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"The Role of Training on New Media Technology in Boosting Arab Investigative Journalists' professionalism"

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ABSTRACT:

The rapid development in the field of digital world has affected many disciplines. Media industry is one of the most affected fields. Hence, journalists need to cope with the ongoing technological evolution and its latest updates. Investigative journalists need to pay attention to this even more than their colleagues in the field. Investigative journalism has in general been remarkably growing in recent years; yet, it still faces significant challenges in the Arab world in terms of the right to access information and the use of open sources. This study focuses on Arab investigative journalism and particularly studies the importance of training on using digital technology and its effects on professionality and high-quality investigative journalists' professionalism. To achieve this goal, this study followed a qualitative methodology through in-depth interviews with twelve Arab journalists who are practitioners and interested in investigative journalism. This study concluded important results about the positive effects of training on new media technology: Gaining more theoretical knowledge and practical skills to apply the acquired knowledge. This would enhance the efficiency of journalists and improve the quality of their work and their competitiveness in the journalistic work sector.

Keywords: New media technology, Investigative journalism, Media training, Journalists' skills, Information digitization.

INTRODUCTION:

Arab journalism is still facing the challenges of digitization and the need of adaptation to the rapid information development and communication technology (Abdulrahman, 2020). This challenge is mainly embodied in the poor qualification of the Arab journalist to deal with the communication technology provided by the new media in terms of access to open information sources, data collection and processing applications, and other modern tools (Alshawabkah, 2020). New media technology makes it easier for journalists to work in the field of investigative journalism, which is described as a risky venture that requires serious preparation and in-depth knowledge of the subject under investigation. For this reason, continuous training for journalists is an ideal way to improve their professional performance (Dyikuk, 2017).

Thus, if the need for qualifying journalists to deal with new media technology is urgent in all fields of journalism, it will even be more urgent in the case of investigative journalists whose work is based on investigating the impact of information and creating accurate links between observations (Alshawabkah, 2020). Achieving this mission requires a special effort in preparing journalists to practice the investigative work in the Arab press environment (Sakkur, 2020).

The development of new media technology has stimulated Arab society to practice expression of ideas, desires, and attitudes (Pepe, 2018). However, the digital technologies brought by new media technology have increased the need for journalists to continue developing their skills through training to keep pace with the rapid and ever-renewing development in the field of communication technology. This training is particularly important when it comes to online journalism, which is defined as a sector subject to constant technological change and geared towards developing content in a variety of formats (Ureta & Peña Fernandez, 2018).

In the Arab world particularly, investigative journalism has recently arisen in an environment that discourages this type of media practice. Bebawi (2016) lists six major challenges facing investigative journalism in the Arab world: access to information, state control, social pressures, journalism culture, journalism education, and instability of the region. The dilemma of the lack of competence that would allow Arab journalists to practice investigative journalism lies in the fact that most of journalism graduates in the Arab world come from universities that do not enhance critical thinking (Bebawi, 2016). Thus, educating journalists becomes one of the challenges that face Arab institutions of investigative journalism. This is because Arab universities still provide education based on theoretical frameworks dating back to the middle of the last century as Rana Sabbagh, the executive director of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, suggested as an interviewee in Bebawi (2016). Sabbagh elaborated that the problem could be a result of the fact that teachers themselves might lack the competence to teach investigative report production, and the fact that most universities in the Arab world are state universities which definitely would not prefer this kind of journalistic practice due to the risks that may arise from investigative work and even training, affecting either professors or students who are not protected as officially employed journalists. Accordingly, Bebawi (2016) recommends a continuous focus on training novice journalists to improve the environment in which they practice investigative journalism in order to remain updated with the skills and methods of reporting.

Many organizations and institutions specialized in investigative journalism exert appreciated efforts to guarantee training service provision for Arab journalists, most prominently "Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism" (ARIJ) and the International Journalists Network (IJNet), in addition to major press training centers that offer training courses in the field of investigative journalism and digital media such as Aljazeera Training Institute. Moreover, several local press

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communities and organizations have also been active, within certain Arab countries, like Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and others, in sponsoring investigative journalism and training journalists on investigative reporting (Al-Shami, 2020).

The training provided by these institutions, either theoretical or applied, is one of the most important methods to enhance Arab journalists' ability to use new media techniques that would lead to the improvement of the quality of their investigative journalism. So, it is a key requirement for journalists to realize the importance of training because knowledge helps institutions and their employees to work in a smarter manner (Ahmetovic, 2021). Therefore, introducing journalists to the characteristics of new media is an important way to draw their attention and to acknowledge them about the benefits that accrue to them from training.

Important data on the use of new media in the Arab world was disclosed in the Arab Youth Center's "New Media" report that was presented in the World Media Congress. The report which was held in the United Arab Emirates in November 2022 with a wide participation from 16 Arab countries, revealed that the percentage of Arab youth who use digital media was 53 percent, compared to 47 percent of traditional media users. It also showed that 41 percent of Arab youth spent 4-5 hours a day on social media. Moreover, the percentage of internet users in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council was 98.21 percent, while the global average is 63 percent. According to the report, the percentage of mobile phone users in the countries of the Gulf States was about 137.66 percent, while the global average was approximately 55 percent.

