereas business-focused newspapers demonstrated more analytical depth. Thematic analysis identified dominant frames around market performance, regulatory interventions, and investment prospects, with minimal emphasis on transparency and accountability. The study concludes that financial journalism in Nigeria tends to privilege elite economic narratives while underrepresenting critical perspectives. It recommends enhanced professional training, source diversity, and accountability-oriented reporting to strengthen the interpretive quality and democratic role of financial news.

Keywords: Capital market reporting, financial journalism, Framing Theory, media framing, Nigerian newspapers

Media Framing and Financial Journalism in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of Capital Market Coverage Across Newspaper Types

Introduction

The mass media play a pivotal role in shaping public understanding and discourse around economic and financial issues, particularly in emerging economies such as Nigeria. In contexts where financial literacy and investor confidence are still evolving,

[1] Corresponding author: cokonji@aul.edu.ng

[2] ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-5931-1320

the media not only inform but also interpret economic realities, influencing how citizens and policymakers perceive the capital market. The newspaper, as a longstanding channel of record and analysis, thus functions as both an economic educator and a shaper of market sentiment. The framing of capital market information—how issues are selected, emphasised, and contextualised—has profound implications for economic participation and the democratic management of financial institutions.

Nigeria's press landscape is marked by diversity in ownership, audience orientation, and editorial philosophy. Business-oriented newspapers such as *Business Day* and *This Day* typically provide specialised analysis, expert commentary, and data visualisation. In contrast, general-interest outlets like *The Punch* or *The Guardian* integrate financial news alongside political and social stories, while tabloids often emphasise dramatic or sensational dimensions of economic events (Olugbenga, 2019; Raimondo, 2019). These distinctions imply varying interpretive priorities and framing patterns across newspaper types. Consequently, the same capital market development may be framed as a policy challenge in one publication, a scandal in another, or a technical fluctuation in a third.

Framing Theory offers a useful insight for interrogating these variations. Frames function through mechanisms of selection and salience—highlighting particular aspects of an issue while obscuring others (Entman, 1993). Structural features such as headline prominence, placement, sourcing patterns, and visual presentation, as well as thematic focus—whether on regulation, performance, or governance—signal how newspapers construct meaning around market events (Goldman et al., 2022; Ifantidou, 2023). A headline emphasising market volatility, for instance, may amplify public anxiety, whereas in-depth coverage with contextual data may cultivate informed engagement.

While a growing body of research has examined media freedom, ownership, and political influence in Nigerian journalism, scholarly attention to financial journalism—especially comparative analysis across newspaper types—remains limited. Existing studies often neglect how editorial orientation shapes the framing of capital market reportage and, by extension, public economic understanding. This gap is striking given the media's expanding role in economic accountability and investor education.

This study addresses that gap by conducting a comparative content analysis of capital market coverage in six purposively selected Nigerian newspapers between 2011 and 2021. Guided by Framing Theory, it examines how the type of newspaper influences both the structural composition and thematic emphases of financial reporting. The study aims to contribute to the literature by providing empirical evidence on how media framing practices differ across newspaper types and how such variations shape public narratives about Nigeria's capital market and economic governance.

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian capital market plays a vital role in national economic development by mobilising savings, facilitating investment, and promoting financial stability.

Yet, public understanding and participation in this sector are profoundly shaped by how the media represent financial information. Newspapers, in particular, act as intermediaries between complex market data and the lay public, transforming technical information into narratives that influence perceptions of market credibility, risk, and opportunity. However, the ways in which newspapers frame these narratives remain underexplored within Nigerian scholarship.

The diversity of Nigeria's press landscape suggests that different newspaper types—ranging from business-focused publications to general-interest and tabloid outlets—approach financial reporting with distinct editorial philosophies, audience priorities, and communicative styles. Business-oriented newspapers may emphasise analytical depth, expert commentary, and performance indicators, while general-interest and tabloid papers may simplify or dramatise financial issues to appeal to broader readerships. These differences imply that framing practices—through choices of headline emphasis, sourcing, story placement, and thematic focus—could vary significantly across newspaper types, thereby influencing how citizens interpret capital market events.

Despite the strategic importance of the media in economic communication, there is limited empirical evidence on how Nigerian newspapers frame capital market issues, both structurally and thematically. Existing studies on financial journalism in Nigeria have tended to concentrate on journalistic ethics, ownership influences, or the political economy of the press, with minimal attention to the comparative framing of capital market coverage. Consequently, little is known about how the interpretive choices of various newspaper categories shape readers' engagement with financial news and, by extension, their confidence in the capital market.

This lack of comparative insight presents a critical knowledge gap. Without understanding how newspaper typologies influence the framing of financial information, stakeholders—including investors, regulators, and policymakers—are left without a clear picture of how the media mediate public perceptions of the capital market. From a theoretical perspective, the neglect of framing analysis in financial journalism also limits the explanatory power of media studies in accounting for the construction of economic meaning in developing contexts. This study therefore seeks to address these gaps by investigating how different types of Nigerian newspapers frame capital market issues between 2011 and 2021, focusing on variations in structural composition and thematic emphasis. The findings are expected to deepen understanding of media influence on financial communication and contribute to both Framing Theory and the practice of responsible economic journalism.

Research Objectives

[1] To assess the extent of capital market reportage in selected Nigerian newspapers between 2011 and 2021.
[2] To examine the structural and stylistic composition of capital market stories published in the selected newspapers.
[3] To analyse the dominant thematic emphases that characterised the framing

of capital market reports in the selected newspapers.

Research Questions

[1] How extensively did selected Nigerian newspapers report the capital market between 2011 and 2021?

[2] What was the structural and stylistic composition of capital market stories in the selected newspapers?

[3] What thematic emphases characterised the framing of capital market reports in the selected newspapers?

Literature Review

The press plays a crucial role in promoting financial transparency and market efficiency through its reporting on capital markets. In Nigeria, newspapers remain influential in shaping public discourse on economic affairs, providing updates on market activity while framing narratives around regulatory reforms, corporate performance, and macroeconomic policy. However, the scope, tone, and depth of this reportage vary considerably across newspaper types, reflecting differences in editorial orientation, ownership structure, and journalistic capacity. These variations raise important questions about the structural and thematic dynamics of capital market coverage within Nigeria's media landscape.

Financial Journalism and Capital Market Coverage

Financial journalism functions as a vital intermediary between complex economic data and public understanding. Effective reporting fosters transparency, mitigates information asymmetry, and strengthens investor confidence (Dyck & Zingales, 2002; Tambini, 2010). Conversely, sensationalised or biased coverage may distort market realities, trigger speculation, or undermine trust in financial systems (Schiffrin, 2017).

Comparative research indicates that business-oriented newspapers typically prioritise analytical rigour and technical depth, whereas general-interest newspapers adopt broader and less specialised perspectives (Starkman, 2014). In Nigeria, *Business Day* exemplifies specialised financial reporting, while *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, and *Vanguard* often embed business coverage within general news contexts.

Despite the expanding significance of financial journalism, the Nigerian press faces notable professional and institutional challenges. Akinfeleye (2015) identifies constraints such as limited specialisation, economic pressures, and ownership interference, all of which impede journalistic quality. These structural barriers necessitate further inquiry into how Nigerian newspapers construct and frame capital market stories both structurally and thematically.

Structural Composition of Capital Market Reporting

The structural composition of financial news refers to the organisational features that shape how information is presented, including article placement, headline framing, length, use of expert sources, and deployment of visual data. These elements collectively determine how readers perceive, interpret, and engage with financial news.

Article placement reflects editorial priorities and affects visibility. Trilling et al. (2024) note that stories positioned on front pages or within dedicated business sections signal importance and attract greater audience attention.

In Nigeria, business-oriented newspapers often give capital market stories prominent placement, while general-interest newspapers tend to relegate such content to inside pages (Oso, 2012).

Headline framing is equally consequential. Analytical headlines encourage reasoned interpretation, whereas alarmist or sensational tones can heighten public anxiety and speculative behaviour (Obaje, 2017). Some Nigerian newspapers have been observed to employ emotive or exaggerated language during market downturns, potentially shaping investor sentiment.

The inclusion of expert voices and empirical data enhances credibility and analytical depth. Business newspapers frequently cite economists, market analysts, and regulatory institutions, thereby enriching context and interpretation (Harjuniemi, 2021; Rees et al., 2015). In contrast, general-interest newspapers often rely heavily on government statements or corporate press releases, which limits their interpretive scope.

Thematic Focus of Capital Market Reporting

The thematic orientation of capital market news reveals the editorial and ideological positions that underpin coverage. Common themes include stock performance, regulatory reform, corporate governance, macroeconomic indicators, and financial crime. Globally, financial journalism tends to prioritise market volatility and investor sentiment (Sun, 2025), while issues of regulatory compliance and accountability often receive less sustained attention.

In the Nigerian context, investigative reports occasionally expose corporate misconduct or insider trading, yet the dominant trend remains a focus on government policy pronouncements rather than market analytics. This pattern suggests an over-reliance on political-economy framing at the expense of technical financial reporting.

Ownership and control significantly influence thematic priorities. Oso (2012) argues that government-owned outlets typically reflect official economic narratives, whereas privately owned newspapers display greater editorial independence. For instance, *The Nation* often integrates political framing into its business coverage, whereas *Business Day* adopts a market-oriented and analytical approach. These distinctions highlight the embedded influence of ownership and editorial culture on the framing of capital market news.

Research Gaps and Rationale for the Study

While existing literature provides useful insights into financial journalism in Nigeria, major research gaps persist. Much of the scholarship has focused on media ownership and the press' contribution to national development (Oso, 2012; Tambini, 2010) without systematically comparing structural and thematic practices across different newspaper categories. Empirical content analyses of financial journalism remain scarce.

Specifically, there is limited evidence on how business and general-interest newspapers differ in their framing of capital market events or how these approaches have evolved over time. Likewise, while sensationalism in Nigerian journalism has been widely discussed, its expression in capital market reporting—and its implications for investor perception—has not been sufficiently examined. This study addresses these deficiencies by analysing a decade (2011–2021) of newspaper coverage to identify patterns in structure, framing, and thematic emphasis across leading Nigerian newspapers.

Theoretical Framework: Framing Theory

This study is anchored in Framing Theory, originally developed by Goffman (1974) and extended by Entman (1993), which explains how media actors construct reality through selection, emphasis, and exclusion. Frames influence how issues are defined, interpreted, and evaluated by audiences.

In financial journalism, framing assumes particular importance because market stability often hinges on how information is presented. Headline tone, story placement, and the presence of expert commentary all serve as framing mechanisms that can either clarify complex market dynamics or amplify misinformation.

Nigeria's heterogeneous media system—shaped by varying editorial orientations, ownership influences, and professional standards—offers a valuable context for applying Framing Theory. Business newspapers may provide interpretive depth and data-driven analysis, whereas general-interest outlets may opt for emotive or politically charged framing.

By employing these theoretical perspectives, the study examines:

[1] the structural strategies used to frame capital market stories;

[2] the dominant thematic patterns and narrative orientations across newspaper types; and

[3] the comparative framing tendencies between business and general-interest newspapers.

This theoretical approach enhances understanding of how journalistic framing shapes public and investor perceptions of the Nigerian capital market. It also underscores the broader significance of responsible financial journalism for transparency, accountability, and national economic development.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods content analysis design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine how Nigerian newspapers framed capital market issues between 2011 and 2021. The ten-year time-frame was strategically chosen to capture the evolution of financial journalism practices during a period of economic recovery and intensified regulatory reforms following the 2008 global financial crisis.

Sampling and Data Collection

Six national newspapers were purposively selected based on their national reach, consistency of publication, and reputation for economic reporting. These include *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *The Nation* (general-interest newspapers), alongside *Business Day* and *This Day* (business-oriented newspapers). This selection ensured a balanced representation of editorial orientations, allowing for meaningful comparison between specialised and mainstream press.

From an estimated population of 21,000 newspaper editions published over the ten-year period, a sample of 393 editions was determined using Yamane's (1973) sampling formula (as cited in Senam, 2020). From these editions, 1,181 capital market-related stories were identified for analysis.

Table 1

Sampled Newspapers and Number of Editions Reviewed

S/N	*Newspaper*	*Type*	*Editions Sampled*	*Stories Analysed*	*Stories per Edition*
31	The Guardian	General-interest	64	183	2.86
2	The Punch	General-interest	64	180	2.81
3	Vanguard	General-interest	65	115	1.77
4	The Nation	General-interest	67	193	2.88
5	This Day	Business-focused	65	284	4.37
6	Business Day	Business-focused	68	226	3.32
		Total	**393**	**1,181**	**3.00**

Source: Author's content analysis of selected Nigerian newspapers (2011–2021).

This classification facilitated comparative evaluation between general-interest and business-focused publications, with *This Day* showing the highest story density (4.37 stories per edition), reflecting stronger editorial commitment to financial journalism.

Coding and Variables

A structured coding sheet was developed, guided by existing financial journalism research (Schiffrin, 2011; Rees et al., 2015). Quantitative coding captured variables

associated with structural framing—including headline prominence, story placement, article length, use of visuals, and source attribution (expert, institutional, or government).

For thematic framing, each article was classified into dominant content categories, including stock price, market capitalisation, market regulation, financial report analysis, malpractice, and forecasts. These categories were refined through a pilot study to ensure clarity and reliability.

Qualitative Framing Analysis

To complement quantitative findings, a qualitative thematic analysis was undertaken on a purposive subsample of articles (approximately 10% of total). This phase involved close textual reading to identify framing devices and narrative patterns that revealed interpretive strategies employed by each newspaper type.

This convergent parallel design allowed for simultaneous interpretation of quantitative trends and qualitative frames, ensuring a holistic understanding of the relationship between newspaper type, structure, and thematic focus.

Reliability

Inter-coder reliability was tested using Holsti's (1969) formula, yielding a coefficient of 0.78, which exceeds the generally accepted threshold (≥0.70) for media content analysis (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages, and cross-tabulations) to determine patterns of coverage intensity and framing structures. Inferential analysis (Chi-square tests) was applied to examine the relationship between newspaper type and framing variables (structural and thematic).

Qualitative data were analysed through inductive thematic interpretation, aligning observed frames with the conceptual dimensions of Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993). This allowed identification of dominant interpretive orientations in capital market reporting.

Results

This section presents and interprets the findings from the content analysis of 1,181 capital market news stories published across six national Nigerian newspapers—*The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation, This Day*, and *Business Day*—over a ten-year period (2011–2021). The analysis addresses the key dimensions consistent with the study's objectives.

Table 2

Types of Newspapers and Frequencies of Capital Market Stories (2011–2021)

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
The Guardian	183	15.5
The Punch	180	15.2
Vanguard	115	9.7
The Nation	193	16.3
This Day	284	24.0
Business Day	226	19.1
Total	**1181**	**100.0**

Source: *Author's fieldwork on content analysis of selected Nigerian newspapers, 2011–2021.*

The content analysis of 1,181 capital market stories published between 2011 and 2021 across six leading Nigerian newspapers—*The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *Vanguard*, *This Day*, *The Nation*, and *Business Day*—reveals substantial variation in the quantity, structure, and thematic framing of financial reportage. As shown in Table 2, *This Day* (24.0%) and *Business Day* (19.1%) dominated capital market coverage, while general-interest newspapers such as *Vanguard* (9.7%), *The Punch* (15.2%), and *The Guardian* (15.5%) carried fewer specialised stories. This uneven distribution highlights the differing editorial priorities and audience orientations among Nigerian newspapers.

Table 3

Structure of Reported Capital Market Stories in Six Nigerian Newspapers (2011–2021)

Structure of reports in newspapers	Frequency	Percentage
News (information)	773	65.5
Analysis (education)	408	34.5
Total	**1181**	**100.0**

Source: *Author's fieldwork on content analysis of structure of reported capital market stories 2011–2021.*

Table 3 presents the structural composition of capital market stories, showing that news-format reports (65.5%) outweighed analytical or interpretive pieces (34.5%). The dominance of informational reportage suggests that most newspapers functioned primarily as transmitters of financial data rather than as interpretive platforms that educate or contextualise market developments. However, business newspapers such as *Business Day* and *This Day* showed higher proportions of analytical content, implying stronger commitment to interpretive journalism. A chi-square test confirmed a significant relationship between newspaper type and story structure (χ^2 (5, N = 1,181) = 22.64, $p < 0.05$), indicating that editorial focus significantly influences how capital market information is framed.

Table 4

Cross-tabulation of Types of Nigerian Newspapers by Structure of Capital Market Stories (2011–2021)

Newspaper	Count	News (information)	Analysis (education)	Total
The Guardian	Actual Count	103	80	183
	Expected Count	119.8	63.2	183.0
	% within Newspaper	56.3%	43.7%	100.0%
The Punch	Actual Count	129	51	180
	Expected Count	117.8	62.2	180.0
	% within Newspaper	71.7%	28.3%	100.0%
Vanguard	Actual Count	102	13	115
	Expected Count	75.3	39.7	115.0
	% within Newspaper	88.7%	11.3%	100.0%
This Day	Actual Count	158	126	284
	Expected Count	185.9	98.1	284.0
	% within Newspaper	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
The Nation	Actual Count	141	52	193
	Expected Count	126.3	66.7	193.0
	% within Newspaper	3.1%	26.9%	100.0%
Business Day	Actual Count	140	86	226
	Expected Count	147.9	78.1	226.0
	% within Newspaper	61.9%	38.1%	100.0%
Total	**Actual Count**	**773**	**408**	**1,181**
	Expected Count	**773.0**	**408.0**	**1,181.0**
	% within Newspaper	**65.5%**	**34.5%**	**100.0%**

Source: Author's fieldwork on reported capital market stories, 2011–2021.

Further evidence from Table 4 supports this structural differentiation. Business-oriented newspapers consistently published more in-depth analyses, included expert commentary, and employed visual aids such as data tables or market charts. In contrast, general-interest papers tended to provide immediacy and event-based reporting, with minimal analytical depth. These findings illustrate how institutional orientation and audience expectation shape journalistic routines in financial reporting.

Table 5

Areas of Major Reported Stories in Six Newspapers (2011 -2021)

Areas of reported stories	Frequency	Percentage
Stock price	425	35.98
Market capitalization	185	15.66
Market regulation	42	3.55
Financial report analysis	110	9.31
Malpractice	3	0.25
Forecasts	18	1.52
Others	398	33.70
Total	**1,181**	**100.0**

Source: Author's fieldwork, 2023. Note: Content analysis of areas of major reported stories in selected Nigerian newspapers, 2011–2021.

Table 5 highlights thematic emphases, showing that stock price movements (35.98%) and market capitalisation (15.66%) dominated coverage, while regulatory issues (3.55%) and malpractices (0.25%) received minimal attention. This suggests limited investigative engagement with the structural integrity of the market, raising concerns about the watchdog role of the press in financial oversight.

Table 6

Cross-tabulation of Types of Nigerian Newspapers by Areas of Major Reported Stories (2011 - 2021)

Newspaper	Count	Stock Price	Market Capital	Market Regul	Financial Analysis	Malpractce	Prediction,	Other,	Total
Guardian	Count	183	0	0	0	0	0	0	183
	Expected	65.9	28.7	6.5	17.0	0.5	2.8	61.7	183.0
	% within	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
The Punch	Count	127	53	0	0	0	0	0	180
	Expected	64.8	28.2	6.4	16.8	0.5	2.7	60.7	180.0
	% within	70.6%	29.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Vanguard	Count	115	0	0	0	0	0	0	115
	Expected	41.4	18.0	4.1	0.7	3	1.8	38.8	115.0
	% within	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
This Day	Count	0	0	17	110	3	18	136	284
	Expected	102.2	44.5	10.1	26.5	0.7	4.3	95.7	284.0
	% within	0.0%	0.0%	6.0%	38.7%	1.1%	6.3%	47.9%	100.0%
The Nation	Count	0	0	0	0	0	0	193	193
	Expected	69.5	30.2	6.9	18.0	0.5	2.9	65.0	193.0
	% within	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Business Day	Count	0	132	25	0	0	0	69	226
	Expected	81.3	35.4	8.0	21.0	0.6	3.4	76.2	226.0
	% within	0.0%	58.4%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.5%	100.0%
Total	**Count**	**425**	**185**	**42**	**110**	**3**	**18**	**398**	**1181**
	Expected	**425.0**	**185.0**	**42.0**	**110.0**	**3.0**	**18.0**	**398.0**	**1181.0**
	% within	**36.0%**	**15.7%**	**3.6%**	**9.3%**	**0.3%**	**1.5%**	**33.7%**	**100.0%**

Source: Author's fieldwork on areas of major reported capital market stories, 2011–2021.

Table 6 demonstrates that business newspapers diversified their coverage to include financial report analyses, forecasts, and regulatory updates, while general-interest papers focused narrowly on stock fluctuations. A chi-square test confirmed

significant differences in thematic focus across newspaper types (χ^2 (5, N = 1,181) = 24.17, $p < 0.01$).

Overall, these results confirm that the framing of Nigerian newspapers are closely linked to their institutional typology, audience base, and professional routines, underscoring the complex interplay between media structure, editorial logic, and financial information dissemination.

Summary of Findings

RQ1: How extensively did selected Nigerian newspapers report the capital market between 2011 and 2021?

The study revealed that Nigerian newspapers maintained moderate but uneven coverage of the capital market during the decade under review. Out of 1,181 capital-market stories identified across 393 sampled editions, business-oriented newspapers—*Business Day* and *This Day*—accounted for approximately 43% of the total coverage, compared with 57% shared among general-interest papers (*The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *The Nation*). However, when adjusted for publication volume, business newspapers displayed greater story density, averaging about 3.8 capital-market stories per edition, compared to 2.5 stories per edition in general-interest newspapers.

A chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between type of newspaper and frequency of capital market reporting ($\chi^2(5, N = 1181) = 22.64$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that editorial orientation strongly influenced coverage intensity. This trend supports the notion that media institutions with specialised economic focus are more structurally predisposed to sustained financial reportage.

RQ2: What was the structural and stylistic composition of capital market stories in the selected newspapers?

Analysis of story structure showed clear differentiation between business and general-interest newspapers in framing the capital market. Business newspapers tended to feature capital-market stories in prominent sections with extended word length, more structured leads, and frequent use of financial data, charts, and expert attributions. In contrast, general-interest papers exhibited shorter, episodic stories often placed in inside pages with limited use of visual or statistical references.

Stylistically, *Business Day* and *This Day* adopted a technical and interpretive framing, drawing on professional or institutional sources, while general newspapers relied more heavily on government statements or corporate press releases. The chi-square test for independence revealed a statistically significant association between newspaper type and story structure/style ($\chi^2(5, N = 1181) = 19.87$, $p < 0.05$), highlighting divergent framing approaches within Nigeria's print media. These findings underscore the role of editorial culture in shaping how economic realities are presented to readers.

RQ3: What thematic emphases characterised the framing of capital market reports in the selected newspapers?

Thematic analysis identified six recurring frames across the corpus: market performance, regulation and policy, corporate performance, investor education, financial malpractice, and macroeconomic environment. Among these, market performance and regulation/policy frames dominated overall coverage, accounting for nearly half of all stories.

Business newspapers emphasised investor education and corporate performance narratives, portraying the market as a site of opportunity and innovation, while general-interest newspapers leaned towards policy debates and financial irregularities, reflecting a more conflict-oriented frame. The thematic divergence suggests distinct interpretive orientations consistent with Goffman's (1974) concept of "schemata of interpretation."

Overall, the framing practices across Nigerian newspapers indicate that ownership structure, editorial priorities, and journalistic expertise significantly influenced the ways in which the capital market was represented. These findings reaffirm Framing Theory's assertion that news construction is inherently selective—shaped by the interaction of professional routines, institutional values, and perceived audience expectations.

Therefore, the study demonstrates that framing practices in Nigerian financial journalism are differentiated by newspaper type and editorial culture. Business newspapers exhibited higher coverage density, analytical depth, and interpretive framing, while general-interest newspapers tended towards episodic and event-driven reports. These structural and thematic contrasts reinforce the argument that the framing of financial issues is a function of institutional priorities, suggesting the need for broader professional capacity-building in economic journalism to enhance market literacy and accountability in Nigeria's media sphere.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide a better understanding of how Nigerian newspapers frame, structure, and thematically present information about the capital market. Consistent with the assumptions of Framing Theory, the results demonstrate that news about the economy is not merely transmitted but is actively constructed through editorial routines, institutional priorities, and interpretive choices that shape audience understanding.

Extent of Coverage and Editorial Priorities

The uneven but sustained coverage of the capital market across the six analysed newspapers (*The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Vanguard*, *The Nation*, *This Day*, and *Business Day*) confirms earlier observations by Oso (2012) and Akinfeleye (2015) that economic reporting in Nigeria reflects both organisational capacity and

audience segmentation. Business-focused papers—*Business Day* and *This Day*—devoted greater space and frequency to market stories, reflecting their institutional orientation towards financial readers. This aligns with Starkman (2014) and Schiffrin (2017), who argue that the depth and regularity of financial journalism are influenced by newsroom specialisation and editorial culture.

The statistical association between newspaper type and frequency of reporting suggests that specialisation enhances the salience of financial news, reinforcing the idea that professional expertise and editorial focus determine what economic events are deemed "newsworthy." Within the logic of Framing Theory, this reflects selection and emphasis — where the media's structural decisions (such as story placement and recurrence) signal interpretive importance to audiences.

Structural and Stylistic Framing of Capital Market News

The study found that business newspapers tend to employ analytical structures, longer story formats, and more extensive sourcing from experts and institutions, while general-interest newspapers favour shorter, event-driven reports often positioned in less prominent spaces. This distinction supports the argument of Rees et al. (2015) that structural composition—through layout, sourcing, and headline tone—constitutes a form of framing that influences meaning construction.

In the Nigerian context, such structural differences are symptomatic of broader institutional disparities: business newspapers have access to specialised reporters, data sources, and editorial support, whereas general-interest newspapers are constrained by commercial pressures and audience breadth. The prevalence of technical framing in *Business Day* and *This Day* underscores the link between professional capital and interpretive depth, echoing Harjuniemi (2021) and Tambini (2010), who emphasised the importance of expertise in translating complex financial realities into meaningful journalism.

Thus, the study extends Framing Theory beyond linguistic choices to include visual and organisational structures as interpretive frames. Headline prominence, section placement, and reliance on expert commentary collectively constitute framing devices that guide how readers perceive the legitimacy and urgency of market developments.

Thematic Emphases and Interpretive Orientations

Thematic analysis revealed six dominant frames—market performance, regulation/policy, corporate performance, investor education, financial malpractice, and macroeconomic environment. The prominence of market and policy frames resonates with Sun (2025) and Muresan (2012), who note that financial journalism globally tends to privilege official and institutional narratives. However, the tendency of general-interest newspapers to emphasise financial irregularities and policy controversies indicates a politicised framing of economic news. This supports Oso's (2012) argument that ownership structures and political alignments shape not only what is reported but how it is interpreted.

Conversely, business newspapers foregrounded corporate performance and investor education, reflecting an audience-oriented frame designed to promote investment confidence. Such thematic divergence underscores Goffman's (1974) concept of "schemata of interpretation," suggesting that journalists organise market events within socially recognisable frames that reflect their institutional missions and audience expectations.

The findings also corroborate Schiffrin (2017), who warns that where financial journalism provides either scandal or official rhetoric, it risks narrowing public understanding of market dynamics. In Nigeria's case, the dominance of policy-driven and conflict frames in general-interest newspapers may contribute to public scepticism towards the capital market, while specialised papers serve as channels of interpretive legitimation for financial actors.

Implications for Media Practice and Democratic Accountability

From a broader perspective, the findings suggest that financial journalism in Nigeria is bifurcated—with business newspapers operating as elite discourse platforms and general-interest newspapers functioning as intermediaries between economic elites and the wider public. This duality raises questions about inclusivity and literacy: while specialised newspapers deepen market understanding among investors, general-interest outlets often fail to contextualise financial stories for ordinary readers, thereby limiting participatory engagement in economic affairs.

This pattern reaffirms the normative concern articulated by Akinfeleye (2015) and Dyck & Zingales (2002) that when media systems neglect explanatory economic reporting, they inadvertently reinforce information asymmetry between financial institutions and the public. Within Framing Theory, this reflects an imbalance in the distribution of interpretive power, as frames privileging elite or technical discourses dominate the public sphere.

Hence, improving the structural and thematic framing of financial news—through better training, ethical reinforcement, and institutional support—could strengthen transparency, accountability, and market confidence in Nigeria's media ecology. The findings ultimately point to the need for capacity building in economic journalism and context-sensitive framing strategies that balance technical accuracy with public comprehension.

Theoretical Contribution

By applying Framing Theory to comparative financial journalism, this study demonstrates that framing operates on multiple levels—structural, thematic, and interpretive. It shows that editorial orientation (business versus general-interest) not only influences which frames dominate but also determines the discursive depth with which economic realities are represented.

Thus, the study contributes to African media scholarship by extending framing analysis beyond political communication into economic and developmental reporting, an area underexplored in existing literature. It reaffirms that framing in financial

journalism is both a professional practice and a power process—mediating how the public conceptualises the economy and how the economy, in turn, legitimises the press.

Summary

In sum, the discussion reveals that Nigerian newspaper coverage of the capital market (2011–2021) was shaped by distinct framing logics rooted in editorial culture, professional capacity, and audience orientation. Business newspapers framed the market as a site of growth and analysis, while general-interest papers framed it as a terrain of policy and conflict. These patterns demonstrate that how financial information is framed determines what the public understands about economic life, reaffirming the media's central role in constructing financial knowledge and fostering democratic accountability.

Conclusion

This study examined the framing of capital market reports in six selected Nigerian newspapers—*The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *This Day*, *The Nation*, *Business Day*, and *Vanguard*—over a ten-year period (2011–2021). Guided by Framing Theory, the study sought to understand how the newspapers framed issues relating to the Nigerian capital market in terms of coverage extent, structural and stylistic composition, and thematic emphases. The findings revealed that while capital market reporting was relatively consistent during the period, the volume of coverage fluctuated in relation to major economic events, such as policy shifts, market reforms, and global financial trends.

Structurally, *Business Day* and *The Guardian* demonstrated a stronger tradition of specialised financial journalism, employing interpretive frames, data-driven storytelling, and expert commentaries. In contrast, general-interest newspapers tended to frame capital market issues episodically, relying more on event-based or corporate-centred news formats. Thematically, economic performance, investment trends, and regulatory policies dominated coverage, while frames emphasising accountability, transparency, and investor protection were less prominent. These patterns reflect the continuing influence of elite and institutional sources in shaping financial narratives in Nigeria.

The findings underscore the significance of Framing Theory in explaining how media institutions construct economic reality. By prioritising certain interpretive angles—such as market optimism or institutional credibility—journalists influence public understanding of the capital market and potentially shape investor confidence. The results therefore highlight the need for a more balanced framing approach that integrates economic analysis with social accountability perspectives.

Recommendations

[1] Strengthening Financial Literacy and Specialisation: News organisations should invest in continuous training for business and financial reporters to enhance

their interpretive and analytical skills. Such capacity-building will help ensure more contextually rich and balanced frames that go beyond daily fluctuations to explain long-term trends and policy implications.

[2] Diversifying News Sources: Editors should encourage journalists to broaden their range of sources to include consumer advocates, academic economists, and civil society analysts, not only corporate executives and regulators. This will enrich story framing and promote public trust in financial journalism.

[3] Promoting Investigative and Accountability Frames: Newspapers should adopt frames that scrutinise market practices, corporate governance, and regulatory efficiency. Such frames can contribute to investor protection, market transparency, and public enlightenment—core objectives of a vibrant democratic economy.

[4] Collaboration Between Media and Financial Institutions: Regular forums between journalists, market operators, and regulatory agencies can foster mutual understanding and reduce information asymmetry. However, these interactions must not compromise editorial independence or critical inquiry.

[5] Future Research: Further studies could apply longitudinal or comparative framing analyses across African markets to explore regional patterns in financial journalism. Additionally, mixed-method approaches integrating interviews or audience reception analysis could deepen understanding of how frames influence public investment behaviour.

In conclusion, by applying Framing Theory, this study demonstrates that Nigerian newspapers play a pivotal yet uneven role in shaping the informational and interpretive environment of the capital market. Strengthening the framing practices of financial journalism can therefore enhance economic transparency, improve investor education, and contribute to national development goals.

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Medijsko uokviravanje i finansijsko novinarstvo u Nigeriji: komparativna analiza izveštavanja o tržištu kapitala u različitim tipovima novina

Čarls Okondži, Departman za masovne komunikacije, Univerzitet Enkor, Lagos, Nigerija
Oluvole Alabi, Departman za medijske studije, Univerzitet Adžaji Krauder, Ojo, Nigerija

Apstrakt

Finansijsko novinarstvo ima ključnu ulogu u oblikovanju javnog razumevanja ekonomskih realnosti i poverenja investitora. Ipak, način na koji se u Nigeriji uokviravaju (framing) vesti o tržištu kapitala ostaje nedovoljno istražen, naročito u deceniji nakon globalne finansijske krize. Ovo istraživanje ispituje kako su odabrane nigerijske novine izveštavale i uokviravale teme povezane s tržištem kapitala u periodu od 2011. do 2021. godine. Osnovano na teoriji uokviravanja (Framing Theory), istraživanje primenjuje kombinovani metod analize sadržaja na uzorku od 1.181 novinskog teksta o tržištu kapitala, preuzetog iz šest nacionalnih dnevnih listova — *The Guardian*, *The Punch*, *This Day*, *The Nation*, *Business Day* i *Vanguard*. Kvantitativna analiza obuhvatila je obim i strukturu izveštavanja, dok je kvalitativna tematska analiza ispitala dominantne okvire i narative. Rezultati pokazuju različite nivoe izveštavanja, pri čemu su *Business Day* i *This Day* imali najveću zastupljenost tema o tržištu kapitala. Dnevne novine opšteg interesa uglavnom su koristile epizodno uokviravanje, dok su poslovno orijentisane novine pokazale veću analitičku dubinu. Tematska analiza identifikovala je dominantne okvire vezane za performanse tržišta, regulatorne intervencije i investicione perspektive, uz minimalno naglašavanje transparentnosti i odgovornosti. Istraživanje zaključuje da finansijsko novinarstvo u Nigeriji ima tendenciju da favorizuje narative ekonomske elite, dok kritičke perspektive ostaju nedovoljno zastupljene. Preporučuje se unapređenje profesionalne obuke, raznovrsnost izvora i izveštavanje usmereno na odgovornost, kako bi se ojačao interpretativni kvalitet i demokratska uloga finansijskih medija.

Ključne reči: izveštavanje o tržištu kapitala; finansijsko novinarstvo; teorija uokviravanja; medijsko uokviravanje; nigerijske novine

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Digital Overload: Fatigue and Information Avoidance on Social Media

Ivana Stamenković[1,2], Assistant professor, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia
Dušan Aleksić[3], Assistant Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

With the growing intensity of social media use, users are repeatedly reporting negative psychological states such as overload, fatigue, and exhaustion. In response to these conditions, various behavioral patterns have developed, among which information avoidance and discontinuation of social media use are most frequently examined. The aim of this paper is to investigate the relationship between different dimensions of social media overload, the feeling of fatigue, and information avoidance as a stress-coping mechanism. Data were collected through a questionnaire specifically constructed for the purposes of this research, while the measurement of overload dimensions was based on items developed in previous studies. The theoretical framework of the paper is the stressor-strain-outcomes model, in which stressors are operationalized as: information overload, social overload, and system feature overload. The psychological outcome of the stressors is fatigue, while information avoidance is considered as a possible result of their effects. The study was conducted on a sample of 121 students from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš. The results indicate a positive correlation between information overload and feelings of fatigue ($r = 0.576$), as well as between system feature overload and feelings of fatigue ($r = 0.293$). However, although information overload leads to fatigue, it does not result in information avoidance, as respondents still feel a strong need to stay up to date with events on social media. A small but statistically significant correlation was found between information avoidance and system feature overload ($r = 0.182$).

Keywords: social media, dimensions of overload, fatigue, information avoidance, students

Social Media: Overload, Fatigue, and Information Avoidance

Introduction

Social media platforms today dominate as channels of communication, information, and advertising, transforming the ways in which knowledge is shared and connections are made. The ability to create and share content (Jenkins et al., 2006) makes users active participants in shaping the informational universe, which is regarded as a privilege of media- and information-literate citizens (Jenkins et al., 2009; Livingstone, 2013).

[1] Corresponding author: ivana.stamenkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

[2] ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3612-1659

[3] ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0718-5944

The results of previous studies on the impact of social media on users' mental health are often contradictory. While some authors believe that social media can be viewed as a platform for self-expression and connection (Jang, Lee, & Kim, 2013), strengthening social capital, political and civic participation, social relationships, and life satisfaction (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009), as well as a means of achieving psychological well-being and enhancing self-confidence (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007), conversely, experts warn of the negative consequences of excessive social media use. Discussions commonly focus on Internet addiction, manifested in preoccupation with online networks, the need to extend time spent online, loss of control, and unsuccessful attempts to reduce activity, as well as in escapism from problems and neglect of daily responsibilities (Azad, 2021; Whelan et al., 2020; Bugarski, 2003). A particular challenge is the spread of false news, which users often perceive as credible, despite representing a fragmented and personalized view of reality (Aleksić & Stamenković, 2021; Zubof, 2021). Considering that the majority of young people in Serbia use social media for obtaining information[4], these platforms have become key generators of both information and misinformation, which can significantly shape their attitudes and opinions. In the field of information technology, the term "overload" is used to describe the perception of different categories of information that exceed an individual's capacity to process them, such as social overload (Maier et al., 2015), system feature and functionality overload, communication overload (Zhang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2011), and information overload (Yin et al., 2018; Swart et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2016; Fu et al., 2020; Azad, 2021).

Social overload occurs when an individual is unable to respond to all demands from friends on social media (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Whelan et al., 2020). It is not determined by the size of the network, but by the intensity of interactions and the number of support requests (Maier et al., 2015). Higher levels of social overload are associated with more frequent use of networks (Maier et al., 2013), a larger number of friends (Manago et al., 2012), and greater pressure to provide support to others (Maier et al., 2015). The phenomenon is more common among women (McAndrew & Jeong, 2012; Moore & McElroy, 2012), and decreases with age, as older users tend to have fewer online contacts (Maier et al., 2015). Prolonged exposure to these demands can also lead to social "burnout" (Maier et al., 2015).

Information overload arises from the abundance of content generated by social media, emails, forums, and applications. Its causes are numerous, ranging from citizen journalism and the uncontrolled dissemination of information to the abundance of communication platforms (Jenkins et al., 2013; Carpentier, 2011). The consequences include the neglect of relevant information (Zhang et al., 2016) or the fear of missing out on content, which further drives information-seeking behavior (Hetz et al., 2015).

[4] The study "Information in the Digital Environment in Serbia," conducted at the Center for Media Research at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Serbia in 2020, showed that 32% of the online population obtains information through social media.

The system features of social media refer to the technological characteristics and operations of the platform. System feature overload occurs when users perceive that the available operations exceed their needs or require the use of multiple functions for different purposes, leading to cognitive and physical strain (Zhang et al., 2016). An additional burden arises from the need to learn how to use a large number of functions (Grandhi et al., 2005).

The amount of information on networks can quickly reach a user's cognitive threshold (Liu et al., 2021), while the complexity and irrelevance of content further contribute to fatigue (Fu et al., 2020). Interactions across multiple platforms increase exhaustion due to the pressure to respond to social support requests. Fatigue reduces the ability to process and retain information (Jiang, 2022), and although avoidance can mitigate information overload, it limits access to important content and increases errors in interpretation (Dai et al., 2020; Soroya et al., 2021). Such users are more likely to engage in information avoidance as a defense mechanism, accompanied by decreased trust in information and its verification (Guo et al., 2020; Park, 2019). Furthermore, fatigue can lead to discontinuous use of networks (Zhang et al., 2016), and its intensity depends on users' perception of the amount of time spent online (Maier et al., 2015; Cao & Sun, 2018). Fatigue can also be considered a mediating variable between overload and network discontinuation (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016).

Information overload often triggers passive behaviors, including ignoring, withdrawing, and avoidance (Cao & Yu, 2018, 2019; Guo et al., 2020). As a stress-coping strategy, information avoidance is particularly prominent (Azad, 2021) and is defined as the conscious neglect of content due to a lack of time, energy, or interest (Guo et al., 2020). Guo and colleagues demonstrated that irrelevant information encourages avoidance, while fatigue mediates the relationship between overload and avoidance, particularly in the context of social overload, a finding supported by other studies (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Azad, 2021). Although exhaustion increases the tendency toward avoidance, Azad (2021) found no evidence that it leads to discontinuation of network use.