These indications may lead to a philosophical question like why Arab investigative journalists should be trained to use new media if ordinary Arab citizens use new media so heavily? However, this presupposition does not seem logical when comparing the need of the average citizen to use the new media just to satisfy human needs such as entertainment and communication with the need of investigative journalists who use new media for professional purposes. Thus, New media: A critical introduction presents six characteristics of new media: digitality, interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality, dispersal (networked) and cyberspace (simulated) (Lister et al., 2008). These characteristics represent an important theoretical framework for this study. Training in new media technology is a key requirement for Arab journalists in order to get aware of these characteristics and to make out the most of them in order to improve their investigative work. The emergence of new jobs in the field of journalism as a result of the development of digital media has led to the emergence of new training programs (Bakirmekik, 2022). Despite being relatively new, new media continues to gain levels of maturity in journalists' use of its features such as interactivity, multimedia, and hypertext (Fondevila-Gascón et al., 2013).

Arab investigative journalists, in particular, need training in using new media to enrich their knowledge about its characteristics and potential (Nuri, 2020) in addition to its important role in improving trainees' abilities and technical skills (Wulnye, Aikins, & Abdul-Fatawu, 2018). This leads to raising their professional competence (Al-Khalidi, 2021) and is positively reflected on the quality of the content it provides to the audience (Sandbothe, 2017). For this reason, this study is significant from an academic research point of view because it contributes to the framing of knowledge about the benefits of training Arab journalists on practicing investigative journalism which would add to the research efforts exerted in the field, which would accordingly contribute to build up a related comprehensive theory. It is also important from a practical point of view because it draws the attention of Arab investigative journalists to the importance of training on the use of new media techniques in their journalistic work, which raises the level of their interest in training and their eagerness to participate in it.

This study focuses on Arab investigative journalism and particularly studies the importance of training on using digital technology and its effects on professionality and high-quality investigative journalistic production. From this standpoint, this study aims to explore the impact of training on new media techniques on Arab journalists' professionalism. Accordingly, this paper raises the question: What are the benefits of training Arab journalists on new media techniques for investigative journalism practice?



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LITRATURE REVIEW

The development of communication technology has created new urgency for journalists to get trained for practicing skills such as communicating across borders, working in participatory groups, exchanging digital images, mapping techniques, and acquiring the knowledge on how to manage information. Other skills that journalists need to acquire through training include making recordings, analyzing bid data, extracting information from multimedia, figuring out how to collect evidence, using hidden lenses in cameras during filming, tracking the leads of cases under investigation, and verifying the accuracy of information (Weiss, 2018).

The Future of Investigative Journalism Report (2012 P. 65) stated that "due to the technological changes that are taking place, investigative journalists will increasingly need to be digitally adept, especially social networking and analytical tools". The report cited that a number of leading British journalism organizations included clauses in their employment contracts with new hired persons providing for paid work and mentoring as part of their investigative journalism training program. The participants that were interviewed during the preparation of the report also noted the BBC's investment in training journalists through its academy. The report recorded a decrease in the number of training opportunities available to aspiring journalists in local newspapers due to the decline in financial resources and the decrease in the number of employees. According to the report, those wishing to enter the journalistic job market often have to be willing to work for free at local news organizations in order to develop work experience. The report also highlighted the increasing use of internships as a way to give potential journalists work experience where media organizations get their efforts cheap. The report raises concerns that projects in which student journalists work on unpaid stories have increased competition among them in a truly competitive market that risks increasing job pressures for those looking to produce investigative reports. The report recommends that the media should invest continuously in training journalists to gain practical experience in local news organizations. The report suggests as well that internships should not be seen as a substitute for paid work for journalists.

In the Arab media training context, there are many areas of training that Arab investigative journalists need in light of the growing digital business environment including specialized technical training, using modern technological tools in the areas of access to information sources, processing data and mastering data dissemination (Al-Shami, 2020). In addition to training on the ethics of investigative journalism and how to deal with laws and legislation that frame the journalists' search for hidden information (Farwaneh, 2018). It also includes training on protecting the security of information and sources (Hasan, 2020), and of course, training on information verification and news examination (Silverman, 2016).

The various pathways of knowledge acquisition have made training on investigative reporting a decisive factor in the development of Arab investigative journalism. It has also exposed the lack or weakness of training as a challenging obstacle facing Arab investigative journalism (Hamam, 2019). Recent studies attribute the poor training on investigative journalism received by Arab journalists to a number of reasons including the situation where no training courses are held in the media institutions they work in and when journalists do not show any interest in this kind of journalistic practice. Actually, all of these drawbacks are probably resulted from the lack of institutional planning to address societal issues (Hamam, 2019).