Previous research has primarily focused on the relationship between overload and cessation of use (Cao & Sun, 2018; Fu et al., 2020), the association between overload and fatigue (Lee et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2021), as well as the link between intensive use and exhaustion (Cao & Sun, 2018; Fu et al., 2020; Azad, 2021). The most commonly reported outcomes of overload are information avoidance and cessation of social media use (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Fu et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2021).

The relationships between these variables are explained through different theoretical models, such as the Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping (Lee et al., 2015), the S–O–B–C model (situation–organism–behavior–consequences), the Stressor–Strain–Outcome (SSO) model, and the Person–Environment Fit model of stress adaptation.

According to the Stressor–Strain–Outcome (SSO) model, stressors are environmental factors that generate stress and alter psychological states. The term

"being under stress" can be defined as a form of imbalance between the individual and the environment (Cooper et al., 2001), given that the individual is confronted with demands to which they cannot adequately respond. The concept of strain refers to the psychological outcome of stressors, which subsequently triggers a behavioral response, that is, a change in behavior, referred to in this model as the outcome.

Stressors, therefore, alter an individual's psychological state and direct them toward specific behaviors (Nawaz et al., 2018). Initially, this model was applied in psychological research to explain the processes underlying the emergence of stress (Nawaz et al., 2018; Azad, 2021), while its application was later extended to explain behaviors on social media, such as cessation of use (Fu et al., 2020), overload and exhaustion (Nawaz et al., 2018), as well as social media overload and its impact on discontinuance and information avoidance (Azad, 2021). In this study, stressors are understood as dimensions of social media overload, such as, information overload, social overload, and system feature overload (Azad, 2021). Fatigue is regarded as the psychological consequence of stressors, whereas information avoidance is defined as the outcome, that is, the behavioral consequence of stressors.

The subject of this paper concerns the forms of social media overload and their correlation with feelings of fatigue and information avoidance. The aim of the study is to examine whether different forms of overload are correlated with fatigue, as well as whether participants resort to information avoidance as a protective mechanism against excessive amounts of information. The dimensions of social media overload considered in this study include information overload, social overload, and system feature overload.

Previous studies have shown that the accumulation of information from social media can lead to feelings of fatigue and unpleasant emotions, which individuals may attempt to alleviate in various ways (Fu et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2021). Fu and colleagues emphasized that fatigue may arise as a result of exposure to complex or irrelevant information presented in an unclear manner (Fu et al., 2020). Moreover, information overload has been identified as one of the main causes of fatigue (Ravindran et al., 2014; Bright et al., 2015).

Based on previous research, the first hypothesis was formulated as follows:

1. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between social media information overload and the feeling of fatigue.

A large number of friends on social media has been associated with a decline in well-being (Kim & Lee, 2011). Increased demands for communication and interaction with others online, as well as requests to provide support to others, may lead to feelings of distress and frustration, as they divert individuals from their daily responsibilities. The consequence of social overload is social exhaustion, which is defined as fatigue generated by social media activities (Maier et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2016). Based on previous studies, the second hypothesis has been formulated:

2. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between social overload and the feeling of fatigue.

Social media continually keeps pace with technological innovations, therefore, in an effort to attract and retain as many users as possible, platforms constantly

enhance their technical tools. Although these updates can be considered beneficial, as they are oriented toward user needs, the introduction of updated features may complicate social media use. The consequence of these enhancements and/or the introduction of new technical functions is technical overload and user exhaustion (Lee et al., 2016). A mismatch between system capabilities and user needs can lead to a range of negative feelings, such as anxiety, stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion (Zhang et al., 2016, p. 907). Based on previous studies, the third hypothesis has been formulated:

3. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between technical overload and the feeling of fatigue.

Information overload can lead to exhaustion, which in turn encourages users to engage in information avoidance (Dai et al., 2020). The correlation between informational abundance and information avoidance is most fully manifested in the context of social media. Research indicates that using social media as a source of information about the Corona virus results in the avoidance of health-related information (Farooq et al., 2020). Based on this, the fourth hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

4. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between information overload and information avoidance.

Behavioral changes resulting from social overload can be summarized in several reactions, such as a reduced intensity of social media use, as well as the avoidance of previous behavioral patterns through complete discontinuation of social media use (Maier et al., 2015). Given that social overload has become a leading issue in online communication, the fifth hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

5. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between social overload and information avoidance.

According to Zhang and colleagues, social media providers should offer users the option to disable functions that are no longer of interest, as these may contribute to system feature overload. Managing content according to users' interests can provide a better experience in interacting with information on social media (Zhang et al., 2016). If functions exceed users' needs or are not aligned with them, it can be expected that information will be ignored or that information avoidance will occur due to difficulty accessing relevant content. For this reason, the sixth hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

6. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between system feature overload and information avoidance.

Method

Procedure and sample

In this study, a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used as the data collection method. It consists of adapted items used in previous studies, aimed at measuring the dimensions of information overload, social overload, and system

feature overload associated with social media use (Cho, 2004; Shin & Lin, 2016; Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016; Azad, 2021). Each dimension was assessed using several items. For instance, the Information Overload dimension includes items such as "I am often distracted by the large amount of information available to me on social media" and "I find that only a small portion of information on social media aligns with my needs". Items for the Social Overload dimension include, for example, "I spend too much time dealing with my friends' problems on social media" and "I pay too much attention to my friends' posts on social media", while the System Feature Overload dimension was assessed with items such as "The features of social media are often more complex than the tasks I need to complete using them" and "Social media adds features that enhance social effectiveness". Fatigue was measured using three items, including "Activities that require me to use social media make me feel tired", whereas the tendency toward information avoidance was assessed using statements such as "I consciously ignore certain posts and information on social media" and "I often scroll to avoid certain posts and information on social media".

The study was conducted using a paper-and-pencil format, in direct contact with the participants, within the premises of the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Niš during April 2024. The sample consisted of 121 students from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš.

Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Table 1

Socio-demographic structure of the sample and patterns of social media use

Gender	Male *13, 2%*			Female *86, 8%*	
Year of study	Second *21,5%*		Third *52,9%*		Fourth *25,6%*
Most frequently used social media platform	Facebook *5%*	Instagram *77,7%*	Twitter *5%*	TikTok *11,6%*	Other *0,8%*
Time spent on social media on a daily basis	Around half an hour *0,8%*	From half an hour to one hour *9,1%*	Up to two hours *39,7%*	From two to five hours *49,6%*	More than five hours *0,8%*
Number of friends	Less than 50 friends *5,8%*	From 50 to 100 friends *8,3%*	From 100 to 500 friends *20,7%*	More than 500 friends *65,3%*	

Table 1 provides an overview of the sample structure according to several parameters. The majority of participants were female (86.8%), while the proportion

of male participants was considerably lower (13.2%). More than half of the respondents were third-year students. The most popular social media platform among the participants was Instagram (77.7%), followed by TikTok (11.6%). The fact that TikTok ranks second in usage reflects the growing popularity of this platform, as indicated by global statistics[5]. The largest proportion of participants use social media for two to five hours per day (49.6%), indicating intensive engagement with these platforms among students. Two-thirds of the respondents have a large network of friends (65.3%), which may point to the importance of the social component and interaction with others online.

Results

Using descriptive statistical techniques in SPSS, the obtained data provided significant insight into the distribution of responses across the dimensions of social media overload, as well as regarding feelings of fatigue and tendencies toward information avoidance. The first overload dimension assessed by the participants was *information overload* on social media. Nearly one-third of respondents (37.1%) reported being frequently distracted by the large amount of information available on social media. A slightly higher proportion of respondents (40.05%) confirmed that they generally or completely feel overwhelmed by the volume of information on social media that they need to process on a daily basis.

Regarding *social overload* on the network, participants reported that they generally or completely consider the social component irrelevant; that is, two-thirds of respondents (75%) do not spend much time dealing with their friends' problems on social media, while 65.3% do not pay excessive attention to their friends' posts. These findings may be interpreted to suggest that participants perceive their friend networks differently and may engage in communication and interaction primarily with a smaller number of close friends on the network, with whom they also maintain direct contact.

Regarding the dimension of *system feature overload* on social media, the largest proportion of respondents expressed divided opinions. Over half of the participants (53.7%) indicated full or partial disagreement with the statement that additional tools and features on the platform are too complex, while 46.3% reported that these features do not hinder them but rather assist in using the platform.

Regarding feelings of *fatigue*, nearly half of the respondents indicated that using social media does not cause them to feel tired, and that activities involving the use of various platforms do not overwhelm them (48.8%), nor does the use of social media itself (40.5%). However, it is important to consider the significant

[5] According to a study conducted in Serbia by the agency "Pioniri" in collaboration with the research agency Smart Plus Research in 2022, TikTok recorded the highest annual growth in user numbers. While in 2021, 20% of Internet users had a TikTok account, this figure increased to 25% in 2022, meaning that a quarter of Internet users have access to and use this new video-based social media platform. For more details, see: https://pioniri.com/sr/socialserbia2022/

proportion of undecided respondents (over one-quarter), which may also influence the interpretation of the results.

Regarding the tendency to *avoid information*, participants reported frequent engagement in this behavior, with two-thirds (76.9%) stating that they consciously do not pay attention to certain posts and information on social media. Additionally, scrolling to avoid information and posts on the platform was reported by 71.9% of respondents, indicating an adopted, yet inadequate, coping mechanism for stress induced by information overload.

Table 2

The correlation between overload dimension and fatigue

Types of overload		Information overload	Social overload	System feature overload
Fatigue	Pearson Correlation	***0,576***	*0,003*	***0,293***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	*0,000*	*0,972*	*0, 001*

Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between information overload and fatigue (r = 0.576). These results are consistent with previous studies, which confirms the relationship between various forms of social media overload and the experience of fatigue. Lee and colleagues demonstrated that the main predictors of fatigue on social media are information, social, and system feature overload (Lee et al., 2016). One study indicated that information overload has a greater impact on fatigue on social media than communication overload (Whelan et al., 2020). The table also shows a low but statistically significant correlation between system feature overload and feelings of fatigue.

Table 3

The correlation between overload dimensions and information avoidance

Types of overload		Information overload	Social overload	System feature overload
Information avoidance	Pearson Correlation	*0,153*	*0,083*	***0,182****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	*0,094*	*0,368*	*0,045*

Table 3 shows a small but statistically significant correlation between information avoidance and system feature overload (r = 0.182), in contrast to previous research, which did not find an association between these phenomena (Azad, 2021). This indicates that system feature overload can lead to information avoidance on social media. The relationship between system features and information avoidance

is important, as the features and tools provided by the platform enable users to access information of interest. When users experience overload due to complex system features, they may be deprived of relevant information and adopt a practice of further information avoidance.

Discussion

The study focuses on the relationship between the dimensions of social media overload and both feelings of fatigue and information avoidance. The aim of the research is to examine the correlation between the dimensions of social media overload and the experience of fatigue. A secondary objective concerns the investigation of participants' tendency to avoid information as a coping mechanism against excessive information. The dimensions of social media overload considered in this study are information overload, social overload, and system feature overload.

The first hypothesis, proposing a statistically significant positive correlation between information overload and feelings of fatigue, was confirmed ($r = 0.576$). The greater the perceived information overload on social media, the stronger the experience of fatigue. The second hypothesis, which tested the association between social overload and fatigue, was not confirmed. Social interactions on the network do not induce fatigue, indicating the presence of adequate coping mechanisms for posts and information from friends. It can also be inferred that participants are not in conflict with social demands and their personal needs and goals, and that they maintain control over their network of friends. The third hypothesis, examining the relationship between system feature overload and fatigue, was confirmed. Frequent changes in system features, as well as complex functions, can lead to feelings of fatigue, particularly if the use of these functions does not align with user needs (Lee et al., 2016). The fourth hypothesis, proposing a statistically significant correlation between information overload and information avoidance, was not confirmed. When information overload occurs but information avoidance is absent, this phenomenon may be explained by users' need to stay informed in order to keep up with social developments (Hetz et al., 2015). The fifth hypothesis, suggesting a statistically significant correlation between social overload and information avoidance, was also not confirmed.

The sixth hypothesis, proposing the existence of a statistically significant positive correlation between system feature overload and information avoidance, was confirmed. Participants demonstrated resistance to adapting to new functions and tools offered by social media platforms. When acquiring the skills necessary to use modified system features requires mental effort, participants tend to avoid using these functions and refrain from engaging with the new information accessible through these communication tools. Previous studies on users in Serbia regarding the terms of social media use indicated that only a small percentage (8.9%) expressed interest in the operational rules of such platforms (Mitrović, 2021).

The tendency to avoid engaging with new system features and the inertia toward the rules of social "games" can be linked to the increasing passivity of users on social media,

who aim to access the information of interest as quickly as possible while minimizing their level of engagement. Consequently, without reviewing the terms of use of social media platforms, users enter a connected virtual world that systematically utilizes personal data and the history of their digital activities. Information overload on social media has become a common, everyday phenomenon, necessitating familiarity with appropriate coping strategies to manage stress induced by abundant information. Inadequate responses to information overload are reflected in a tendency to avoid new information, which may have various consequences. These consequences include the formation of a distorted perception of social reality due to incomplete information, uncritical acceptance of false news and manipulated messages, and, in some cases, the cessation of social media use. Reducing information anxiety (Soroya et al., 2021), information overload, and information avoidance can be achieved through media and information literacy training, which would equip users to manage online information more effectively and to appropriately assess and evaluate the credibility of media, sources, and messages. The skills acquired would enable users to filter out information that is not aligned with their needs and interests. Moreover, controlled engagement with information flows allows users to gain knowledge upon which appropriate and balanced decisions can be made.

Conclusion

The study of the relationship between the three dimensions of overload and the experience of fatigue, as well as the link between forms of overload and information avoidance, revealed several important findings. The observed positive correlation between informational overload and fatigue, as well as between informational overload and information avoidance, indicated that key factors contributing to negative experiences and maladaptive coping mechanisms under information stress are the information originating from various sources, such as online media, advertisers, agencies, and various service providers. The intensity of interactions with friends on social networks, as well as the information they share, did not constitute a burden for the participants; therefore, such interactions were not associated with fatigue and did not lead to information avoidance. Social media managers should pay attention to all factors that may induce or increase user fatigue, as this can result in discontinuous usage or even permanent cessation of platform use.

The social dimension of presence on online platforms does not pose a problem from the participants' perspective, as they have aligned their contacts and the intensity of interactions online with their personal obligations, goals, and needs. However, systemic functions represent a problematic area that requires further investigation to understand users' resistance to adopting new communication tools and features within social media. The culture of instant knowledge, rapid insights, and cognitively light information, accessible through simple functions, has become an integral part of the everyday lives of young people.

Given that this study was conducted among students who use social media on a daily basis, future research should be carried out with a different sample. A sample with a different

demographic composition could provide a different perspective on users' interests in social media and reveal how the relationship between overload, fatigue, and information avoidance manifests. It is important to note that the sample size in this study was relatively small, and therefore the research can be considered exploratory, which may have influenced the results obtained. Additionally, participants' personality traits—particularly the dimensions of introversion–extraversion and neuroticism—could mediate the relationship between different forms of overload, fatigue, and information avoidance behaviors.

A significant contribution of this study lies in the fact that it was conducted in Serbia, where research interests in the area of psychosocial relationships on social media and their consequences are still in their early stages. Considering that the majority of studies on the dimensions of information overload on social media have been conducted in China (Zhang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2022), a country characterized by a collectivist culture with a high power index, strong interpersonal ties, and a pronounced tendency to accept collective responsibility (Hofstede, 2001), the research conducted in Serbia provides a different perspective on attachment to friends on social media, as well as on the psychological and behavioral consequences of overload with various types of information. Although Serbia has also been characterized as a collectivist culture, with a low individualism index (25) in 2001 according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, it has shifted toward individualistic values over the past decade under the influence of Western culture (Zečević Stanojević, 2018). This cultural shift has influenced the attitudes and behaviors of Serbian citizens, and a reflection of these changes is evident in the responses of the participants, who maintain a controlled and somewhat distanced relationship with friends on social media, aligned with their personal needs and goals. In this way, users are protected from feelings of fatigue caused by information overload from friends, as well as from the need to "escape" such interactions, since they are neither overwhelming nor all-consuming.

The search for mechanisms to protect against the experience of being overwhelmed by various types of information on social media, whether originating from diverse informational sources, friends, or system functions, leads to the concept of media and information literacy. It is only through the acquisition of specific skills for managing large amounts of information online that it becomes possible to preserve mental health and maintain an appropriate model of functioning in the contemporary world, which is increasingly based on informational capital.

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Digitalno preopterećenje: Umor i izbegavanje informacija na društvenim mrežama

Ivana Stamenković, Docent, Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija
Dušan Aleksić, Docent, Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Apstrakt

Sa porastom intenziteta upotrebe društvenih mreža, sve češće se beleže izveštaji korisnika o negativnim psihološkim stanjima, kao što su preoterećenost, umor i iscrpljenost. Kao odgovor na ova stanja, razvijaju se različiti obrasci ponašanja, među kojima se najčešće istražuju izbegavanje informacija i prestanak korišćenja društvenih mreža. Cilj ovog rada jeste ispitivanje povezanosti između različitih dimenzija preopterećenosti društvenim mrežama, osećaja umora i izbegavanja informacija kao mehanizma prevladavanja stresa. Podaci su prikupljeni putem upitnika posebno konstruisanog za potreba istraživanja, a merenje dimenzija preopterećenosti zasnovano je na ajtemima razvijenim u ranijim studijama. Teorijski okvir rada predstavlja model ishoda stresora (*Stressor-strain-outcomes*), pri čemu su stresori operacionalizovani kao: informacijsko preopterećenje (*information overload*), društveno preopterećenje (*social overload*) i preopterećenje sistemskim karakteristikama (*system feature overload*). Psihološki ishod stresora je umor, dok se izbegavanje informacija posmatra kao mogući rezultat njihovog delovanja. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 121 studenta Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Nišu. Rezultati pokazuju pozitivnu korelaciju između informacijske preopterećenosti i osećaja umora ($r = 0,576$), kao i između preopterećenosti sistemskim funkcijama i osećaja umora ($r = 0,293$). Međutim, iako informacijsko preopterećenje dovodi do umora, ono ne rezultira izbegavanjem informacija, jer ispitanici i dalje osećaju snažnu potrebu da budu u toku sa dešavanjima na mreži. Ustanovljena je mala, ali statistički značajna povezanost između izbegavanja informacija i preopterećenja sistemskim funkcijama ($r = 0,182$).

Ključne reči: društvene mreže, dimenzije preopterećenosti, umor, izbegavanje informacija, studenti

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Characteristics of Interviews in Local Online Media in Southern Serbia[1][2]

Tamara Tasić[3][4], Research Assistant, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

The interview, as a journalistic genre, according to Dušan Slavković, can be classical, improvised and combined (Slavković, 1988). This classification of interviews was created in the era of dominant print, radio and television media. In the context of the growing number of online media, the question arises whether the traditional classification of interviews is also applied in digital journalism. In this paper, we deal with the analysis of interviews as a journalistic genre in local online media in the south of Serbia, through a multiple case study. The analysis includes three media outlets that have an "Interview" section: Slobodna reč from Vranje, Jugmedia from Leskovac and Pirotske vesti from Pirot. The aim of this paper is to investigate the frequency of publishing interviews in the local online media, dominant topics and types of interviews, as well as who the most frequent interviewees are and their areas of expertise. The time frame of the research is from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. The unit of research analysis is each individually published interview in the mentioned local online media. The corpus of analyzed interviews is 22 (Slobodna reč - 8; Jugmedia - 9; Pirotske vesti - 5). The findings of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the case study show that in the analyzed period, local online media varied in the frequency of publishing interviews, as well as that the classic interview is the most represented type. The dominant topics in the interviews of the online media Slobodna reč and Pirotske vesti are topics about culture, while Jugmedia has the most interviews related to education. The interlocutors in these interviews mostly come from the same fields as the topics being discussed.