Moreover, among the problems is the poor awareness of journalists of their need for continuous training in the field of investigative journalism to overcome the problems they face in dealing with modern media technology (Zhang & Wang, 2022). Within this framework, journalists are convinced of the poor feasibility of training provided by some institutions that, however, have become reputed to provide financial profit over real training. This raises questions about the returns that would accrue to journalists from paying money and spending much time on training that might not improve his professional level. In addition to the difference in the journalistic training environment from one Arab country to another according to the interest of the press in each country in terms of sustainability, modernization of the media process, and the practice of self-censorship (Bebawi, 2016).

As previously mentioned, there are many Arab journalistic institutions and associations which are active in the field of investigative journalism, including journalistic training centers, such as the Aljazeera Training Institute. From its founding in 2004 until the end of 2022, Aljazeera Training Institute organized about 6,000 training courses, benefiting more than 68,000 trainees, including 20,000 trainees working for Aljazeera Media Network (Al Amri, 2023). At the end of 2005, a group of Arab journalists established Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ), which aims to train journalists on investigative journalism and to produce investigations through these trainings. According to Maharat (2020), ARIJ trained 2,800 journalists and produced 600 investigative reports in 20 Arab countries between 2005 and 2015. ARIJ has contributed to the establishment of investigative units in several Arab media outlets. The network also oversaw the broadcasting and publication of a large number of investigative reports on local, Arab and international channels such as the BBC and Deutsche

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Welle in Arabic. Based on data collected by Al-Shami (2020), ARIJ also helps journalists working in the press, radio, television and online media in each of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Palestine, Yemen and Tunisia.

On the local level, several investigative journalistic networks have been established to sponsor the production of investigative reports and to train journalists to produce investigative reports, including the "NIRIJ" network in Iraq, "SIRAJ" in Syria, "YAMAN" in Yemen, the Libyan Foundation for Investigative Journalism "LIFIJ". In Lebanon, a group of journalists launched the "DARAJ" website, which presents partly Lebanese and Arab investigative reports (Maharat, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the qualitative approach of data analysis of in-depth email interviews that fit the exploratory nature of this study as descriptive research, which makes in-depth interviews a suitable tool for collecting and presenting deep and rich information and understanding (Boyce, 2006). E-mail interview method was used in the study to provide the opportunity to conduct qualitative interviews with journalists experienced in investigative journalism in a number of Arab countries, which facilitated the expansion of the geographical scope of the data collection process and did not leave it confined to one geographical location.

The non-probability study sample consisted of twelve Arab journalists (n = 12) distributed on six Arab countries: Iraq, Yemen, Palestine, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. The interview participants were distributed equally to three categories: four journalists of the field of traditional journalism (n 1 = 4), four investigative journalists who worked as supervisors, trainers or media investigators (n 2 = 4), and four journalists who had received training courses in the field of new media and \ or investigative journalism (n 3 = 4). Homogeneous sampling is adopted as a strategy in data sampling, which is based on selecting interviewees from homogeneous groups related to the subject being researched (Creswell, 2014). The interviewees of this study were selected from social media accounts on the Arab journalism training networks, and all of them answered the same three questions: 1. What are the benefits of training on new media techniques for Arab investigative journalists? 2. How would training of Arab investigative journalists affect their practice of investigative journalism? And 3. How could the process of training Arab journalists on new media techniques be developed?

The procedures of data collection were carried out by following five stages: 1. Interviews preparation after in-depth understanding of the topic. 2. Setting the questions related to the objectives of the study. 3. Obtaining the consensus of the interviewees to be informants in the study. 4. Sending the questions' file via e-mail with specifying the time for the interviewees to submit the answers. 5. Collecting the answers to the questions by e-mail. Following Creswell (2014), this study adopted five stages of data analysis: firstly, reading the answers preliminarily for assuring that they are appropriate to the questions sent. Secondly, translating the information into English. Thirdly, coding the main themes that were identified. Fourthly, excluding codes that are not related to the objectives of the study. Fifthly, reporting the results separately by including an introduction to each theme; showing the level of frequency of its use and the interviewees' agreement; discussing the results by presenting and quoting the information provided by the interviewees and including their opinions; including some quotes from studies and ideas consistent with each result; and writing a conclusion for each of the results that have been reached.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Training is an urgent and basic need for workers in the investigative field because investigative journalism combines the knowledge required for understanding the needs of society and the characteristics of the public and the skills required in order to master the use of technological tools provided by new media in accessing information sources and processing what the journalist obtains from these data sources. The answers of the interview questions showed a very high level of agreement among the informants on the idea that training journalists on the use of new media techniques greatly improves their skills and performance in the field of investigative journalism, whether at the level of the input, quality of processing, or the output of the investigative work whether it is a written, audio or a visual narrative. The training also raises the journalist's cognitive abilities to understand the role of the press in societies, especially in supervisory contexts, and to harmonize the concepts of freedom of publication and social responsibility, whereas balancing the two domains represents the basis on which the editorial levels build their decisions whether to publish or not any journalistic product.

This study found out seven reasons why training Arab journalists in the use of communication technology is important for the development of Arab investigative journalism: developing technical skills, improving cognition and knowledge, raising professional competence, improving content, enhancing competitiveness, and enriching relationships of investigative journalists.



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a. Developing journalists' technical skills

Developing technical skills is the most important benefit of training Arab investigative journalists on new media technology. The skills here are not only related to the theoretical aspect related to the knowledge of technical tools and applications of new media, nor to realizing their usefulness in investigative journalism, but rather to the practical aspect directly related to how to use and benefit from these tools in journalistic investigative work. The largest number of interviewees in this study agreed on this theme, with ten out of twelve informants.

Regarding skill improvement, training on new media enables journalists to own the tools of working in investigative journalism, to master their use, and to qualify them for employing these tools in data verification and fact-checking. In this regard, Adel Abdulmughni, the Yemeni investigative media instructor and trainer, highlighted the need for training and qualifying journalists for the use of technical tools and multimedia as an urgent requirement in the era of digital technology. He considered training on new media as positively reflected on investigative journalism "which cannot be accomplished by traditional journalistic work mechanisms, as there are a number of modern skills and techniques that lead to a distinguished investigative product". According to Abdulmughni, investigative journalism has greatly benefited from new media training courses provided by different institutions which are interested in developing the field in the Arab world. Qutb Elaraby, the Egyptian journalist who worked in investigative journalism for more than 35 years, opines that "training improves the technical skills of the investigative journalist". Suhaib Al- Falahi, the executive manager of Times 24 for digital marketing from Iraq, believes that the issue of training journalists on new media is "a crucial topic in investigative journalism and its development because we are facing an amazing development at the technical level and at the level of new media and its various forms and applications".

Wasef Al-Qadah, a PhD researcher in graphic design at Ariel University in Turkey, considered that training journalists on new media techniques is very important for investigative journalists. He argued: "For example, when using Photoshop, whoever stops keeping up with the program's updates just for a month will lose the capability to invest in its new features and will not be an expert user even if it was the case before that month". What Al-Qadah said means that the journalist's keeping up with media programs and its technical and digital tools, which are developing in a continuous manner, requires journalists to keep abreast of these developments in order to remain able to update their skills to use them efficiently, leading to the practice of investigative journalism with high efficiency. As for Yousuf Al-Junaidy, a media trainer and researcher who holds a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from University Putra Malaysia (UPM), he believes that the use of digital communication technology is an important aspect that investigative journalists should be trained on. He demonstrated that there are many areas that the journalist should be familiar with, such as "using applications to change faces and voices, acting, drama, changing places, satellite channels, methods of collecting transactions, recording, using lenses to monitor some people and movements, and others".

For his part, Omar Fayyad, a press editor at the official Turkish news agency Anatolia, and a PhD student in journalism and media at Ataturk University in Turkey, stressed that training journalists on the use of new media technology in investigative journalism "needs follow-up and keeping pace with the development of tools and sectors of continuous journalistic work in light of the rapid technical progress". He added, "There are things that develop every day in terms of programs and techniques. Thus, trainers should train the journalists on how to deal with these tools". As for Mohamed Ben Salem, the Tunisian broadcaster on Al-Hiwar TV channel, he stressed that "enabling journalists to use new digital applications and tools is the most benefit they can get from training in new media technologies".

Despite the fact that informants praised the training on skills of dealing with new media technology, Zahir Beyoglu, an investigative journalist for the New Arab website who holds a Ph.D. in media from Ankara University in Turkey, stipulated that "sustainability, as a major determinant of journalists' benefit from training", should be achieved. Beyoglu elaborated by saying "teaching someone to fish is better than giving him a fish", which means that the journalist can succeed in presenting good investigative work if he applies the skills he learned by training, "but developing his production requires perseverance in training, keeping pace with and acquiring new things". And finally, Hudhaifa Jarrar, who is studying for a master's degree in journalism in Turkey and has undergone many investigative journalism digitization courses, considered that training on modern technologies "must keep pace with the investigative journalist's path from cradle to grave," and said that "the new developed media world no longer suits traditional journalists who do not develop their technical skills through continuous training". However, Jarrar linked the importance of training to its quality, and considered that high-quality training is the one that includes "practical applications, the use of experimental production facilities, and the provision of permanent advice from trainers to trainees".