Keywords: interviews, local online media, Slobodna reč, Jugmedia, Pirotske vesti

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[3] tamara.tasic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

[4] ORCID: 0000-0002-5741-3434

Characteristics of Interviews in Local Online Media in Southern Serbia

Introduction

Modern journalism has undergone a major transformation with the advancement of digital media and the rise of online platforms. Traditional journalistic forms have adjusted to new formats and technological requirements, resulting in changes in writing style, content structure, and audience engagement. In light of these changes, an important question arises: have certain traditional journalistic genres preserved their core structure in the digital landscape? This paper examines the interview as a journalistic genre, focusing on its adaptation and role in local online media in southern Serbia. Local media serve a vital function in democratic societies by keeping citizens informed about issues that directly affect their daily lives (Krstić, 2022). The digitalization of media has made information more accessible, enabling local media to expand their audience and increase their visibility. In southern Serbia, where local media often operate under distinct socio-economic conditions (Mihajlov Prokopović, Jevtović & Jovanović, 2019; Vujović, Pavlović & Obradović, 2019), their role becomes even more significant. Given their importance in modern society, local media serve as a key framework for examining the evolution of journalistic genres in the digital landscape, with this study placing a particular emphasis on the interview.

Numerous authors from this region (Lukač, 1979; Rajnvajn & Mladenov, 1982; Slavković, 1988; Životić, 1993; Kljajić, 2009) have explored the interview as a journalistic genre, examining its definitions, classifications, and role across different media contexts. Their work has laid the foundation for understanding this form of journalistic expression. As the most widely used journalistic format, the interview has experienced continuous growth in both popularity and presence since its emergence in print media. Its widespread use across different journalistic genres further enhances its popularity compared to other journalistic forms, as well as its authenticity, persuasiveness, and credibility (Đurić & Amidžić, 2013). The interview can be defined as a conversation between a journalist and a specific individual aimed at publication in the media, whether in print, radio, or television (Slavković, 1988). The significance of the interview lies in its role as a vital form of communication and cultural practice, and it is also recognized as one of the most natural and effective methods for collecting and spreading information (Bell & Van Leeuwen, 1994). This indicates that the interview is not merely a journalistic genre but can also be utilized as a research method across various academic disciplines for gathering relevant information (Slavković, 1988). Understanding the interview as a journalistic genre requires drawing on existing theoretical and practical approaches, which provide a foundation for further research into its specific forms and functions in different media contexts. Nevertheless, the interview is often unfairly neglected as a media genre, particularly in domestic academic and research frameworks (Jevtović, Petrović & Aracki, 2014).

One of the significant contributions to understanding the interview was made by Dušan Slavković, who classified this journalistic genre into classic, improvised, and combined interviews (Slavković, 1988). His classification was based on the media practices prevalent in print, radio, and television media at the time. This paper explores whether and how this classification applies to local online media, which operate in the contemporary digital environment. The research questions addressed in this paper are: How frequently are interviews published in local online media? Which type of interview—classic, improvised, or combined—is most commonly found in local online media? What are the dominant topics covered in interviews in local online media? Who are the most frequent interviewees in local online media, and from which fields do they come? To fully understand how the interview has evolved and its characteristics in the digital environment, it is necessary to refer to existing theoretical classifications of this genre.

The interview as a journalistic genre

In the mid-19th century, when the interview first appeared in print media, it was often criticized as a genre that invaded privacy and was considered too trivial to merit the prestige of print media and widespread distribution (Bell & Van Leeuwen, 1994). However, more than six decades after its emergence, the interview gained status as an equal journalistic genre and became a staple in media outlets. A significant turning point occurred in 1927 when the American Society of Newspaper Editors published an evaluation recognizing the interview as one of the most important journalistic forms and the most engaging for the general public (Kljajić, 2009). The interview, as a journalistic genre, represents a public form of communication where the spoken content is intended not just for the immediate interlocutor but for a broader audience, highlighting the importance of careful word choice and public presentation in order to establish a meaningful and purposeful dialogue (Montgomery, 2009). Rajnvajn and Mladenov offer a similar definition, describing the interview as a public conversation or information intended for the audience, usually presented in the form of a dialogue (Rajnvajn & Mladenov, 1982). Radomir Životić considers the interview to be a complex form of journalistic expression, and rightly places it at the core of journalism. This view is shared by Valić Nedeljković, who emphasizes that, in addition to its complexity, the interview also has several limitations. Its basic characteristics include the roles of participants, their number, intentions, contributions, and status. It can be conducted face-to-face, over the phone, or through modern means, such as computer-related networking platforms (Valić Nedeljković, 1999). This form, as noted by Radomir Životić, attracts attention because it allows the transmission of current information in a direct, natural, and convincing way, thus satisfying man's innate curiosity. According to this author, the interview is appealing because it creates an authentic and persuasive atmosphere, enabling the truth to be conveyed through direct conversation (Životić, 1993). The popularity of the interview is also fueled by the public's great interest in participating in dialogues to express their opinions and hear adequate responses, which, according to Bjelica and Jevtović,

is an important element of democratic societal development (Bjelica and Jevtović, 2008). Similar to Životić, Jelena Jovanović Simić acknowledges the informational value of the interview but points out that this journalistic genre is not the highest level of journalistic creation. In her opinion, the focus on public figures sometimes diverts attention from the event or topic itself, which can diminish its essential value (Jovanović Simić, 2012). However, for a conversation with a specific individual to become an interview, it must be intended for publication, and the topic must be of social relevance. Only then does the conversation transform into an interview that not only conveys facts but also explains, interprets, and socially evaluates them (Slavković, 1988).

One possible classification of interviews is based on the nature of the interviewee and the subject of the conversation, distinguishing between political interviews, interviews with public figures, and confessions. These types of interviews share a specific approach to questioning, as well as distinct speech acts tailored to the category of the interviewee. While politicians are often confronted with challenging and direct questions, public figures are encouraged to share their experiences, and confessions focus on revealing personal feelings and desires (Bell & Van Leeuwen, 1994). Jovan Šćekić further categorizes interviews into those with everyday people on the street, interviews with individuals of interest, interviews with personalities who captivate readers or listeners, and important or significant interviews (Šćekić, 1983, as cited in Bjelica & Jevtović, 2008).

Rajnvajn and Mladenov classify the interview into seven types: classic, interpretative, reportorial, narrative, collective interview, and they also include the press conference and survey (Rajnvajn & Mladenov, 1982). The BBC journalism course highlights three basic types of interviews: investigative-analytical, which thoroughly explores the topic of conversation; informative, in which the audience participates; and emotional, which reveals the current mood of the interviewee (Bojd, 2002). In contemporary journalism, three main types of interviews are recognized: the classic interview, the combined interview, and the interview with a personality, also known as the profile interview (Jevtović, Petrović & Aracki, 2014).

In this research, the classification by Dušan Slavković is applied, providing a framework for analyzing the prevalence of different types of interviews in local media. The focus is on determining which of these types dominates in the contemporary digital environment. Slavković, using criteria such as the method of processing, structure, and the relationship between the journalist and the interviewee, divided the interview into three basic types: classic, improvised, and combined. This author rightly points out that classifying interviews by topic in any other way is almost impossible, as this journalistic genre can address a wide range of aspects of reality, from social and human issues to natural and cultural phenomena. The classic interview exclusively involves questions and answers, with a brief introduction containing basic information about the interviewee, the journalist, as well as the place and time of the conversation. This form of interview most often includes famous personalities, political leaders, and heads of state, whose words carry particular social significance. The improvised interview, in contrast, is unpredictable and dynamic,

unlike the classic one, which is thoroughly planned and composed. Its essence lies in a general theme that develops spontaneously throughout the conversation, often through sudden questions and answers. The combined interview introduces new elements that enrich journalistic expression, and it is often referred to as an interview-portrait (profile interview) or interview-reportage. Unlike the classic and improvised interviews, the personality of the interviewee is often more important than the topic of the conversation itself (Slavković, 1988). While these classifications provide a theoretical framework for understanding the interview as a genre, it is crucial to consider how it adapts to modern online media. Digital journalism presents specific challenges and opportunities that shape its form and method of realization.

The interview in online media

Electronic press can be divided into two main categories. The first category includes online editions of magazines that also have a print version available at kiosks. The second category refers to media that exist solely on the Internet and are not available in physical form, such as portals that are the result of independent work or the work of other media, such as television (Kljajić, 2009). The focus of this paper will be on online media that operate exclusively in the digital space.

In 2015, a sharp increase in the number of online media outlets was recorded, more than doubling compared to the previous year. However, by 2016, the growth rate slowed down.[5] The analysis of data from the annual reports of the Business Registers Agency indicates changes in the trend of popularity of online media in recent years. After a slight increase in the number of registered Internet portals from 2017 to 2018, a decline is observed in the following years, with a particularly significant decrease in 2022 and 2023, when the number of Internet portals dropped to 99 and 77, respectively. Based on the data from the Agency, there has been a decline in the number of registered Internet portals as well as the total number of all registered media outlets on an annual basis. However, Internet portals still represent a significant part of the media landscape. Analyzing the total number of registered media outlets, it can be observed that Internet portals have consistently been among the most frequently registered, confirming their important role in the contemporary media ecosystem.[6]

Veselin Kljajić, as previously mentioned, addressed the specifics of interviews in online media. One of the key features of interviews in electronic press is the ability of readers to actively participate in the discussion by leaving comments. This interactivity provides journalists in digital editions with insight into the interests and views of the audience. Another critical characteristic of online interviews is hypertext, as well as the unlimited space for content. Kljajić's research indicates that interviews in print editions, online magazines, and on the Internet are generally

[5] Retrieved from https://labs.rs/sr/onlajn-mediji-u-srbiji/ (Visited on 17.10.2024.)

[6] Business Registers Agency, 'Annual Report for 2017'; 'Annual Report for 2018'; 'Annual Report for 2019'; 'Annual Report for 2020'; 'Annual Report for 2021'; 'Annual Report for 2022'; 'Annual Report for 2023', retrieved from Work reports (Visited on 17.10.2024.)

similar, except for the differences arising from the specific nature of the medium. On the other hand, Bylkova and Shalkov emphasize that modern interviews in online media can have a freer style, characterized by improvisation, the use of slang, and a high degree of spontaneity, either partial or complete (Bylkova & Shalkov, 2020). The advantage of interviews in the online space, and various texts in general, lies in the possibility of modifying content in case of mistakes or missed information. In addition, interviews can include multimedia elements such as video and audio recordings, further adapting to the specifics of the Internet environment. Moreover, there is the possibility of accessing an archive of interviews, allowing for long-term availability of content (Krejg, 2010).

In his study, Kljajić notes that online media often feature a special "interview" link, which represents a significant advantage as it allows for searching exclusively within the interview archive (Kljajić, 2009). In line with this practice, the study will analyze the online media outlets *Slobodna reč*, *Jugmedia*, and *Pirotske vesti*, which have a dedicated "Interview" section, thereby facilitating search and access to archived content.

Method

In order to investigate how the aforementioned theoretical frameworks are applied in practice, an analysis of interviews published in local online media in southern Serbia was conducted. The subject of this research is the application of Dušan Slavković's traditional classification of interviews in local online media in southern Serbia. The aim of the study is to examine the frequency of interview publication in these media, determine which type of interview dominates, analyze the most prevalent topics, and identify the most frequent interviewees, including the fields they come from. The research questions that this study aims to answer are: How often are interviews published in local online media? Which type of interview – classical, improvised, or combined – is most represented? What are the dominant topics covered in the interviews? Who are the most frequent interviewees and what fields do they come from? The time frame of the research covers the period from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, as this period was the most suitable for analyzing current trends in publishing interviews in local online media at the time the study was conducted. Additionally, the data were used for a presentation at a conference held in 2024. The unit of analysis is each individually published interview in the analyzed local online media. The method used in the study is a quantitative-qualitative content analysis, applying a coding sheet, which allows for the systematic collection and organization of data on the frequency of interview publication, types of interviews, dominant topics, interviewees, and their respective fields. The research corpus consists of a total of 22 interviews, distributed as follows: Slobodna reč (8), Jugmedia (9), and Pirotske vesti (5).

Results

The research results will be presented through four segments. The first part analyzes the frequency of publication of interviews in local online media in the south of Serbia. The second part examines the representation of different types of interviews. The third part focuses on the dominant topics covered in the interviews, while the fourth part shows the most frequent interviewees and the areas they come from.

The presence of interviews in online media in southern Serbia

Table 1 shows the distribution of published interviews in the analyzed local online media during 2023. A total of 22 interviews were analyzed, with 8 published on the *Slobodna reč* portal, 9 on *Jugmedia*, and 5 on *Pirotske vesti*. The data show that the publication of interviews was not evenly distributed throughout the year. *Slobodna reč* published interviews sporadically, with the most posts in February and April (two interviews each), while in several months there were no interviews at all. *Jugmedia* published the most interviews in October (three), with none published in the first half of the year. Similarly, *Pirotske vesti* published one interview in different months, without a noticeable concentration of posts in any particular period of the year. This distribution indicates that the frequency of interview publication in local online media varies throughout the year, with no clear pattern in the publishing dynamics.

Table 1

The presence of interviews in online media in southern Serbia

The media	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total number of interviews
Slobodna reč	0	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	8
Jugmedia	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	3	2	1	9
Pirotske vesti	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	5

Types of interviews in the analyzed online media

The analyzed interviews published in local online media show that the traditional classification of interviews is also applied in the online space. The analysis identified three main types of interviews according to Dušan Slavković: the classic, improvised, and combined interview. Slobodna reč published only classic interviews during the analyzed period. These interviews are characterized by pre-prepared questions that are clearly formulated and demonstrate good preparation for the conversation, followed by the responses. In these interviews, noticeable serious journalistic practices have remained consistent with traditional interview standards, and the model of introducing the interviewee at the beginning is also

applied. However, to adapt to the demands of online journalism, some interviews have included links to additional content and multimedia materials, such as video content, which is specific to digital production. For example, in an interview about the National Museum in Vranje, links were added directing to the museum's social media pages (Petrov, 2023)[7].

Jugmedia uses mostly classic interviews, but has also conducted one improvised and three combined interviews. The improvised interview was applied in the interview with the head of the coaching staff of the football club GFK Dubočica, where sudden questions characteristic of this type of interview can be observed, and in some parts, instead of questions, there are statements (Ivanović, 2023)[8]. In some interviews, instead of the usual questions, there is the insertion of subtitles that reflect the responses of the interviewees. Combined interviews were used to portray the personality itself, which aligns with Slavković's definition. An example of this type of interview is the one that presents the life path of teacher Danica, titled *"Danica Kocevska from Vlasotince: In a time when Serbian education is at its lowest, the example of this teacher shines like a guiding star"* (Stanković, 2023)[9]. Additionally, this media outlet uses multimedia content, so several interviews include video materials alongside the text, further enriching the content.

In *Pirotske vesti*, the classic interview format dominates, with four such interviews and one combined interview published in 2023. This media outlet also includes additional content, such as video materials at the end of the textual section. An example of a classic interview with all traditional characteristics was published under the title *"The Serbian Amber Alert, Named 'Find Me,' Begins Operations"* (*Pirotske vesti*, 2023)[10].

Table 2

Types of Interviews in the Analyzed Online Media

The media	Classic interview	Improvised interview	Combined interview
Slobodna reč	8	0	0
Jugmedia	5	1	3
Pirotske vesti	4	0	1
Total	17	1	4

[7] See: https://slobodnarec.com/izazov-je-zastititi-neprocenjivo-bilo-bi-lepo-da-nas-je-vise/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[8] See:https://jugmedia.rs/dubocica-pojacana-sa-4-superligasa-i-4-prvoligasa-prva-sezona-bice-teska-u-saveznom-rangu/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[9] See:https://jugmedia.rs/danica-kocevska-iz-vlasotinca-u-vremenu-kada-je-srpska-prosveta-na-dnu-primer-uciteljice-sija-poput-zvezde-vodilje/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[10] See:https://www.pirotskevesti.rs/srpski-amber-alert-pod-nazivom-pronadi-me-pocinje-sa-radom/, visited on 11.11.2024.

The thematic framework of interviews in local online media

From Table 3, it is clear that thematic areas vary across different media, with the dominance of certain topics providing insight into each outlet's focus. Slobodna reč primarily covers cultural topics, which make up the majority of its published interviews. This thematic focus reflects an interest in cultural events and developments within the local community. One such interview is titled "*Children See Jokić on TV and are Back on the Playgrounds—The Same Should be Done with Culture"* (Petrov, 2023)[11]. In addition to culture, politics also appears in several interviews, though to a lesser extent compared to culture-related topics. *Jugmedia* primarily focuses on social issues, with education being the most represented. An example of a social-themed interview is *"Danica Kocevska from Vlasotince: In a Time when Serbian Education is at its Lowest, the Example of a Teacher Shines Like a Guiding Star"* (Stanković, 2023)[12]. One interview focuses on health, while *Jugmedia* also covers topics related to sports and culture. This media outlet also features an interview addressing local issues, specifically local politics. *Pirotske vesti* similarly emphasize cultural topics, with less coverage of sports and social issues, each represented by a single interview. An example of a culture-focused interview is titled *"Nemanja Lilić from Pirot Blends Traditional Balkan Music with Irish Folk Music and Dance"* (*Jugmedia*, 2023)[13]. Overall, the analyzed media primarily focus on cultural topics, while political and social issues are covered to a lesser extent.

Table 3

The Thematic Framework of Interviews in Local Online Media

The media	Society	Culture	Politics	Health	Sports
Slobodna reč	0	5	3	0	0
Jugmedia	5	1	1	1	1
Pirotske vesti	1	3	0	0	1
Total	6	9	4	1	2

Interviewees and their fields in interview

Interviewees from the field of culture in the online media outlet *Slobodna Reč* come from various segments of cultural life. Among them are a musician, a young

[11] See:https://slobodnarec.com/deca-vide-jokica-ili-partizan-na-tv-u-i-ponovo-su-na-igralistima-isto-uraditi-sa-kulturom/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[12] See:https://jugmedia.rs/danica-kocevska-iz-vlasotinca-u-vremenu-kada-je-srpska-prosveta-na-dnu-primer-uciteljice-sija-poput-zvezde-vodilje/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[13] See:https://www.pirotskevesti.rs/pirocanac-nemanja-lilic-spojio-tradicionalnu-muziku-balkana-sa-irskom-tradicionalnom-muzikom-i-plesom/, visited on 11.11.2024.

writer, an audiovisual artist, the acting director of the National Museum in Vranje, a drama student, a screenwriter, and a director. Conversely, interviews covering political topics feature exclusively political figures. In all three political interviews, the interviewees are politicians. One notable example is an interview with the president of the Freedom and Justice Party, Dragan Đilas, titled *'I called on people from both sides in Vranje to communicate normally because they will be in power'* (Pešić, 2023)[14]. Jugmedia predominantly covers social issues, with interviewees on this topic mainly being educators, along with one journalist featured in an interview. The outlet also explores sports-related topics, including an interview with Dejan Čelar, head coach of the GFK Dubočica football club from Leskovac (Ivanović, 2023)[15]. Health-related topics are explored through an interview with a particular education specialist, while a distinctive culture-focused interview features the mayor of Pirot. In a discussion on local politics and social inclusion, the interviewee was a municipal president. *Pirotske Vesti* also conducted two interviews on cultural subjects, featuring a writer and a musician. A third interview, centered on a folklore festival, includes a conversation with the director of the Cultural Center, Miško Ćirić (Pirotske Vesti, 2023)[16]. In the field of sports, the interviewee was a sports coach, while in the social issues interview, the interviewee was the director of the Center for Missing and Kidnapped Children.

Conclusion

Kljajić predicts that interviews will continue to hold their place in journalism, as audiences remain interested in the format. However, the key challenge lies in how journalists adapt to changes and shape interviews in line with modern media trends (Kljajić, 2009). Based on the conducted analysis, it is evident that interviews remain a relevant journalistic genre in the digital landscape. However, their use in local online media in southern Serbia varies in frequency and thematic focus. The research findings indicate that the number of interviews in the analyzed local online media is relatively low. Over a one-year period, a total of 22 interviews were published across three media outlets, suggesting that this genre is not a dominant feature in the digital local media sphere. However, differences among media outlets were observed—Slobodna Reč and Jugmedia published more interviews compared to Pirotske Vesti. The analysis revealed that the classic interview format is the most common in local online media, while improvised and combined interviews are less frequent. However, there is a clear tendency toward innovation, particularly through

[14] See:https://slobodnarec.com/pozvao-sam-ljude-iz-obe-kolone-u-vranju-da-komuniciraju-normalno-jer-ce-oni-biti-vlast/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[15] See:https://jugmedia.rs/dubocica-pojacana-sa-4-superligasa-i-4-prvoligasa-prva-sezona-bice-teska-u-saveznom-rangu/, visited on 11.11.2024.

[16] See:https://www.pirotskevesti.rs/pocinje-medunarodni-folklorni-festival-manifetacija-koja-promovise-druzenje-kulturno-naslede-i-tradiciju/, visited on 11.11.2024.

the inclusion of multimedia content. This confirms that Dušan Slavković's traditional classification of interviews remains applicable in the digital landscape. In terms of subject matter, the research showed that interviews in the analyzed media are most often focused on culture, with fewer covering social issues and politics. Slobodna Reč and Pirotske Vesti primarily address cultural topics, while Jugmedia features the highest number of interviews related to social issues, particularly in the field of education. In local online media, interviewees generally come from areas that align with the dominant thematic categories of each outlet. Cultural interviews often feature artists, writers, and cultural workers, while education-related interviews typically include professors, school principals, and university faculty. This suggests that local online media tend to engage experts, which boosts the credibility and quality of the content. While interviews are not the most commonly used genre in local online media, their presence highlights the fact that digital platforms continue to value this format. The traditional division of interviews into classic, improvised, and combined types still applies, with the classic interview being the most dominant. The thematic focus varies among the analyzed media, but the selection of interviewees emphasizes a preference for expert sources. These findings offer insights into the transformation of journalistic genres in the digital environment and suggest potential avenues for further research in local digital journalism.

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Karakteristike Intervjua u Lokalnim Onlajn Medijima na Jugu Srbije

Tamara Tasić, istraživač-saradnik, Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Apstrakt

Intervju, kao novinarski žanr, prema Dušanu Slavkoviću, može biti klasični, improvizovani i kombinovani (Slavković, 1988). Ova klasifikacija intervjua nastala je u doba dominantnih štampanih, radijskih i televizijskih medija. U kontekstu sve većeg broja onlajn medija, postavlja se pitanje da li se tradicionalna klasifikacija intervjua primenjuje i u digitalnom novinarstvu. U radu se bavimo analizom intervjua kao novinarskog žanra u lokalnim onlajn medijima na jugu Srbije, primenom studije više slučajeva. Analiza obuhvata tri medija koja imaju rubriku „Intervju": Slobodna reč iz Vranja, Jugmedia iz Leskovca i Pirotske vesti iz Pirota. Cilj ovog rada je istražiti koliko često se u lokalnim onlajn medijima objavljuju intervjui, koja vrsta intervjua je najzastupljenija, koje su dominantne teme koje se obrađuju u intervjuima, kao i ko su najčešći sagovornici i iz kojih oblasti dolaze. Vremenski okvir istraživanja je od 1. januara 2023. godine do 31. decembra 2023. godine. Jedinica analize istraživanja je svaki pojedinačno objavljeni intervju u navedenim lokalnim onlajn medijima. Korpus analiziranih intervjua je 22 (Slobodna reč - 8; Jugmedia - 9; Pirotske vesti - 5). Nalazi kvantitativne i kvalitativne analize studije slučaja pokazuju da su u analiziranom periodu lokalni onlajn mediji varirali u učestalosti objavljivanja intervjua, kao i da je klasični intervju najzastupljenija vrsta. Dominantne teme u intervjuima onlajn medija Slobodna reč i Pirotske vesti su teme o kulturi, dok je u Jugmedii najviše intervjua iz obrazovanja. Sagovornici u ovim intervjuima uglavnom potiču iz istih oblasti kao i teme koje se obrađuju.

Ključne reči: intervju, lokalni onlajn mediji, Slobodna reč, Jugmedia, Pirotske vesti

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Respecting the Journalistic Code in Reporting: A Case Study of EuroPride[1]

Aleksandar Đokić[2][3], Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract

The Code of Journalists of Serbia prescribes the appropriate manner that is necessary to report on particularly sensitive social groups, while respecting ethical principles and professional norms (Article V, paragraph 4). Relying on the Code, the aim of this paper is to answer the research questions dealing with the way daily newspapers in Serbia report on EuroPride 2022 and the differences in reporting on sensitive social groups in relation to the quality of newspapers (serious daily, semi-tabloid and tabloid). A total of 23 texts were analyzed, the subject of which was EuroPride, published in the daily newspapers *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer* during the manifestation, from September 12 to 18, 2022. The results of the analysis showed that the newspapers *Danas* and *Večernje novosti* adhered to the Code of ethics, while *Informer* violated the Code of Journalists in 100% of published articles (N = 4) and reported discriminatorily about the LGBT+ community.

Keywords: EuroPride, ethics, LGBT+, journalists' code, discrimination

Respecting the Journalistic Code in Reporting: A Case Study of EuroPride

Introduction

The LGBT+ community represents an important segment of modern society, which increasingly strives to ensure equality and respect for diversity. However, despite advances in rights and visibility, it often faces obstacles, stereotypes and discrimination, especially in countries with more conservative social structures and in those ruled by a traditional patriarchal society such as Serbia. Reporting on LGBT+ issues in the media plays a key role in shaping public opinion and raising awareness of the rights of this community. EuroPride, as one of the most impressive manifestations of support for LGBT+ rights in Europe, gathers thousands of

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[2] Corresponding author: djokicaleksandar30@gmail.com

[3] ORCID: 0009-0000-9765-0402

participants every year and provides a platform for expressing equality and solidarity. Belgrade, as the host of one of the biggest EuroPride events, represented a specific meeting point of various social and cultural factors, which is why the focus of this paper is particularly on the manner the media followed and reported on this event and the LGBT+ population itself.

The media portrayal of the LGBT+ community and events such as EuroPride can go in the direction of education and empowerment, but also deepen prejudices and polarization, and therefore it is necessary to analyze the tone, content and approach of media reporting in the social and political context of Serbia, where issues of diversity and acceptance often cause public reactions.

When reporting on this topic, the media, i.e., journalists, often take a sensationalist approach in order to increase the circulation of their media. Čedomir Čupić explains sensationalism as "unexpected news that strongly affects a person's senses, and later on his perception. The goal of a sensation is to distract people or to divert their attention from important issues and problems of common life" (Čupić, 2010: 59).

He further writes that the sensations that appear in the media equate truth and lies, justice and injustice, good and evil, hatred and love, beauty and ugliness, and because of this, people lose their value orientations and compasses. Čupić claims that sensations and spectacles are the most often and best sold. "Media sensations, when it comes to personal lives, take on the characteristics of 'modern cannibalism'. They attack the personality not only to the point of 'baring' but to the 'bones'. Journalists and the media turn into 'piranhas' on dry land. An unbearable state of verbal and written terrorism, insignificance and irrelevance is created which makes everything senseless. The audience turns into a mass or a crowd hungry for other people's exposed intimates, stumbles and of the lowest passions. Media sensationalism is the rule of insignificance, banality, vulgarity and brutality in the public space" (Čupić, 2010: 61).

Who are the members of the LGBTI+ population? LGBTI+ stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Although these terms have an increasing global use, in different cultures other terms can be used to describe people who form relationships between the same sexes and those who display non-binary gender identities" (Being LGBTI+ in Eastern Europe: Report for Serbia, 2017).

In order to be able to talk about this population, it is necessary to define basic terms. The full acronym is LGBTTIAQ, with the shorter acronym LGBT+ being more generally accepted and known to the wider population.

- "Lesbian - a woman who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to women;
- Gay - a person who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same sex, is more often used for men, and is not wrong for women either;
- Bisexual person - a person who is emotionally, romantically and sexually attracted to both sexes;
- Transgender person – a person whose gender presentation and gender

expression are in contrast to their biological sex and traditional gender roles for their gender;

- Transsexual person – a person who intends to, is in the process of, or has changed (i.e., adjusted - from a subjective perspective) gender;
- Intersex – a person who was born with undefined distinctly male or female sexual organs;
- Asexual - a person characterized by the absence of sexual orientation or lack of interest and desire for sex;
- Queer - a term used to describe all persons who are not heterosexual, i.e., deviation from heteropatriarchal norms and principles, questioning and constant disruption of everything that is socially assumed and conditional. This word also refers to activism, theoretical trends and movements" (Stojanović, Vuković, Stanković, Ranđelović, 2016: 18).

If we talk about respecting and ensuring the rights of this population, we can conclude that they are at an extremely low level. In the annual Rainbow Europe Index survey conducted by the ILGA-Europe organization in 2017, which concerns the respect of LGBTI+ persons, the institutional and legal framework in the Republic of Serbia was rated at 30%.

This is supported by the fact that Serbian society is extremely traditional and patriarchal, and hate speech, discrimination, and violence against this population does not abate. As the sociologist Mršević (2013) writes in her work "Homophobia in Serbia and LGBT Rights", homophobia in contemporary Serbian society represents a widespread form of negative attitude toward non-heterosexuality. Homophobia manifests itself through various forms of public hate speech, but also through discrimination and violence motivated by homophobic attitudes. Of particular concern is the fact that homophobia leads to the denial of basic rights to the LGBT community, including the right to freedom of peaceful public assembly.

Explicit homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, intolerance, and discrimination against LGBTI+ people are increasingly present in the media, but also on social networking platforms. The LGBTI+ individuals face daily fear in Serbia, and their basic rights, such as the right to a transparent love life, expression of their gender, and the like, are threatened.

The results of the Annual LGBTI+ Survey show that sexual orientation and gender identities are recognized in Serbia, as well as in the countries of the European Union, as reasons for discrimination, violence, abuse and harassment in various areas of life. "The state of fundamental human rights of LGBTI+ citizens in Serbia is difficult to assess because there is no system of data collection at the national level, as well as relevant data on the prevalence of discriminated persons, especially from the aspect of the prevalence of LGBTI+ persons" (Annual LGBTI+ Survey, 2020: 1). Pride is precisely the place where basic human rights are sought, and European Pride is the subject of this paper.

Marija Radoman in her work "Research of the views of the LGBT population on the security sector" writes that "respect for the rights of the LGBT population can

be taken as an indicator of the democratization of the country both at the declarative legislative level and in practice. This minority has been the subject of intense public attention in Serbia since 2009, when the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination was passed and when the Pride Parade was banned. Until today, the issue of sexual minorities is set as very important for detecting those policies in Serbia that pretend to be or are close to liberal pro-European values or conservative organization of society" (Radoman, 2012: 150).

Previous research (Milivojević 2013, Čupić 2010) has shown that the media play the role of gatekeepers. Editors, as well as journalists, control which topics will be covered and released to the public. In addition to that role, the media largely shape our perception of reality, but also determine already existing attitudes. By influencing the role of the public, i.e., the formation of public opinion, the media can significantly contribute to the construction of an open, equal and tolerant society. However, the same media can also be a catalyst in inciting hatred, xenophobia, racism, homophobia and violence. It is important to remember that the function of the media is to examine, question and criticize. Moreover, fostering a culture of speech, critical thinking, respect for basic human rights, the right to equality and the right to protection against discrimination should be respected when reporting on members of the LGBT+ population.

When we talk about discrimination, it is necessary to explain the term itself. In their work "The problem of discrimination of the LGBT community in Serbia", Isaković and Žolt write that discrimination refers to "unjustified discrimination or unequal treatment of certain people or groups toward other individuals or groups who have different personal characteristics, which puts them in an unfavorable social position. Personal characteristics as a basis for discrimination can be religious or political beliefs, ethnic origin, race, health status, disability, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, etc." (Isaković & Žolt, 2016: 397).

They add that discrimination is based on "the existence of prejudices and stereotypes associated with these social groups, the basis of which are wrong, fixed, irrational or simplified opinions about others and, as a rule, it is very difficult to overcome them. Prejudices against different social groups, including the LGBT population, are acquired through social learning, most often learning from a model (role model). They represent a major social problem, and we can find their roots in the traditional way of life and traditional understandings" (Dobrić-Brankov, 2012: 62, according to Isaković & Žolt, 2016: 397).

This population has been sensationalized in the Serbian media for decades, which violates the Code of Journalists of Serbia[4], i.e., its numerous principles prescribed by the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) and the Association of Journalists of Serbia (UNS). At the same time, reporting from last year's EuroPride is the subject of this paper. In this paper, we will deal with checking how many daily newspapers *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer* reported on EuroPride, but also how many times they violated the principles prescribed in the Code of Journalists of Serbia.

[4] You can find the Code of Journalists of Serbia at the link here. Visited: 20. 1. 2023.

Reporting in Print Media - Respect for Journalistic Standards

It was said among theoreticians, as well as in journalistic circles, that print media would die out due to the invention of the Internet, the transfer of news to online platforms followed by the publication of news on social networks; however, this did not happen, because daily newspapers are still produced and found on newsstands throughout Serbia.

Vulić & Milovanović in their work "Factography and interpretation in the Serbian daily press" write that the pursuit of true, complete and timely information has been the basis of society since the beginning of the first patterns of civilization. "The emergence of the press as the first mass media contributed to the satisfaction of the need for information, on the basis of which individuals can further create judgments about reality and build a value system" (Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 307). In the following text, the authors state that "the press fulfills one of its basic functions, which is also one of the reasons for its creation - to provide accurate, complete and timely information, which can only be achieved by comprehensive research of the topic being written about and its placement in a wider social context" (Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 308). What the authors described is interpretive journalism. What is an interpretation? Vulić and Milovanović write that it is:

> "an integral element of the daily press, and according to theorists, it is one of the ways in which it has remained a competitive medium and contained its readers even in the era of the Internet. Providing a deeper analysis, shedding light on the background of events, revealing the hidden by answering the questions of why and what to do next - the characteristics are a good interpretation, which 'makes' the reader think and take a critical stance, thus becoming an active subject of public communication" (Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 308).

Matić (2012) noted that the crisis has gripped the media in Serbia in recent years. In her work "Structural causes of the news press crisis in Serbia", she points out that the crisis led "to the commercialization and tabloidization of the media, but also affected, among other things, the quality of interpretation in the press. The news press crisis in Serbia is partly a reflection of the world press crisis, but it is essentially caused by the specific characteristics of the domestic media sector" (Matić, 2012: 167 according to Vulić & Milovanović, 2016: 308).

In his book "Media ethics and media lynching" Professor Čedomir Čupić, PhD, from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade points out that the role of the media and journalists is three-fold: "to transmit information essential for public life; to mediate between the government and citizens, that is, the state and civil society; and to be the first external critic and controller of the government" (Čupić, 2010: 13). According to him, freedom of expression and freedom of criticism are prerequisites for other professional standards, among which he singles out independence and integrity, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, appropriate attitude toward sources of information, respect for persons who are the subject of information, elimination of any form of discrimination and responsibility of journalists (Čupić, 2010).

"Freedom of expression and freedom of criticism are a prerequisite for other professional standards. Freedom of expression stems from one of the basic human rights - the right to freedom. Without freedom there are neither free individuals nor a free society" (Čupić, 2010: 14). For Professor Čupić, the responsibility of journalists when reporting is twofold.

> "Firstly, to act in accordance with professional standards and secondly, to resist any external pressure that calls into question the right of citizens to be informed about everything of public importance in the community. A journalist is also responsible to the sources of information, the individuals about whom he speaks and writes, professional standards, professional journalistic organizations, personal beliefs and convictions, i.e., his own conscience and editorial management" (Čupić, 2010: 43).

Jevtović and Despotović, in the book "Geopolitics of Media", indicate the great importance of media representation and the media for creating public opinion.

> "The media is a strong factor of socialization, but also a source of political power, so the question of media ownership and control over content becomes key to the formation of media representation. The corporate interests of media owners are key to determining the editorial policy of the media, while media whose main goals are to make a profit and spread their own ideology, views, beliefs, opinions and attitudes lack a sense of responsibility toward the society they are supposed to serve - they abandon their role as guardians of public interests and turn to junk media content, tabloidization, sensationalism, censorship, etc." (Despotović and Jevtović, 2019 in Stevanović: 2022: 12).

Respecting the journalistic Code when reporting from an event implies that journalists, i.e., media workers, follow all moral and ethical standards prescribed by the Code and adhere to them when reporting. It includes numerous principles, some of which are truthful reporting, journalistic attention, respect for privacy, independence from pressure, prevention of corruption and conflict of interest, relation to sources of information, use of honorable means, respect for authorship and protection of journalists. Journalists are obliged to respect the laws, and to think in advance about the consequences of their reporting on society, as well as individuals. However, compliance with this Code is not mandatory and there are no sanctions for journalists or media that violate them.

That is why it is of great importance that journalists and the media are self-disciplined and adhere to the Code. Only compliance with the prescribed Code helps to ensure public trust in the media, which will also contribute to the public interest.

In her work "Why diversity is important", Snježana Milovojević, PhD, Professor from the Faculty of Political Sciences points out that reporting on diversity refers to the presentation of "otherness" (characteristics different from those that we/ the majority possess), i.e., sensitivity to and fair treatment of diversity in the media.

> "Ignoring, suppressing and excluding diversity results in the dominance of majority groups over minority groups. The consequence of such dominance is discrimination, which in relation to different groups can be manifested in many ways. But the end result of all those ways is always the same: minorities are excluded from the generally

accepted, and their experiences remain hidden and unnoticed" (Milivojević, 2012: 165).

She further explains that according to many contemporary theories, media representation is considered central to the process of identity formation. "It is also crucial for the public perception of actors, it affects the formation of social attitudes toward minorities, including their public acceptance or rejection. That is why the consequences of inappropriate representation are both serious and great" (Milivojević, 2012: 65).

Historically, LBGT+ contents and their representation in the media were mostly of a negative character. Therefore, the combination of insufficient visibility and minimal, but at the same time negative visibility, certainly contributed to the negative perception of the LGBT+ population in the general public. As Judith Butler states in her book "Imitation and Gender Insubordination", it is not only the dominance of heteronormative ideologies and visibility, but also socio-cultural conditioning, in addition to visual culture that promotes "homosexual invisibility" (Butler, 1993 according to Stevanović, 2022: 3).

The image of this population in the media is presented in three ways: neutral, positive and negative. The research numbers of relevant organizations that will be used in this paper show that the media reports on this topic in all three ways, depending on the media policy that is represented.

Research and the Media Image of the LGBTI+ Population in the Media

In Serbia, the visibility of the LGBTI+ community in the media has increased significantly in recent years. As it is written in the research "Media analysis of the representation of the LGBTI community in the Serbian media during 2020[5]", with the growth of the visibility of the LGBTI community, the reporting of the problems faced by this community has also increased. "While in previous years (especially in the first decade of the 2000s) the reporting mostly concerned the (non)holding of the Pride Parade, in the previous year the media in Serbia reported on various topics when it comes to the LGBTI community" (Đorđević and Omeragić, 2021: 3). In this research, they add that the pandemic of the COVID-19 virus, which has affected the entire world, has affected the issue of legalizing same-sex unions, and it has finally become actual. This was also related to the fact that Serbia, as a country, committed itself through the Washington Agreement to work on the decriminalization of homosexuality in the world (Đorđević and Omeragić, 2021).

When it comes to their analysis in 2020, they write that:

> "the reporting narrative on this topic in Serbia was mostly neutral and the principles of journalistic ethics and the prohibition of discrimination were respected. On the other hand, the transmission of statements by certain members of parliament or church officials in which members of the LGBTI community are insulted and belittled, and their way of life is called sinful or to blame for the pandemic caused by the COVID-19

[5] The full research is available at the link here. Visited: 28. 1. 2023.

virus, contributes to the creation of negative and homophobic attitudes in society, that is, such attitudes become normalized year after year. It is also noticeable that the attitudes of the right-wing media have not changed, that is, the criticisms and warnings of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the Press Council are still not effective" (Đorđević and Omeragić, 2021: 4).

According to the report "Annual LGBTI survey[6]" of the Center for Research and Development of Society - IDEAS and the Gay Lesbian Info Center GLIC, which was conducted in 2020, it shows that 82% of respondents believe that Serbia is not a good place for LGBTI people to live and that only 14% of them feel free to express their identity.

"As in previous years, violence is at the top of the list of problems that LGBTI+ people face on a daily basis. As many as 59% of respondents stated that they had been exposed to some form of violence in the last year. The data indicating the frequency of sexual violence reported by 14% of respondents is particularly worrying. Emotional violence is still the most frequent form of violence against LGBTI+ people and was experienced by 56% of participants in the research. When it comes to physical violence, the same level of exposure is shown as in the previous research cycle in 2018, i.e., this form of violence was reported by 8% of respondents" (Annual LGBTI+ survey, 2020).