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From the foregoing, it can be said that training in general is a crucial factor for business success by providing trainees with the skills necessary for their business (De Vos & Willemse, 2011). The use of information technology is one of the four main skills required in the field of journalistic work, along with language skills, communication with others, and management. (Nuri, 2020; Parahita, Monggilo, & Wendratama, 2020). The development of communication technology has created many technical tools that are indispensable for the media in the digital age, such as the digital recorder, photo-taking techniques, and the art of talking to camera, which journalists need to master. (Sedorkin et al., 2020). For this reason, training in digitization techniques achieves the digitality as one of the six new media characteristics (Lister et al., 2008).

b. Improving journalists' cognition and knowledge

Training increases the familiarity of journalists with models of investigative journalism work in which modern technologies are used, making it easier for them to simulate pioneering investigative reports in their work. Eight of the twelve interviewed journalists believe that training raises the knowledge and awareness of journalists significantly and creates their investigative sense. They combine the cognitive and skill aspects of the process of training journalists on the use of new media. For example, Sanae Elkouiti, a Moroccan journalist working as a correspondent for Aljazeera Net. says that "Journalistic training enables the trainer to possess various tools for investigative work; to know the limits of investigative work; and to be able to assess the impact of investigative work, during or following its publication". Yousuf Al-Junaidy, believes that "knowledge precedes action". Thus, Al-Junaidy says: "The theoretical part of training is sufficient to acquaint journalists with the tools, means and applications that are used in investigative journalism". From his side, Mohamed Ben Salem pointed out that to provide the trainees with beneficial knowledge, training should "start mainly from identifying the trainees' needs on the basis of a scientific survey".

Training on the ethics of journalistic work is also very important. Suhaib Al-Falahi stressed that "every investigative journalist should receive training on how to avoid violating the individual rights of people and the moral rights of institutions in order not to violate these rights and to keep the investigative work within the framework of the ethics of the journalistic profession". Training on investigative journalism technology also prevents trainees from violating local and international laws applicable in the regions where they carry out their journalistic coverage. In this particular aspect, Wasef Al-Qadah, who has received training in the use of new media technology in investigative journalism, explained that "it is not enough for a practitioner of investigative journalism to learn, for example, how to operate drones to take photos". Rather, he stressed that the trainer "has to learn that he must avoid using drones in the vicinity of sensitive facilities such as army camps, security forces centers, and all facilities in which photography may be prohibited and punishable by law".

As for Omar Fayyad, he said that training enables the traditional journalist to understand the elements of journalistic investigation. He added: "In order for the journalist to be successful in his investigative work, he must be trained on building hypotheses, preparing questions, reaching conclusions, and proving arguments. This requires a high knowledge outcome that does not result with theoretical sciences as much as from training". Hudhaifa Jarrar believes that training journalists on digital techniques is crucial for investigative journalists. He argued by saying: "There is no doubt that each journalistic template has its own characteristics and structure that distinguishes it from other journalistic works. Training is the basis of the knowledge structure that a journalist must arm himself with when using new media technology in order to produce investigative work that meets quality standards in the field of investigative journalism".

Since the structure of the journalistic report is consistent with its investigative purpose, Aseel Saraih, the Yemeni investigative media director and trainer, believes that the journalist's understanding of the templates used in investigative reports is one of his most important cognitive needs for training. He also believes that the need to understand the templates that are built by using new media technology has become a primary goal of the investigative journalism training process. Saraih claimed that new media makes the audience enjoy the documentation and narration of the content, "but there are many journalists who do not have such narration skills". Therefore, Saraih added that providing these journalists with these skills through training courses from specialized institutions "such as Aljazeera Training Center, ARIJ, the International Federation of Journalists or the International Network for Investigative Journalism would contribute to the development of journalists' capabilities in developing their usage of new media" and would eventually result in improving their production of investigative journalism.

These results were consistent with the understanding of training as a process of learning new skills and knowledge on an ongoing basis (Jensen, 2023). In this context, training is more related to knowledge than to practical application. For Wulnye, Aikins, & Abdul-Fatawu (2018), training helps the trainees to acquire technical knowledge and problem-solving abilities and thus improves their performance. Also, these results were consistent with the definition of training as a basic



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process to improve the individual's knowledge and to build his awareness (Mahmud, Wahid, & Arif, 2019). Providing theoretical training through remote courses increases the ability of journalist trainees to collect as much knowledge as possible and to realize the capabilities of new media without the need to spend a lot of travel expenses and transportation to attend knowledge training activities, and this is completely consistent with the virtuality feature as one of the Lister et al. (2008)'s six characteristics of new media.

c. Raising professional competence

Training in media technology contributes to improving professional performance skills of journalists in general (Al-Khalidi, 2021). The concept of professional competence links, among other elements, the theoretical knowledge to applied skills as stated in Epstein & Hundert's (2002 p. 226) definition of professional competence: "the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and re-flection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served". This study found out that training on new media technology increases the speed of journalists in producing investigative reports, facilitates their work, enhances their ability to plan investigative production, and improves their efficiency in presenting information. Thus, 7 out of 12 informants mentioned the role of new media training in raising professional competence of investigative journalists.

In this regard, Adel Abdulmughni, stated that training in new media technology increases the ease of publishing and the intensity of dissemination and interaction, as well as the mechanisms that new media provides to make it easier for an investigative journalist to verify and scrutinize the data he receives". Developing the skills of an investigative journalist are not confined to the technical dimension related to the use of new media as tools to search for sources, access and verify information. Rather, training in the skills of administrative arrangement of investigative work and creating the narrative product is also important. Aseel Saraih discussed the importance of new media training and its effects on investigative journalism by reviewing the role of training in leading the journalists to plan for investigative works. He said: "today, when journalists present their proposals for investigative works, they make it clear that they will rely on new media. So, Saraih claimed that "training in this type of journalism, as an advanced narrative and style that are based on the development of new media, contributed a lot to enhancing the capabilities of journalists and helped them work on, narrate, write and present the material to the public very well".