The focus of this year's research was also on the position of LGBTI+ people in the field of work and employment. The results show that 16% of LGBTI+ workers who were looking for a job believe that they have been discriminated against in the last year, while 24% believe that they have been discriminated against at work. A high degree of mistrust of LGBTI+ citizens in the state and the existing protection mechanisms against violence and discrimination, as well as insufficient information, are key factors that lead to the fact that LGBTI+ people are not ready to use the available protection mechanisms.

As the basis of their demands toward the state, LGBTI+ citizens stated "improvement of the legislative framework, and above all the regulation of same-sex unions, improvement of protection mechanisms against violence and discrimination, raising the general population's awareness of equality and improvement of the role of education in the field of tolerance development and protection against discrimination of LGBTI+ students. In order to improve the position of LGBTI+ citizens, it is necessary for state institutions to urgently take concrete measures to demonstrate a greater commitment to the protection of the human rights of LGBTI+ persons. Likewise, employers should continuously work on improving protection mechanisms in the working environment in order to achieve full inclusion in the labor market and ensure the right to dignified work" (Annual LGBTI+ Research, 2020).

If we look at the Report on monitoring compliance with the Serbian Code of Journalists in daily newspapers in the period from July 1 to December 31, 2021[7], the

[6] Full research here. Visited: 27. 1. 2023.

[7] The entire report is available at the link here. Visited: 28. 1. 2023.

daily newspaper *Informer* is in third place with 949 articles in headlines that violate the Code of Serbian Journalists, while *Večernje novosti* is in fifth place with 586 articles in headlines that violate the Serbian Journalist Code. The daily newspaper *Danas* violated the Code of Serbian Journalists in 45 articles, and is in last place. During the six-month monitoring, the results of the report of the Press Council showed that 5,715 articles violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia, and in this period the daily newspaper *Alo* violated the Code in most articles.

In the same period, in 2020 alone, from July 1 to December 31[8], there were about 2,000 fewer violations than in 2021, more precisely, the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated in 3,724 texts, according to the Media Monitoring Report of the Press Council. In 2020, *Večernje novosti* took third place with 627 articles, while the daily *Informer* was in fifth place with 509 articles. The daily newspaper *Danas* violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia in 35 articles and occupies the penultimate place.

According to the latest Review of the work of the complaints commission of the Press Council for the year 2022[9], 57 complaints were resolved and in all cases the code was violated, while 5 complaints were resolved in which there were no violations of the code. According to the Press Council, most complaints were filed by individuals - 68 of them filed a complaint with this self-regulatory body, followed by 15 civil society organizations. Media that complained comprised 66 online media, 19 print media and 1 news agency. The most common violations of the Code are Truthfulness of Reporting and Responsibility of Journalists with 33 violations and Journalistic Attention and Respect for Privacy with 26 violations.

Methodology

Research Methodology

The research subject in this paper is the way in which the print media Danas, Večernje novosti and Informer reported and respected the Code of Serbian Journalists when reporting on EuroPride, which was held from September 12 to 18, 2022 in Belgrade. The verification will be done using scientific research methods where the presented hypotheses will be proven or disproved - a qualitative-quantitative analysis of the content of the mentioned media.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of the paper “Respecting the Journalistic Code in Reporting: A Case Study of EuroPride” are:

1. Determine how many texts were published in the period from September 12 to 18, 2022 which refer to EuroPride

[8] The 2020 Press Council report is available at the link here. Visited: 28. 1. 2023.

[9] An overview of the work of the Press Council's complaints commission can be found here. Visited: 12. 2. 2023.

2. Determine the number of texts in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride

Results

In the period from September 12 to 18, 2022, i.e., at the time of the start and end of EuroPride in Belgrade, 874 texts were published in the daily newspapers *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* and *Informer*, which is shown in *Table 1* by the dates of newspaper publication. It is important to note that the daily newspaper *Danas* and *Informer* are published on weekends as two issues, while *Večernje novosti* had their editions during the weekend as well, that is, on September 17 and 18.

During the analyzed period, the daily newspaper *Danas* published 224 articles, *Večernje novosti* published 369 articles, and the daily newspaper *Informer* published 281 articles.

Table 1

Display of texts in daily newspapers during coverage of EuroPride in Belgrade in 2022

Date	Number of texts in daily newspaper *Danas*	Number of texts in daily newspaper *Večernje novosti*	Number of texts in daily newspaper *Informer*	Total number of texts
12. 9. 2022.	38	44	49	131
13. 9. 2022.	36	56	46	138
14. 9. 2022.	37	47	46	130
15. 9. 2022.	39	60	47	146
16. 9. 2022.	41	56	46	143
17. 9. 2022.	33	106 (67 + 39)	47	186
18. 9. 2022.				
Total number of texts	**224**	**369**	**281**	**874**

In the monitored period, the daily newspaper *Danas* and *Večernje novosti* reported daily, while *Informer* did not write about EuroPride on September 12 and 15 (*Table 2*). The daily newspaper *Danas* reported the most about EuroPride with a total of 12 articles, followed by *Večernje novosti* with 7 articles and *Informer* with 4 articles, and the subject of EuroPride was in 23 articles of these printed media.

Table 2:

Number of articles on EuroPride coverage by day in daily newspapers in Serbia

Date	Number of texts on EuroPride in daily newspaper *Danas*	Number of texts on EuroPride in daily newspaper *Večernje novosti*	Number of texts on EuroPride in daily newspaper *Informer*	Total number of texts
12. 9. 2022.	1	1	0	2
13. 9. 2022.	1	1	1	3

14. 9. 2022.	2	1	1	4
15. 9. 2022.	2	1	0	3
16. 9. 2022.	2	1	1	4
17. 9. 2022.	4	2 (1+1)	1	7
18. 9. 2022.				
Total number of texts	**12**	**7**	**4**	**23**

Both daily newspapers *Danas* and *Večernje novosti* tried to respect the principles prescribed in the Serbian Journalists' Code when reporting. However, it can be seen in *Table 3* that the daily newspaper *Informer* violated the Code of Journalists of Serbia four times in the same number of texts when reporting on EuroPride.

Table 3:
The number of texts in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride

Date	**The number of articles in the daily newspaper *Danas* in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride**	**The number of articles in the daily newspaper *Večernje novosti* in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride**	**The number of articles in the daily newspaper *Informer* in which the Code of Journalists of Serbia was violated when reporting from EuroPride**	**Total number of texts**
12. 9. 2022.	0	0	0	0
13. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
14. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
15. 9. 2022.	0	0	0	0
16. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
17. 9. 2022.	0	0	1	1
18. 9. 2022.		0		
Total number of texts	**0**	**0**	**4**	**4**

In the text "Porfirije: We are not for the gay parade, they are raping our souls and minds" published on September 13, section IV Responsibility of journalists is violated, where it is written that "a journalist must oppose all those who violate human rights or advocate any kind of discrimination, hate speech and incitement of violence" (Code of Journalists of Serbia, 2015: 15).

Picture 1:
"Porfirije: Nismo za gej-paradu, SILUJU NAM DUŠU I PAMET";
photo: print *Informer* / 13. 9. 2023.

VAŽNO PATRIJARH SPC O NAMETNUTOJ 'LGBT KRIZI'

SUTNJA U BEOGRADU
Skoro 30.000 ljudi izašlo na ulice

Porfirije: Nismo za gej-paradu, SILUJU NAM DUŠU I PAMET!

Patrijarh srpski Porfirije izjavio je da SPC ne vodi 'krstaški rat' protiv gej populacije, ali da ne podržava održavanje gej-parade, takozvanog 'Evroprajda' u Beogradu.

Prema njegovim rečima, SPC nikako ne želi, niti podržava, bilo kakvo nasilje i progon LGBT osoba u Srbiji, ali isto tako odbija nametanje njihovih pravila.

Nećemo egzibicionizam

Crkva i većina ljudi neće egzibicionizam i nametanje stavova pojedinaca iz LGBT populacije
Patrijarh Porfirije

OŠTAR NA REČIMA
Patrijarh Porfirije

- Ko kaže da mi vodimo krstaški rat protiv LGBT populacije?! Nama drugi propagiraju svoje ideje i nameću ih. Hoće da nama kažu i nametnu šta i kakvi treba da budemo. Mi smo u ovoj priči oni koji su izloženi nasilju. Siluju nam pamet, siluju nam dušu! Hteli bi, ali neće moći... Mi smo protiv svake vrste nasilja, protiv mržnje, prezira, progona i žigosanja i onih koji dele te ideje, ali isto tako ne prihvatamo da nama na silu nameću bilo šta - poručio je patrijarh Porfirije ispred Hrama Svetog Save, gde je u nedelju održan moleban kojem je prisustvovalo oko 30.000 ljudi.

- Unutar LGBT zajednice postoje ljudi koji dostojanstveno nose svoj krst i bore se sa svojim iskušenjima, ali ne paradiraju naokolo. Crkva i većina ljudi protive se egzibicionističkom ponašanju i nametanju stavova pojedinih pripadnika tog dela populacije. Bog je stvorio brak i porodicu i na tome se temelji ljudski poredak i civilizacija kakvu poznajemo - istakao je patrijarh Porfirije. Z. J.

UREDNIK DNEVNOG LISTA 'DANAS' NAPAO PREMIJERKU

Petrović: Ana nije LGBT, ona je naprednjak Brnabić: Tako diskriminiše 'prosvećena elita'

Glavni urednik lista 'Danas' Dragoljub Petrović optužio je SPC da se ponaša "kao partija', a premijerku Anu Brnabić da je 'nije LGBT osoba, već naprednjak'!?! Brnabićeva je odmah odgovorila na ovu provokaciju:

'Ovo je suština diskriminacije koju niti vidi 'prosvećena elita', niti ih to interesuje. Ako si gej, možeš da budeš samo gej i tačka. To je jedino što te definiše. Nisi premijer, nego LGBT. Nisi dan SNS, nego LGBT. I ne vide nijedan problem u tome, već misle da je to nešto pametno", napisala je Brnabićeva na Tviteru.

This article was also violated in the text "VERY DANGEROUS MESSAGES FROM AMERICAN AMBASSADOR HILL - America is pushing us INTO THE LGBT WAR!" which was published on September 16. Here, apart from section IV Responsibility of journalists, section V Journalistic attention, i.e., article 4, was also violated, in which it is written that a journalist "must be aware of the danger of discrimination that can be spread by the media and will do everything to avoid discrimination based on, among other things, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, language, religion, political and other opinion, national or social origin" (Code of Journalists of Serbia, 2015: 18).

Picture 2:
"VEOMA OPASNE PORUKE AMERIČKOG AMBASADORA HILA – Amerika nas gura U LGBT RAT!"; photo: print *Informer* / 16. 9. 2023.

VEOMA OPASNE PORUKE AMERIČKOG AMBASADORA HILA

Amerika nas gura U LGBT RAT!

Kristofer Hil, sam dan pošto je MUP zvanično zabranio gej-paradu, rekao da je "siguran da će se u subotu šetati"!?!

AUTORSKI TEKST DRAGOSLAVA BOKANA

LEVI ČEKIĆ I DESNI NAKOVANJ, oba udaraju na srpsku državu

Both sections were also violated in the text "LGBT ORGANIZATIONS IGNORE PROHIBITIONS BY THE MINISTRY OF POLICE - Gays do not give up walking in the city" which was published in a double issue on September 17 and 18.

Picture 3:
"LGBT ORGANIZACIJE IGNORIŠU ZABRANE MINISTARSTVA POLICIJE – Gejevi ne odustaju od šetnje gradom"; photo: print *Informer* / 17, 18. 9. 2023.

LGBT ORGANIZACIJE IGNORIŠU ZABRANU MINISTARSTVA POLICIJE

Gejevi ne odustaju od šetnje gradom!

Poštovaće se zakon ove države

Mislim da će se poštovati zakon i odluka MUP. I neću više da se bavim tom temom koja je pokvareno nametnuta narodu

Aleksandar Vučić, predsednik Republike Srbije

Conclusion

Reporting on socially sensitive groups or marginalized groups in the Serbian media, such as the LGBT+ population, is extremely difficult and sensitive. On the example of reporting from EuroPride, it can be seen that the daily newspaper *Danas* and the daily newspaper *Večernje novosti* respected all professional and ethical standards and principles. These two publications did not use sensationalist headlines, which would further interest the readers, but reported on the event in an objective manner and in the public interest.

The daily *Informer*, unlike the other two media, used sensational headlines and capital letters and thus harmed this population in its reporting. In the focus of this media's reporting were the officials of the European Union, but also the US ambassador to Serbia, as well as the "threat to the safety" of citizens, if EuroPride takes place, and all of this led to the spread of hate speech against the LGBT+ population.

The role of the media in today's society is extremely significant. Precisely for these reasons, the media professionals must follow the principles prescribed by both journalist associations in the Code of Journalists of Serbia, which state that it is the duty of journalists to follow professional and ethical principles, as well as to resist all pressures to violate these principles. Fostering language culture, as well as freedom of thought, speech and expression and media independence, are notions that are defined and prescribed by this Code. However, these values are not part of the editorial policy of certain media, such as *Informer*, which on a daily basis violates both ethical and professional principles when reporting on socially sensitive topics. In addition, the media has a very important role when it comes to the development and functioning of democracy; this is of extreme importance when we talk about the rights of the LGBT+ population in Serbia, because the media is a pillar of democracy in every country.

Respect for human rights refers to respect and protection of the rights of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity - especially when it comes to LGBT+ people. This includes the right to freedom of expression, equality before the law, protection from discrimination, the right to life and security, as well as other rights that are enshrined in law. The main goal is to ensure that all LGBT+ persons are equal and treated equally in society. However, this is not possible in all parts of the world because LGBT+ people are still discriminated against and their basic rights are not respected. Apart from the above-mentioned rights, it is important to mention the right to education, the right to access health care and other aspects of life.

It is extremely important to note that respect for the human rights of LGBT+ persons is not only a matter of rights and fairness of a system in the state, but also important in order to strengthen society as a whole in every country. Equal rights and equal treatment of all citizens lead to the creation of a stronger community characterized by solidarity and functioning according to the principle of equality and tolerance. All this leads to the fact that respecting this population is courageous and

crucial for strengthening democracy, the rule of law and a society based on human rights and equality for all.

In order for objective, true and timely information to reach citizens, journalists, editors and media owners must respect all professional principles and standards when reporting, because only in this way can reporting on marginalized groups be improved. Apart from the Serbian Code of Journalists, there are numerous manuals that define how to report on major events, but also on topics that are socially sensitive.

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Poštovanje novinarskog kodeksa prilikom izveštavanja – studija slučaja Evroprajd

Aleksandar Đokić, Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Nišu, Srbija

Apstrakt

Kodeks novinara Srbije propisuje na koji način je neophodno izveštavati o posebno osetljivim društvenim grupama, uz poštovanje etičkih principa i profesionalnih normi (Član V, stav 4). Oslanjajući se na Kodeks, cilj ovog rada je da odgovori na istraživačka pitanja Na koji način su dnevne novine u Srbiji izveštavale o Evroprajdu 2022. godine i Kakve su razlike u izveštavanju o osetljivim društvenim grupama u odnosu na kvalitet novina (ozbiljni dnevni list, polutabloid i tabloid). Analizirana su ukupno 23 teksta, čiji je predmet izveštavanja bio Evroprajd, objavljena u dnevnim novinama *Danas*, *Večernje novosti* i *Informer*, u periodu trajanja manifestacije, od 12. do 18. septembra 2022. godine. Rezultati analize pokazali su da su se novine *Danas* i *Večernje novosti* pridržavale etičkog kodeksa, dok je *Informer* u sto odsto objavljenih tekstova (N = 4) prekršio Kodeks novinara i diskriminatorno izveštavao o LGBT+ zajednici.

Ključne reči: Evroprajd, etika, LGBT+, kodeks novinara, diskriminacija

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Practicing Journalism Between Legal Controls and Ethical Responsibility Under Media Legislation in Algeria[1]

Farek Said [2,3], Associate Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Badji Mokhtar University, Annaba, Algeria

Abstract

This research paper seeks to clarify the legal controls and ethical responsibility for practicing journalism under Algerian media legislation. Journalists are granted rights in exchange for their commitment to adhering to journalistic ethics. They are also required to implement the provisions of the law, which stipulates that the general principles of the state, public order, and society must not be violated, and that the rights and freedoms of individuals must be respected. Meanwhile, regulatory texts stipulate that journalists must adhere to the principles of ethical responsibility stemming from their moral and professional conscience and adhere to social responsibility toward their community. Through our reading of Media Law 12-05, the study concludes that the practice of journalism and the right to expression are constitutionally and legally guaranteed. This guarantees the protection of media activity, which is contingent upon journalists' implementation of the provisions of the 2012 Media Law. The articles and clauses of the law reveal the means and tools of the journalistic profession and its ethics, ensuring journalists' freedom and regulating their journalistic practice to achieve honest journalistic performance.

Keywords: journalism, legal controls, ethical responsibility, legislation, Media Law 12-05, Algeria

Practicing Journalism Between Legal Controls and Ethical Responsibility Under Media Legislation in Algeria

Introduction

Practicing journalism is considered a constitutionally and legally guaranteed freedom, in accordance with ethical principles embraced by journalists and legal controls for practicing their media profession. A journalist practices their profession

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[2] Corresponding author: farek said

[3] ORCID (https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1009-3722)

through their affiliation with a governmental or private institution, working to gather information and news and disseminating them to the public through the media outlet through which they practice their profession. Researchers and jurists in the field of media have differed regarding the extent to which a journalist adheres to legal controls for practicing their media freedom, considering that practitioners of journalism and media duties provide a service to society, requiring them to be dedicated to their work and aware of the importance of its issues. Accordingly, journalism has a social function, and failure to fulfill its social responsibility results in the loss of the rights of those benefiting from journalistic and media services, in various branches of media and journalistic practices. This was established by the Algerian legislator in the 2012 Media Law, which regulated the journalistic profession and outlined articles containing the ethics and morals of journalistic practice. The latter also follows the principles of freedom to practice it, which can only be seriously achieved if legal guarantees and controls are in place. In addition, there is the issue of its moral responsibility, while ensuring the right to access information and data, and providing appropriate conditions for media practice, including access to information sources, attendance at events, and the right to access information.

The importance of this topic stems primarily from the importance of journalism, and the effective role it plays as a moral embodiment of the fourth estate in the state. Consequently, this profession has a social function that cannot be overlooked, given its influence in guiding public opinion and shaping events. This is a matter of grave importance and cannot be left without regulation or oversight, especially from a legal and ethical perspective. The reason for regulation is that the noble and sublime mission of media professionals in raising awareness in societies and informing public opinion does not become subject to compromise in light of the challenges facing honest and ethical journalistic performance.

From this perspective, we will clarify the reality of practicing the journalistic profession, as guaranteed by the Media Law for journalists, while determining its relationship to the practice of their journalistic profession. We will also highlight their ethical responsibilities and the extent of their adherence to legal controls in light of the new legislation. Based on this, we pose the following question:

What is the reality of practicing journalism between legal controls and ethical responsibility under Algerian media legislation?

The objectives of this research paper stem from the need to address what Algerian legislation stipulates regarding the practice of journalism, the importance of which is evident in:

- Clarifying the legal controls for practicing journalism under Algerian legislation.
- Clarifying the ethical responsibility of the journalistic profession through the Algerian Media Law of 2012.

In this paper, we adopted a descriptive approach to clarify the reality of practicing journalism in light of journalists' commitment to legal controls and ethical responsibility. This is in accordance with a plan to divide the research paper into

three parts: the first part was devoted to research concepts, the second part addressed the legal controls for practicing journalism under Algerian media legislation, and the third part focused on the ethical responsibility for practicing journalism under Law 12-05 on the Media. Finally, we provided a conclusion and recommendations.

Research Concepts

Legal Controls

Legal controls refer to laws related to professional regulation. In media law, they refer to the rules that define the necessary provisions for publishing, printing, radio and television broadcasting, as well as media practice. These laws are in the form of a single law, such as publishing, printed matter, or press and media laws, for example, the laws of media institutions (Qadem, 2017: 129).

They also represent a set of rules that journalists must adhere to while practicing journalism. They are in the form of regulatory texts, which in turn provide legal protection.