Training on the use of new media techniques can provide a journalist with a high professional competence that combines the two elements: knowledge and skills. This is positively reflected on the quality of the investigative work produced by the journalist who has received the appropriate training. However, the informants in this research added a third important factor to the knowledge and skills, which is the quality level of the institution for which the investigative journalist works. According to Suhaib Al-Falahi, poor investigative report could be produced when the journalists does not get sufficient knowledge and practical qualifications about using the essential equipments for investigative journalism. He added "Here, we find the difference between a journalist associated with a press organization that is concerned with investigative journalist publishing on social media and new media only". Al-Falahi concluded that "training forms a distinguishable factor in the efficiency levels among practitioners of investigative journalism".

The speed of work can be one of the measures of professional competence, according to Hudhaifa Jarrar, who stressed that training the investigative journalist on new media technology increases his speed in developing ideas, forming hypotheses, conducting the necessary treatments, and presenting the report. He said: "Speed, accuracy and clarity are all among the standards of professional competence that can be improved for the benefit of the investigative journalist through training on new media technology".

Mastering the investigative work is an important part of the elements of professional competence that can be achieved for a journalist by training on media technology. Sanae Elkouiti considered appropriate training for investigative journalists on media technology gives them a "prior vision" of the form of the journalistic material they are working on. She added:" This increases the ability of the journalist to extrapolate, read between the lines and behind the words, and move between the details smoothly". For his part, Wasef Al-Qadah highlighted the importance of mixing knowledge with skills in order to reach professional competence, considering that "it is one of the determinants of the work the journalist wants to do". He said that among those determinants is also "understanding and knowing all technical parts and details of work related to work tools, then specialization in specific parts of these tools and having control with main role in that part as a complete specialization of the work". Al-Qadah explained his argument by saying, "for example, I may be specialized in writing content, but if I want to excel in this field, I have to understand the mechanics of photography, the arts of directing, and the audience's demands in order to write high-quality content".

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In addition to knowledge, skills, and quality of the organization, the journalist's experience in the practice of investigative work completes the square of professional competence the informants suggested in this study. However, Yousuf Al-Junaidy warned the investigative journalist of the risk of falling in "the trap of relying on his experience". He elaborated that some journalists neglect training because of their long experience. He said: "This is a big mistake, because experience does not compensate senior journalists for training. Sometimes what you can get in years from experience, could be achieved simply in weeks by training".

All in all, achieving professional competence in investigative journalism, requires journalists to have a high degree of cognitive competence and technical skills (Al-Khalidi, 2021), which can be obtained by training on the use of new media. However, in order to achieve professional competence, a set of factors must be met: Practical skills and theoretical knowledge (Epstein & Hundert, 2002), the quality of the institution for which the journalist works and the interest of the institution in learning and educating its teams of journalists (Huseynov, 2007), the sustainability of the training process (Sokolović et al., 2023), the provision of practical applications and training facilities that simulate reality (Kaplan, 2013), as simulation is one of the six characteristics of new media (Thompson, 2018), and finally, the journalist's experience history of practicing investigations (Karadimitriou, et al., 2021). According to the informants of this study, training journalists on new media techniques contributes to raising the quality of the investigative work they do by improving their skills in presenting works, building content, speed of production, accuracy of information, and clarity of data they provide to the public.

d. Improving the content of investigations

The content of the investigative material represents the real test field for the extent to which the trained journalists benefit from the theoretical knowledge and applied skills they acquired in developing their professional competence. According to what was reported by five out of twelve informants, this appears in the areas of producing new investigative templates to present the content in non-traditional ways, and the use of updated arts that attract the audience to this content in order to achieve persuasion, which is the ultimate goal of communication process (Velde, 2020).

Renewing the content of investigative journalism is about producing templates that are richer in information, more attractive to the public, and more visible to the public. Abdulmughni argued, in this regard, that the benefits of training journalists on new media techniques is directly reflected on the sort of investigative content they produce "which is now made in more accurate and easy-to-understand templates for the public such as data journalism, info graphics and other modern templates". New media techniques increased the journalist's ability to publish his investigative production on the internet websites which opened up an opportunity for him to include all documents and details in their original copies within his journalistic material. So, Aseel Saraih argued that modern websites that rely originally on the diversity of media production elements such as sound, image, text, graphics and others can be enriched with the content provided by the journalist if he got enough training to deal with them. Saraih considered investigative reporting as "a new style of in-depth journalism in the Arab world that needs a good space for clarifying issues to the public in a detailed and explanatory way supported by evidence similar to that used in cross or digital media investigations".