Ethical Responsibility

Responsibility is a professional commitment stemming from the lofty principles and goals of the profession. John Honberg defined it as "the fundamental obligations that every journalist must possess, which are primarily the need to work to achieve fair, comprehensive, accurate, truthful, and clear coverage, while taking into account the protection of sources and the public interest, by respecting the law and the rights of individuals' privacy and correcting errors when they occur" (Honberg, 1996: 51). It is journalists' adherence to ethical values and fundamental principles. This commitment is considered a type of personal duty that results in sound and ethical behavior, through their adherence to responsibility, credibility, and impartiality.

Journalism

The word "journalism" is used to mean "press," something related to the printing, publishing, and dissemination of news and information. It is also called "journal," meaning both newspaper and press, and encompasses both the newspaper and journalist (Tawil, 1984: 13).

Ismail Ibrahim defines it as "all activities related to practicing the profession of collecting and tracking information, ideas, and opinions. It is a mirror reflecting everything that takes place in society and the facts and events that are based on it, whether they appear or remain hidden behind the scenes" (Ismail, 1998: 5).

Therefore, journalism is considered a media outlet that broadcasts news to the public in various fields, enabling them to learn about the various events taking place around them, whether political, social, or otherwise.

Media Legislation

Legislation refers to the process by which the competent authority in a state establishes legal rules to regulate societal relations, within the limits of its jurisdiction and in accordance with established procedures (Qasaysia, 2014: 221-222).

In the field of media, it refers to binding rules related to media activity, regulating its practices and setting standards governing its various activities. Legislation is generally divided into legal rules related to content, those related to media institutions in terms of their organization and management, those related to their rights and duties, and those related to the profession (Hejab, 2004: 140).

As for Algerian media legislation, it represents a set of legal rules issued by the country's legislative authority to regulate the media sector in its various branches: audio, visual, written, and even electronic, in media laws.

Theoretical Basis of the Research

Theories of Professional Media Practice

Theory of Freedom

This theory dates back to the European Renaissance, when the British Parliament issued a resolution prohibiting any prior censorship of publication (Ilm al-Din, 2012: 314). Individuals were permitted to publish newspapers without requesting a license from the authorities. This theory also views humans as rational beings; according to one of its pioneers, John Milton, people have the ability to differentiate between right and wrong. Among the basic elements upon which the theory of freedom is based, Swedish media thinker Dennis Mcquille (Mcquail, 2018: 634) argues as follows:

- Publication must be free from any prior censorship.
- Publication and distribution must be open to any person or group without prior government authorization.
- Criticism of any government, political party, or official must be subject to punishment even after publication.
- Coercion or compulsion against journalists must be prohibited.
- All restrictions on all information must be imposed and disseminated through legal means.
- Journalists must enjoy professional independence within their journalistic institutions (Abdul Majeed, Media Legislation, 2005: 22).
- The goals of the media, according to this theory, are to inform and entertain, as well as to participate in discovering the truth and monitoring government activities.
- Defamation, undermining prevailing moral values, and subversive activities are strictly prohibited during times of chaos and war (Mahna, 2002: 74).

Despite the factors that attempt to break this theory somewhat from the absolute rule of power and its restraint on the media by granting a form of freedom

to information and news, its implementation has encountered many obstacles, the most important of which is that the theory aims to protect media owners and cannot provide equal expression regarding the rights of editors, media professionals, editors-in-chief, or the public. It also appears as if it is designed to protect freedom of opinion and belief and has little to say about information, especially regarding access and privacy (Zadeh Souih, 2018-2019: 10).

The Ethical Duty Theory

This theory by Algerian researcher Azzi Abdel Rahman (2016) is based on four basic principles, which in turn branch out into sub-fields that accommodate developments in media practice. These are:

The first principle: Preventing harm to others. This means that media professionals should refrain from causing harm to others. This represents the highest level of ethical value. Examples include avoiding slander, insults, cursing, violating individual privacy, plagiarism, insults, abuse, ignoring, exclusion, spreading lies, fallacies, misinformation, and inflammatory propaganda.

The second principle: Conferring added value on others. This principle is incorporated within the field of media by contributing to the advancement of society through the media. This means that the message must be ethical in its informational, cognitive, cultural, social, economic, and political dimensions.

The third principle: Listening to and caring for those affected, in need, oppressed, afflicted, and those seeking help, both in times of security and reassurance and in times of crisis and exceptional circumstances.

The fourth rule: relates to learning and activating the practice of constructive criticism, prohibition, change, and guidance in the best possible way. Constructive criticism becomes an ethical media responsibility, given its contribution to advice, guidance, and the inculcation of various values. Therefore, the ultimate goal is for everyone to emerge as a winner from the purposeful media and ethical process. Thus, freedom of the press is automatically strengthened and embodied in reality, without resorting to other means such as deterrence and punishment (Azzi, 2016: 59-65).

From this theory, we conclude that ethics play an important role in the practice of journalism by journalists working for a media institution and their full adherence to the principles and values of professional journalistic ethics.

Legal Controls for Practicing Journalism Under Algerian Law

Most texts guarantee freedom of the media and the press, but in practice, freedom of the media and the press is restricted. The issue here is the availability of rules that support freedom of the media in preparing media work. The law guarantees the journalist's right to access official reports and information, enabling him to access them, provided that their disclosure is not harmful to the public interest or in violation of the provisions of the law. Therefore, legal controls are legal restrictions imposed by Algerian media constitutions and laws on journalists, starting with the 1990 law

and ending with the 2014 law. We have summarized these in common points from the various articles and clauses. The latter, in turn, imposed restrictions and guarantees on media practice. Controls are also legal mechanisms represented by legal texts aimed at regulating the professional practice of journalism and ensuring compliance with legal obligations within the journalistic profession. They also constitute a set of legal obligations imposed on journalists, and violations are punishable by law. These obligations are as follows (Zad Souih, 2018-2019, pp. 98-116):

Respect for the General Components of the State

Non-infringement of the general principles of the state, which branches out into:

A - Non-infringement of Legislation

The constitution is considered the basic legislation from which all other laws derive their existence. Regarding the constitution, the media legislator has been keen to ensure its respect, given that it constitutes the frame of reference for the relationship between the ruling regime and the citizens living within the state's geographical borders. Whenever the constitution is promulgated, regardless of its form or method of issuance, it is the basic law of the state.

B - Non-infringement of National Sovereignty

The legislator obligates media institutions and all individuals practicing this media profession to respect and refrain from infringing on national sovereignty. This is a general principle that must not be made a subject of media and journalistic coverage, given the potential for attacks intended to create chaos and unrest within or outside the country.

C - Non-infringement of National Security

Algeria is committed to protecting its security and its sovereign and national entity, in accordance with its laws, which criminalize and punish anything that might undermine its unity. This includes the Media Law, which addresses the field of media activity and emphasizes the need for journalists and media institutions to respect state security and not make it a subject for discussion and analysis to the extent that it is infringing upon it. The state governs these institutions through legal mechanisms and media codes of conduct.

Algeria is also committed to protecting its security and defending against new threats posed by the modern technological revolution in communications, by achieving cybersecurity, which has become a priority for Algerian defense policy.

Not Violating the General Principles of Society

Media professionals, while performing their duties, must act with a social conscience, respect their responsibility toward public opinion and its interests, adhere

to the social and cultural values embraced by society, and refrain from publishing anything that offends these principles, including:

- Not violating the Islamic religion or other religions.
- Not violating national identity, which is represented by the Islamic religion, the national language, and history.

Respecting the Rights and Freedoms of Individuals in Society

Respecting the Freedoms of Individuals in Society

Algerian media legislation has established the duties of journalists to refrain from infringing on the freedoms of individuals in order to achieve their goals. Infringement of these freedoms must be within the limits permitted by law, which journalists must adhere to through their social and ethical responsibilities. These freedoms vary and are linked to media practice, particularly in investigative media work.

Respect for Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Freedom of opinion and expression in the media is addressed in national constitutions and legislation as one of the most important human freedoms. If a person loses it, they certainly cannot enjoy other freedoms. It is the source of many other freedoms.

Algerian law classifies it as an individual right that must be respected in any public profession, as individuals have the right to express their opinions, and journalists and media outlets have a legal and ethical obligation to respect freedom of opinion and expression.

Respecting Freedom of the Press and Media

Freedom of the press and media is an element of freedom of opinion. It serves the purpose of developing new ideas by providing individuals and readers with ready-made ideas and news that the public receives, creating a general trend within society.

Respecting the Rights of Individuals in Society

These rights are enshrined in international conventions, particularly Algerian ones, and guaranteed by law that protects them from all attacks or infringements. Human rights issues have received particular attention in the media through the dissemination of knowledge that enables individuals to understand their rights and influence the protection of these rights.

In the same context, the Algerian legislature has ensured that various media institutions and journalists are obligated to respect the rights of individuals and their place in society in the performance of their journalistic profession. These rights include the following:

Respect for Individuals' Right to Privacy

This right is one of the legal controls that curb freedom of media practice. In our opinion, it pertains to ordinary individuals and citizens who do not have public responsibilities toward society, as their lives are not the subject of media coverage unless they violate the law. Respect for privacy is one of the most prominent principles upon which professional media ethics are based, even before legal ethics.

Therefore, investigative journalists must not use any media outlet to harm the reputation of individuals and their right to privacy. Respect for the private lives of individuals is part of the journalist's ethical, legal, and social responsibilities.

B- Respecting Individuals' Right to Access Information

Citizens' right to access information cannot be satisfied by constitutional and legal protection. How can the media respect this right, and what type of information needs to be respected?

Legal Controls for Practicing Media Work According to Media Law No. 12-05

The law constitutes one of the fundamental controls for practicing the journalistic profession, as it enshrines, through legislative rules, the right to information. Conversely, the legal rules in force in the country constitute legal texts that regulate media activity and the methods of practicing it. This is outlined in Algerian media legislation, through the provisions of the laws that have regulated the media field since independence, and the executive decrees issued within its framework, up to the 2012 Media Law issued under No. 12-05, which defines the means and tools for practicing media activity, as follows (Organic Law No. 12-05 of January 12, 2012, relating to the media, 2012, page 28):

Means for Practicing Media Activity in Law No. 12-05

The Algerian legislator defined in Article 3 what is meant by media activities within the meaning of Organic Law No. 12-05, which relates to the media in force, defines it as: "Any publication or broadcast of events, messages, opinions, ideas, or knowledge, via any written, audio, television, or electronic media, or directed to the public or a segment thereof. Article 5 specifies the objectives that the media (media activity) contributes to achieving". This law defines the means of media practice as follows:

First: Public sector media.

Second: Media outlets established by public bodies.

Third: Media outlets owned or established by political parties or accredited associations.

Fourth: Media outlets owned or established by legal persons provided that they are subject to Algerian law and their capital is owned by natural or legal persons of Algerian nationality.

Fifth: Electronic media. Electronic media is defined as: "A new type of media that shares the same concept, general principles, and objectives as traditional media (Alaoua, 2017: 164)». What distinguishes it from traditional media is that it relies on a new form of modern media, namely the integration of all traditional means of communication with the aim of delivering the desired content in distinct and more effective forms. It relies primarily on the Internet, which provides media professionals with ample opportunities to present their various media materials purely electronically.

Concerning electronic media, the Algerian legislator addressed it in a separate chapter of this law, and allocated specific provisions commensurate with its nature and characteristics as a special media outlet. These provisions specifically define the meaning of electronic journalism, the meaning of online audiovisual services, and what online print journalism represents.

As for the conditions for practicing electronic journalism and online audiovisual activities, the Algerian legislator stipulated that they must also be conducted in compliance with the text of Article 2 of this law, which defines the basic principles for practicing media activity and the profession of journalists, as they constitute the first basic rules within which the regulating provisions are established for professional ethics and morals.

Media Activities in Law No. 05-12

The Media Law divides media activities into two categories based on the nature of the tools used in its practice, which are divided between two tools: written media and audiovisual media. Each is organized in a separate chapter, containing the following basic provisions (Nail, 2022: 2029-2030).

First: Media Activities in the Print Press - These provisions are regulated in Chapter Two of Media Law No. 12-05, which includes two chapters: the first regulates the procedures for issuing periodicals, and the second regulates distribution and sale on public roads. Regulating the practice of media activities through the print press is entrusted to an independent regulatory authority for the print press.

The powers of the regulatory authority for the print press are also defined under the provisions of Chapter Three of Law No. 12-05, while stipulating that the procedures for the operation and organization of this authority are determined by internal provisions, without specifying the body issuing these provisions.

Second: The Practice of Audiovisual Media Activity - This activity is regulated under the provisions of Chapter Four in two chapters. The first defines what is meant by audiovisual activity within the meaning of this organic law, emphasizing that this activity is a public service task, the specification of which is referred to regulation. Chapter Two of this chapter regulates the audiovisual regulatory authority, the establishment of which is established under Article 64 of this law, defining its legal nature as an independent authority with legal personality and financial independence. In the following Article, No. 65, the definition of the duties and functions of this authority, as well as its composition and operation, is referred to the law relating

to audiovisual media, which was issued in 2014 under No. 14-04. Article 66 of the same chapter, with regard to the practice of audiovisual activity via the Internet, affirms the freedom to practice this activity, provided that it is subject to registration procedures and information monitoring by submitting a prior declaration by the director responsible for the online media apparatus. In the midst of these texts that define the practice of the journalistic profession, we conclude that media legislation has set important controls that restrict its practice, which are represented in respecting the general components of the state, represented in legislation, national sovereignty, respect for public order, the privacy of individuals and society, not violating the general principles of society, respecting individual freedoms and not violating national security; simultaneously, the provisions of the law regulate the activity of the written press, electronic media and audio-visual media, all of which are controls that regulate the media profession of the journalist and prevent the journalist from exceeding the prohibited, whatever the circumstances.

Ethical Responsibility for Practicing the Journalistic Profession in Algerian Media Legislation

Ethical Responsibility

Definition of Professional Ethics - The Dictionary of Journalism and Media defines it as a set of rules related to professional conduct established by an organized profession for all its members. These rules are defined, monitored, and enforced. They are collective morals, ethics, and duties that complement or replace legislation and its application by judges (Mustafa and Al-Badawi, 1991: 17).

Media professional ethics are the set of rules and duties governing the journalistic profession, or the various principles that a journalist must adhere to in their work. They are also the set of ethical principles that a journalist must voluntarily adhere to in the performance of their duties, as behavioral standards that guide them to produce work that gains public approval (Macbride, 1981: 505).

Definition of Ethical Responsibility - This is the responsibility arising from the obligation of the moral law and from the fact that the actor has free will. This means that the actor whose actions are necessary, i.e., arising from natural causes or driven by the will of another, is not considered morally responsible. This responsibility has varying degrees, the highest of which is the responsibility of someone who freely chooses to act, and the lowest of which is the responsibility of an actor whose heart is controlled, blinded by his vision, and prevented from seeing the truth (Boulsnam and Boukhors, 2022: 60).

Moral responsibility stems from a pure conscience and feeling that automatically approves of good and instinctively disapproves of evil. This conscience recognizes what should be done. The core of this responsibility is trust between journalistic and media professionals, relying on credibility, honesty, integrity, and impartiality in conveying facts and news, commenting on events, expressing opinions, and

emphasizing the importance of building sound, objective foundations to protect freedom of the press and freedom of expression (Boulsnam and Boukhors, 2022: 61-62).

The Concept of Ethics in Media Practice - The term "ethics" is typically used to denote the sum of qualities and characteristics, commendable human behavior and conduct. These are universal standards whose practice ensures upright human conduct. Ethics in Arabic means "nature, chivalry, religion, and nature" (Hajjam, 2014: 133).

John Honberg defines media ethics as: "The basic obligations that every journalist must possess, which are primarily the need to work to achieve fair, comprehensive, accurate, truthful, and clear coverage, while taking into account the protection of sources and the public good, by respecting the law and the rights of private life, and correcting errors if they occur" (Honberg, 1996: 51).

Ethical Responsibility for Practicing Journalism Through Law 2012 - The Algerian media legislator, through Organic Law 12/05 on the Media, devoted a chapter to professional ethics, containing eight articles separate from the rest of the law's topics. These articles are included under Chapter Six, entitled "The Journalist's Profession, Ethics, and Professional Conduct". Below, we review the contents of these articles, attempting to analyze them and determine the extent to which they encompass the ethical and creative freedom demanded by media professionals in the field of seeking and disseminating information, as well as those working in journalism, within the limits of the Media Law (Organic Law No. 05-12 of January 12, 2012 on the Media).

- Article 92: "A journalist must ensure full respect for professional ethics and conduct in the exercise of journalistic activity".
- Article 93: "Violating the privacy, honor, and reputation of individuals is prohibited. Violating the private life of public figures, directly or indirectly, is prohibited".

Article 94: "A Higher Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals shall be established, and its members shall be elected by professional journalists".

Article 95: "The composition, organization, and operation of the Higher Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals shall be determined by its founding general assembly. The Higher Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals shall also benefit from public funding".

Article 96: "The Higher Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals shall prepare and approve a code of honor for the journalistic profession".

The Algerian legislature has also granted the authority to draft a code of honor for the journalistic profession. Since this has been recognized, we believe there is no need to mention professional ethics and morals in the media law, as the code will necessarily include them.

Article 97 of Organic Law 12/05 on the media: "Any violation of the rules, ethics, and morals of the journalistic profession shall subject its perpetrators to penalties ordered by the Higher Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals".

Article 98: “The Higher Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals shall determine the nature of these penalties and the procedures for appealing them”.

The Algerian legislature also granted the Supreme Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals the authority to determine the penalty and how to appeal it. However, it did not specify the legal procedures in the event that this council exceeds its powers or in cases where the crime committed by a journalist is both a criminal offense and a civil case.

- Article 99: “The Supreme Council for Journalism Ethics and Morals shall be established within a maximum period of one year from the date of issuance of this organic law”.

Article 2 stipulates that the free practice of journalism is achieved by working to respect the following:

- The Constitution and the laws of the Republic.
- Islam and other religions.
- The national identity and cultural values of society.
- The pluralistic nature of opinions and ideas.
- Human dignity and individual and collective freedoms.
- The citizen’s right to full and objective information.

These points and others suggest that freedom of media and journalism exists. However, media professionals must respect these rules, which represent an inalienable framework for media practice, setting limits beyond which freedom of media performance may be transgressed (Dahmani, 2019, pp. 67-68).

As long as it remains a positive law, it will certainly require continuous amendment to keep pace with the times and address new media violations, especially with the technological development in media and communications and the development of new methods to violate not only media laws but freedom of expression itself. From this, the common articles of the Media Law have established a professional conduct for journalists in their ethical responsibility, which is evident in the following elements:

Guaranteeing freedom of the media and the press. Sheridan believes)1846(: “It is better for us to be without parliament than without freedom of the press. It is better to be deprived of ministerial responsibility, personal freedom, and the right to vote on taxes than to be deprived of freedom of the press, for it is only with these freedoms that the other freedoms can be restored, sooner or later” (Abdul Majeed, Journalism in the Arab World, no year of publication, p. 98).

Based on this, freedom of the media plays a major role not only in arriving at the truth, but also in providing journalists with a sense of comfort and reassurance.

Freedom of access to objective sources of information. Among the demands of journalists is access to objective information, and the ability to broadcast and disseminate it, just as they demand the right to freedom of expression.

Accuracy, truthfulness, and non-distortion of the presentation of facts. “Gaining the reader’s trust is the foundation of distinguished journalism”, and truth, and making every effort to ensure that the newspaper’s news content is accurate, free

of any falsification, covers all aspects, and is published fairly (Moghaddam, 1997, p. 51).

The right to knowledge. This right includes the citizen's right to know what is happening within government organizations. Depriving citizens of this right is considered an obstacle to the credibility of the media and the process of democracy.

Impartiality. Impartiality includes writing objectively and separating subjectivity and emotion from what is written (Hardo Center, 2016: 6).

Responsibility toward public opinion, its rights, and its interests toward national, ethnic, and religious communities, the nation, the state, and religion, and maintaining peace.

Integrity and independence. The independence of the profession and the integrity of the media professional is exemplified in gathering and disseminating news, information, and opinions to the public and institutions.

The Necessity of Refraining From Defamation, False Accusations, Slander, and Violating Privacy

Right of reply and correction. The right to reply and correct has become a necessity imposed by circumstances, as has the right to inform others, complete missing information, and correct it when it is false.

Respect for professional confidentiality. This is both a right and an obligation, and its goal is to protect journalists and media freedom alike, and to facilitate access to information sources.

Justice and fairness. The journalist must be fair and committed to actual facts.

Preserving public morals and ethics. "This is everything related to the foundations of moral dignity within the community, the pillars of good behavior, the foundations of its moral excellence, and the refusal to deviate from them" (Organic Law No. 05-12 of January 12, 2012 on the Media).

Consequently, every society has its basic components that the press is keen to adhere to, leaving some roles to each journalist's sense of applying legal controls and his commitment to moral responsibility, in addition to embracing his social responsibility toward society and appreciating its circumstances, the seriousness of the information, and its impact. In such a vision, journalists adhere to this without any state-mandated legislation, but rather through voluntary codes of professional ethics. Other countries believe that this should not be based solely on journalistic conscience and patriotism, but rather that their media legislation and laws must include what journalists are required to uphold, at times, the foundations of society, and at other times, its religious or secular authorities, and impose penalties on those who violate these requirements. This is especially true given the rampant phenomenon of fanaticism, which has historically led to wars of words, sometimes bloody. Fanaticism is among the unethical elements that negatively impact journalism, as it exaggerates matters by inciting racial or sectarian changes, and disregard for the law, among other things. These are all remnants that undermine the ethical principles and rules of the media profession, and journalists must avoid them for the sake of peace and humanity. Although deterrent legal controls exist, they are not sufficient to deter media professionals, whether intentionally or unintentionally, from violating the freedom of the media and expression. Rather, they

have suffered from some deviation and have become a target for exploitation by capitalists. Media projects have tended to satisfy viewers and readers, forgetting their primary objective for the media.

Conclusion

From the above presentation, it is clear that the reality of practicing journalism in Algeria is represented by the following:

- The media law regulates the journalistic profession and establishes its ethics in an organic legal text, based on the provisions of the Constitution and overseen by both the Constitutional Council and the Council of the Nation in Algeria, which provides sufficient legal force to enforce compliance with these provisions.

- Media Law No. 12-05 established the necessary legal mechanisms to enforce respect for the ethics of the journalistic profession and regulate its practice, by establishing the Supreme Council for Ethics and Journalism as a supervisory and disciplinary body for the practice of journalism, in addition to creating two authorities to regulate the print press and to regulate audiovisual activity.

- The practice of journalism is not an absolute freedom, but rather is restricted by legal controls and moral responsibility under the 2012 Media Law. However, like other freedoms and rights, it has a scope and a context that cannot be exceeded under any circumstances. If it insists on exceeding them arbitrarily or aggressively, media laws must intervene to prevent violations and punish media professionals who commit them and to protect the public or private interest. The reason for this is to link the freedom of media practice for journalists to legal controls and moral responsibility, and to be imbued with social responsibility as a third factor to respect the general principles of society in the practice of their journalistic work.

Research Suggestions

- Journalists must be familiar with the legal rules governing their media profession and view the law as the source of professional practice to avoid committing prohibited acts and exposing themselves to legal penalties.
- Establish a code of honor for the journalistic profession that is consistent with the provisions and principles of Media Law 12-05.
- Journalists often fall into prohibited acts, and therefore they are obligated to adopt professional ethics and consider them a responsibility stemming from conscience. This is to demonstrate the value of their profession and portray a positive image of it in society, enabling them to gain trust and respect. They must also adhere to the noble ethics stemming from the rules of the media profession, viewing it as a humane and ethical practice rather than legal restrictions and controls.

The practice of journalism must be linked, above all, to an important aspect: moral conscience and social responsibility toward one's society.

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Praktikovanje novinarstva između zakonske kontrole i etičke odgovornosti prema medijskom zakonodavstvu u Alžiru

Farek Said, vanredni profesor, Fakultet humanističkih i društvenih nauka, Univerzitet Badji Mokhtar, Annaba, Alžir

Apstrakt

Ovaj istraživački rad nastoji razjasniti zakonsku kontrolu i etičku odgovornost za bavljenje novinarstvom prema alžirskom medijskom zakonodavstvu. Novinarima se daju prava u zamenu za njihovu posvećenost pridržavanju novinarske etike. Takođe su dužni provoditi odredbe zakona, koje propisuju da se opštii principi države, javnog poretka i društva ne smeju kršiti i da se moraju poštovati prava i slobode pojedinaca. U međuvremenu, regulatorni tekstovi propisuju da se novinari moraju pridržavati principa etičke odgovornosti koji proizlaze iz njihove moralne i profesionalne savesti i pridržavati se društvene odgovornosti prema svojoj zajednici. Kroz naše čitanje Zakona o medijima 12-05, studija zaključuje da su novinarska praksa i pravo na izražavanje ustavno i zakonski zagarantovani. Ovo garantuje zaštitu medijske aktivnosti, što zavisi od toga da li novinari primjenjuju odredbe Zakona o medijima iz 2012. godine. Članovi i odredbe zakona otkrivaju sredstva i alate novinarske profesije i njene etike, osiguravajući slobodu novinara i regulirajući njihovu novinarsku praksu kako bi se postiglo pošteno novinarsko delovanje.

Ključne reči: novinarstvo, pravne kontrole, etička odgovornost, zakonodavstvo, medijsko pravo, medijski zakon 12-05, Alžir.

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Photography in the Media

Emilija Petrović[1,2], Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš

***Book cover: Vujović, Marija*: Fotografija u medijima (Photography in the media), *Faculty of Philosophy, University of Nis,* 2021**

Photography is one of the major technological phenomena of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, it is often viewed as a type of visual content that can be misused or interpreted contrary to ethical standards. Due to the fact that today's scientific world does not devote enough attention to resistance to manipulation and to "reading between the lines," photography, whether as an artistic or amateur work, or as a contribution to contemporary journalism, is often perceived in opposition to the author's intention. This leads to misinterpretations, criminal misuse, violations of copyright, and endangerment through *deepfake* technology and artificial intelligence. For this reason, it is essential to be information-literate in order to handle modern information and communication systems skillfully, to recognize various types of manipulation, and to remain immune to the deceptions that are increasingly common in the media.

Photography in the Media by Marija Vujović, a PhD holder and a professor at the Department of Communicology and Journalism, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, is a scholarly work that, in addition to serving as required reading for students of this department, introduces readers to a deeper analysis and representation of photography disseminated across various types of media platforms. The work comprises 158 pages and 46 chapters. Some of these chapters present different types of photography, such as war, fashion, and sports photography, framing its historical development and contemporary context, while also addressing issues of ethics and copyright. The book also discusses prominent Serbian photojournalists, featuring their interviews and professional experiences. The work concludes with a biography of Professor Vujović.

The work begins with a concise history and development of the media through the centuries. One should not forget that printed newspapers also belong

[1] Corresponding author: e.petrovic-19986@filfak.ni.ac.rs

[2] ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1982-0217

to the media, since today younger generations often identify the term "media" solely with television and radio. The book presents the first cameras, the process of creating photographs, and the procedure developed for producing a photographic image. Since this book is also about media and advertising, it includes examples of advertisements from print media that promoted photography. Photography is presented as a visual text that possesses communicative power, often provoking strong emotions in the observer. With the development of technology and the Internet, anyone can quickly and easily take and publish a photograph, leading to an enormous production of images. The author emphasizes the changes in communication brought by the Internet, the convergence of media, and the equal participation of all communicators in the process. People began to recognize the importance of creating content that visually reflects reality, and the technology evolved to the point where, for instance, in upper-class households, painted portraits were replaced by photographs. Photography was then regarded as something that could best represent the real image of what we see. If we look back at the history of art and the ethics of various paintings, we can agree that many portraits of historical figures were often merely "embellishments." The importance of photography is also presented in the essence of this work, namely the media. Certain print media such as magazines and newspapers are analyzed, as well as artistic photographs which, in the author's words, photojournalists viewed as critiques of society, because authors could highlight their dissatisfaction in photographs that were difficult to censor.

In the chapter on the development of news photography, the discussion focuses on the press as a mass medium and the manner in which photography replaced the engravings and drawings that had been visible in print. News photography developed as documentary photography. There is a discussion of news photography during the Second World War, and how, during Hitler's dominance in occupied Europe, photography as a craft and art lost its liberal significance; as a result, many photographers were tempted to emigrate to the USA.

Photojournalism is yet another chapter mentioned in this work. Here it is stated that photography in journalism has a primary purpose, namely, to inform and convey a message. There are considered to be six steps for every photojournalist: idea, assignment, good cooperation with colleagues from the editorial section, shooting, selection, graphic design, and production. The forms of news photography are also discussed: photo-news, photo-interview, photo-reportage, and photo-essay.

As this trend developed worldwide, it did not bypass the Balkans or Serbia, so there is a rich history of photography in Serbia, on its media scene, which is described in this work. Photojournalism developed in Serbia at the beginning of the 20th century. At first, photojournalism in Serbia served the purpose of entertainment and pastime, but with the advent of wartime on the territory of the Kingdom of Serbia, photography came to serve to inform about war events on the fronts and in other parts of Europe and Serbia. Photojournalism was initially present in the weekly *Nedelja*. The most prominent photojournalists in Yugoslavia at that time are highlighted, for instance, Tomislav Peternek. There is a discussion of famous photographers of the Principality of Serbia and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia who, in

addition to writing their first scholarly theories of photography, opened photographic studios where various photographic services were provided. Portraits, landscapes, architecture, people on the streets and their everyday life were photographed with ease, and such photographs would soon be found on the pages of various newspapers.

The chapter *The Profession of the Photojournalist* discusses the difficulties and history of photo-reporters and photojournalists. Earlier, their job was harder - the cameras were overly weighty, and it was a challenge to bring them to an event. It is interesting to note how the beginning of this profession was received negatively. A division of photojournalists according to Veselinović is emphasized: staffers, freelancers, and stringers.

After the history of the media and photography, news photography is also discussed, since newspapers are the first example of mass media. Moreover, throughout history, they have undergone various reforms - from two pages of cheap paper to digital editions available at any time. News photography is divided into photographs in the areas of sports, war, and citizen reporting, as well as photography in award competitions. From here, one can extract from the context of historical photography what is most important to capture with the lens in order for a message to be conveyed successfully to a wider audience through the media.

The chapter *War Photography* speaks of the horrors of reporting and photographing from war zones. An example is given of a harrowing photograph from the Vietnam War, where American soldiers and naked children with terrified faces are seen fleeing the horrors of war and potential death. Photographers became aware of the devastating consequences of war and began to publish disturbing photographs, awakening the conscience of the public (page 46).

Sports Photography is the chapter on photographs from sports fields. Here the greatest focus is on movement, facial expression, the reactions of athletes and the audience, and the atmosphere. Within this type of photography there are several sequences.

Portrait Photography could be classified among the most studied forms of photography, which quickly replaced painted portraits. Portrait photography aims to capture the moment; as such, it can be intentional or spontaneous. Through given examples, Vujović shows how, within the sphere of art, intentional portrait photography is more present; its aim is to convey a deep message of aesthetics, beauty, something profound that only the author may know, leaving us to discover what is hidden. In the media today, spontaneous photography is increasingly present, whose goal, as already mentioned, is to capture the moment. Among the faces in portrait photography one can find everyone - from ordinary citizens to politicians and distinguished figures whose presence is recorded regularly.

Citizen photojournalism is classified among the phenomena of the twenty-first century, precisely because of the greater development of modern technologies and information-communication technologies. Today anyone can photograph and document contemporary events. Examples are given of some global events, such as the 9/11 terrorist attack, and natural disasters in Indonesia, when citizens took the opportunity to photograph and document the moment. Today, citizen

photojournalism is becoming increasingly popular. The media encourage people to send their work through various artistic competitions, but also aim to point out certain problems visible to ordinary citizens. In this way, creativity is encouraged, as well as raising awareness. As journalism, together with other forms of mass media, began to develop, so too did the great demand for recognition and awards in the fields of reporting, reportage, and photography. A photographer from our region, Goran Tomašević, is mentioned, who in 2019 received the prestigious Pulitzer Prize working for the Reuters agency, becoming the first photojournalist from our region to receive this award.

Advertising Photography has the goal of attracting the buyer - in this case, the consumer and the recipient of the message, and compelling them first to consider the purchase or service of the product, and then to actually do so. Advertising photography has different forms of promoting services, but it is one of the most frequent manipulative techniques, even if that is not evident at first glance. It often promoted values that today are almost unimaginable, and even sharply condemned by various social groups. With the development and growth of feminist groups, advertising changed, and with it advertising photography, which today strives to promote diversity, gender equality, and respect. Advertising photographs are often carriers of ideological messages, for the understanding of which it is important to know the context of production, the context in which they are displayed, and the context of reception (page 59).

Fashion Photography is a subtype of advertising photography, the context of the photograph is considered much more important than the model or the clothing being worn. Fashion photography first appeared in fashion magazines, for instance, in the famous *Vogue*, which still operates successfully in many countries of the world.

Stock Photography represents photographs that are available in the digital archives of photographers or photographic agencies and can be borrowed for reproduction by various clients, including media that use them to illustrate articles or sections. These photographs encompass diverse content and categories, collected from numerous authors, and are often used for marketing purposes or to illustrate print and digital media. There are various websites that offer stock photographs, such as *Getty Images*[3], *Shutterstock*[4], *iStockphoto*, *Dreamstime*, *Fotolia*, and *Bigstockphoto*.

Undoubtedly, one of the most interesting parts of this book is censorship of photography and its legal aspect, explained through the chapters *Photography and Legal Regulations*, *Photography and Manipulations*, *Photography and Copyright*, *Verification of Photography*, as well as *Ethics of Photography in the Media*. It can be stated with certainty that, with the development of multimedia technologies, the authenticity of photographs has lost in significance because censorship and manipulation are all around us, and photography is thus prone to alterations and to the transmission of false information. With the emergence of social networking platforms and tools for image editing, it is easier than ever to change or falsify photographs. This

[3] More on this: https://www.gettyimages.com/

[4] More on this: https://www.shutterstock.com/

can have serious consequences for the authenticity of the information transmitted through the media. Nevertheless, manipulation in photography and censorship had their beginnings long before social networks began to develop. It is a well-known fact that Joseph Stalin, the president of the USSR, together with his team, removed all undesirable people from his photographs. Let us say that Stalin was photographed one day with some influential figure from the world of politics. Knowing history, especially Stalin as a figure at that time, a large number of his friends would soon turn into enemies, so he sought, in every possible way, to erase the trace of his meeting with them[5].

In order to better understand manipulation and recognize it in a photograph, reliable websites for checking the authenticity of photographs are listed. The legal part is also mentioned, i.e., the copyright of photographers and their works, about which there is a section in the law[6]. It is of exceptional importance to verify the authenticity of a photograph whether it has been altered, i.e., photoshopped, who the author is, when and where it was created, whether it can be freely used for scholarly and other purposes, provided that the reliable source is cited. For the verification of photographs, the website *Photo Forensics* is very useful; by entering a URL address or uploading a photograph, it is possible to determine information about the photograph, which includes the technical characteristics of the photograph.

The work does not shift entirely to the historical development of photography, but also touches on more contemporary topics. Photography on social networks, selfie photography, and composition of photography are highlighted, which will be most useful to photo-reporters and those engaged in photography. Photographs on social networks, i.e., digital photographs, emphasize the importance of disseminating information on social networks in order to convey an adequate message. In Serbia, when it comes to the use of the Internet and social networks, statistics show high results that change from year to year; an increasing number of Serbian citizens have access to the Internet and social networks, where digital photography is disseminated. Statistical data are given for the two largest social networks at the time of the publication of this work, Instagram and Facebook.

Selfie photographs have become an indispensable part of the culture of social networks, transforming the way we present ourselves and communicate on the Internet. These photographs, in which we often photograph ourselves, have different purposes and meanings in the digital environment. First, selfie photographs represent a way of expressing and presenting one's own personality and identity. Users of social networks often use selfies to show their appearance, mood, activities, or places they visit. In addition, selfie photographs are also a way to build one's own image and brand on social networks. Many users use selfies to create a certain image of themselves - be it as a person who is always smiling, adventure-oriented, or devoted to certain interests. These images often become part of a user's digital reputation

[5] If you would like to see more: https://www.historynet.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Image-1.jpeg

[6] Law on Copyright and Related Rights: https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_autorskom_i_srodnim_pravima.html

and influence how others perceive them. Selfie photographs have also become a means for expressing self-confidence. Publishing selfies can be a way to affirm one's appearance and identity, as well as to receive validation and support from other users of social networks.

Photography and Archives is the chapter that discusses how photographs are stored and protected from oblivion and aging (page 91). The most significant global and Serbian archives for preserving old material historical sources, primarily photographs, are listed, such as the Archives of Yugoslavia, the National Library of Serbia, and the Photo Museum in Belgrade, but the Stevan Sremac National Library in Niš is also mentioned, which preserves a multitude of photographs from the 19th century and the early decades of the previous century.

In the chapter *Photography and Composition*, the author emphasizes the importance of composition in photography. To some extent, the way the message in the photograph will be conveyed depends on its composition, that is, the way in which the recipient of the message will be attracted. Some of the basic elements of every photograph are: contrast, leading lines, depth, shooting angle, symmetry, cropping, and framing. In addition, the rule of thirds and negative space are listed. All of this is very important to follow when creating photographic content if we want to convey a message in an adequate way to the audience that observes our work.

*Plans and Angles of Shootin*g are a continuation of the previous chapter, in which the basic elements of photographic angles and shooting are listed. The author emphasizes: long shot (total plan), which encompasses a wide space and provides information about the space being filmed; medium shot, which shows a person from head to toe; American shot, which focuses on the area from the knees to the head; close-up, which shows the person being photographed; as well as near shot, which highlights the photographer. Angles of shooting are also indispensable in professional photography. Here one can distinguish the high angle, which records the surroundings from a certain height, above the person or object; the low angle, which, as the very term suggests, photographs a person or object from a lower vantage point, i.e., from below; and eye-level view, which photographs a person or object from the same height, i.e., proportionally. In order to have a better insight into the appearance of each of these angles, the author did not omit photographs.

Digital Processing of Photographs is something that tickles the imagination of all artists and journalists, and this chapter is useful because it provides an exact list of programs that may be of use when editing photographs. These are *Gimp*, *Adobe Photoshop*, *PicsArt*, *Pixlr, BeFunky*, and others. Through these programs, it is possible to change the dimension, detail, object and other elements.

The end of this work is marked by interviews with some of the more prominent figures of Serbian photography, such as Vanja Keser, Aleksandar Kelić, Igor Čoko, Zvezdan Mančić, Nemanja Pančić, Irfan Ličina, and Saša Čolić. They spoke about what is important in photography, its elements, personal anecdotes from their careers, the relationship between the public and the photographer, as well as the rights that every photograph has along with its creator. The photographers in this chapter are clearly connected by a love of photography; thus, to Marija Vujović's question of

whether they would choose the photographic vocation again, every photographer answered in the affirmative. In addition to the interviews, since the book is at the same time a textbook for students who follow the course *Photography in the Media* in the study programs Communication and PR and Journalism at the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, the professor included worksheets for students.

This work can teach readers about the history of photography and the media in Serbia and worldwide, all the way to the contemporary photography we see every day while scrolling through social networks in our free time. This book offers a different approach to photography. After reading, the next time we scroll through a newspaper article and see an author's photograph or a photograph not subject to copyright we might have a different perspective. At that moment we will know what process stands behind the visual content, and we will value the journalistic and photographic profession more than we have until now. Besides recognizing fake news and refusing to accept tabloid news as valid, it is also important to recognize the role of photography in the media and potential deception. I would note that the chapter in which professional photographers are interviewed is very useful - it provides insight into a deeper picture and analysis of photography and the work of a photographer. A subsequent edition of this work would benefit from a discussion of the development of artificial intelligence in photography, since it has advanced so much that it is difficult to distinguish the real one from what a computer system has created. Moreover, the chapter on social networks and photography could be slightly expanded, as in recent years TikTok has become one of the key platforms for sharing visual content alongside Facebook and Instagram.

Overall, *Photography in the Media* offers a critical overview of the importance of photography in various forms of media, as well as how photographs are created, what types exist, and why it is essential to pay special attention to them when analyzing media discourse. It can serve as an introduction to the basics of photography for anyone interested in the field: students, photography course participants, and those involved in general journalistic work. Both journalists and photojournalists can benefit from the book's content to gain a better understanding of their craft and to avoid potential legal issues, since, in addition to discussing the purpose, types, history, and characteristics of photography, the work also explains copyright and legal aspects, which are often overlooked in today's media landscape.

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