The process of improving the content of the investigative material begins from the moment the decision is made regarding the form of presenting these materials to the public, as Zahir Beyoglu said that it is a decision the investigative journalist makes based on the information available to him and based on the nature of the press through which the report will be published, as well as based on the journalist' vision of the appropriate template for presenting the information. He added:" If the journalist is sufficiently trained in managing new media technologies, he will have more flexible options in choosing the template through which he presents his material in a way that ensures smooth presentation, enriches the content, and maintains its attractiveness to the public". From the same aspect, Qutb Elaraby stated that "training on new media technologies updates the investigative journalist with various global models that assist him in his work". The process of updating the content of investigative journalism does not appear to be an easy process for traditional journalists, according to what Mohammed bin Salem emphasized, who considered that the process of choosing a journalistic template is very much subject to the direction, experience and habit of the traditionally produced journalist. He said, "This requires subjecting the journalist to rigorous training in dealing with new media in order to have the flexibility necessary to develop the content he produces for keeping pace with the requirements of digital development in the journalistic work environment".

The idea of developing content in investigative journalism by training journalists on new media techniques intersects with hypertextuality, which is a modern technical method to change the linear form of the text into a retinal form that makes it easier for users of new media platforms to access it by clicking only on the words, pictures or video clips included within the written texts (Sandbothe, 2017). As for the development of investigative journalistic templates based on international



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models, it also intersects with the concept of media globalization, which is one of the characteristics of new media that emerged mainly after the technology revolution and its development (Thompson, 2018).

e. Enhancing competitiveness among investigative journalists.

Enhancing competitiveness among investigative journalists is one of the direct implications of training process in using new media technology where five out of twelve informants found out that training bridges the gaps that result from the difference in individual abilities among the trainees and reduces the achievement distances between advanced journalists in their experiences and their colleagues who are still at the beginning or the middle of career. Training also bridges knowledge gaps resulting from the level of development of the journalism profession between one society and another, which transfers the work of investigative journalists to a level where the rules of work converge and excellence in it transfers to the added value that each journalist can provide.

Moreover, training creates a common ground of knowledge that includes, according to Zahir Beyoglu, technological tools, universal templates, and investigative journalistic approaches, which "open the door to competition among investigative journalists to get all the new from them through training". Moreover, mastering the use of new media technology facilitates the production of good content, as mentioned previously which becomes, as Omar Fayyad considered, "an area of competition among investigative journalists in the quality of content". He added:" Certainly, the media is looking for a journalist who produces more quality investigative content, and therefore journalists are competing on the issue of quality to get the offers of media institutions, and they need continuous training to develop their content to be able to win such offers".

Since training on the use of new media techniques leads to high-level investigative production, investigative journalists benefit from the branding industry for their names. Thus, Hudhayfa Jarrar concluded, "the investigative journalist's ability to use new media techniques through training makes him knowledgeable among his peers and competitors". For the same reason, Sanae Elkouiti puts the topic of stimulating competition among trainees as one of the benefits that an investigative journalist reaps from training in new media techniques. And Qutb Elaraby said that "training provides the investigative journalist with newness for competing with peers in the field".

In general, training in new media techniques does not only affect creating competitiveness among investigative journalists. However, based on Pointers for Policy Development (2011), the overall training opportunities contribute to enhancing competitiveness among trainees in all professional fields. Thus, Karadimitriou et al. (2022) believes that the opportunities for journalists to participate in media training provide an important benefit to investigative journalism.

f. Enriching relationships of investigative journalists.

In its general framework, training, any training, leads to the creation of friction opportunities on three levels. The first is among the trainees themselves who meet in one course; the second is between the trainees and the trainers; and the third is between the trainees and the institution that implements the training. Although only three out of twelve informants reported on this effect, it is still important to be considered as this friction creates a network of relationships for the trainee with what Hudhayfa Jarrar called the "training environment," which, according to him, consists of those three levels. Jarrar explained that "the development of inter-relationships within this environment represents one of the direct positive repercussions of training in general, including training in new media techniques, on professionals, including journalists and investigative journalists".

From Omar Fayyad's point of view, the scope of the role of training on building relationships extends beyond the training environment and reaches the level of influence in the general community. Fayyad explained that training journalists on using new media with its techniques and tools as a step to qualifying them to practice investigative journalism can contribute to raising the ability of journalists to address society and the public in a constructive and effective way. He added, "digital transformation can be harnessed to develop local media and to enhance the role of journalism in democratic and civil society by training journalists in many aspects, especially in the use of new media". For the above reasons, Mohammad Bin Salem described the role of training journalists on using new media as "a serious, important and critical role because the performance of the journalist is directly reflected on society; so, he should be qualified enough to handle this issue". Bin Salem explained that training enables investigative journalists to make their reputations and to use their accounts on social media in an effective way to communicate with and influence the audience towards promoting community values.

Finally, the role of training on new media techniques is important for building relationships of journalists and enhancing their influence on society. Coronel (2003) has found out that training on reporting techniques as well as on reading financial statements is one way to stimulate investigative journalism in an effort to deepen democracy in societies. And



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Muratova, Grizzle, & Mirzakhmedova (2019) found out that this training enhances the values of freedoms in society through public dialogue and understanding between the interlocutors and the defense of pluralism and diversity without censorship.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Such as any professional training process, training in new media techniques brings many benefits to investigative journalists. Some of these benefits can be classified as a direct reflection on the capabilities of the journalist, the most important of which is increasing knowledge and raising awareness of the importance of using new media and getting acquainted with its applications and tools, in addition to raising the technical skills of journalists and improving their abilities to deal with new media tools and platforms in their investigative work. Training dramatically helps raise the ability of journalists in order to take advantage of the six characteristics of new media identified by Lister et al. (2008): Digitality, interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality, dispersality (networked) and cyberspace (simulated).

The combination between raising cognitive awareness and possessing applied skills, in addition to other gains, leads to improving the professional competence of investigative journalists including improving the level of planning investigative works and presenting them to the public with sufficient speed, accuracy, and clarity. The professional competence of journalists is directly reflected on the quality of investigative production content in terms of updating journalistic templates and diversifying the contents used in their preparation. Training of journalists on new media techniques is also reflected on the competitive situation among investigative journalists to provide the best and most persuasive product for media institutions and publishers. Training also contributes to creating a training environment in which the relations of the trained investigative journalists grow, and then expand to contact and influence the wider community.

This study found out that achieving the optimal benefits for investigative journalists trained on new media technology requires the fulfillment of a set of conditions that must be met in the training process including the balance between theoretical training and practical training. The first aspect achieves the cognitive rooting of knowledge about the advantages, benefits and implications of training, and gives the trainees theoretical introductions about smart tools and applications. The second aspect qualifies them skillfully by answering questions of how to use these tools and applications. This study also found out that updating knowledge and skill by keeping pace with the development of digital technology in new media is a prerequisite for achieving training effectiveness. In addition, the results showed that investigative journalists should achieve the principle of sustainability from the training process by continuing to be exposed to training courses, in addition to achieving the principle of comprehensiveness through general awareness of new media technologies with specialized depth in specific parts of them.

Accordingly, this study recommended that the Arab universities and academic institutions for involving in training process by including new media technology education courses in their curricula with the aim of creating basic knowledge awareness for media students. As well as by sending distinguished media and journalism students to advanced regional and international training programs in the field of investigative journalism. The study also recommended the Arab institutions working in the field of investigative journalism to intensify training programs of investigative journalists on the use of new media in their investigations, and by applying integrated training programs that achieve the principle of sustainability for keeping pace with technological development, and enhancing the methodology of experimentation by providing tools, technical equipment, and studios equipped with new media programs, so that trainees can deal with them in a realistic and applied manner.

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"دور التدريب على تكنولوجيا الإعلام الجديد في تعزيز احترافية الصحفيين الاستقصائيين العرب"

إعداد الباحثين:

خليل المبروك و حميدي عدنان

الملخص:

لقد أثر التطور السريع في مجال العالم الرقمي على العديد من التخصصات. صناعة الإعلام هي واحدة من المجالات الأكثر تضررا. ومن هنا، يحتاج الصحفيون إلى مواكبة التطور التكنولوجي المستمر وآخر تحديثاته. يحتاج الصحفيون الاستقصائيون إلى الاهتمام بهذا الأمر أكثر من زملائهم في الميدان. شهدت الصحافة الاستقصائية بشكل عام نموًا ملحوظًا في السنوات الأخيرة؛ ومع ذلك، لا تزال تواجه تحديات كبيرة في العالم العربي فيما يتعلق بالحق في الوصول إلى المعلومات واستخدام المصادر المفتوحة. تركز هذه الدراسة على الصحافة الاستقصائية العربية، وتدرس بشكل خاص أهمية التدريب على استخدام التكنولوجيا الرقمية وتأثيرها على المهنية والإنتاج الصحفي الاستقصائية العربية، وتدرس بشكل خاص أهمية التدريب على استخدام التكنولوجيا الرقمية وتأثيرها على المهنية والإنتاج الصحفي الاستقصائي عالي الجودة. ومن هذا المنطلق، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكثاف أثر التدريب على تقنيرها على المهنية والإنتاج احترافية الصحفيين العرب. ولتحقيق هذا المنطلق، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكثاف أثر التدريب على تقنيرها على الجديد على صحفيًا عربيًا من الممارسين والمهتمين بالصحافة الاستقصائية. وخلصت هذه الدراسة إلى استكثاف أثر التدريب على تقنيرها على المديد على محفيًا عربيًا من الممارسين والمهتمين بالصحافة الاستقصائية. وخلصت هذه الدراسة إلى من خلال إجراء مقابلات معمقة مع ائتي عشر على تكنولوجيا الإعلام الجديد: اكتساب المزيد من المعرفة النظرية والمهارات العملية لتطبيق المعرفة المكتسبة. الأمر الذي من شأنه تعزيز كفاءة الصحفيين وتحسين جودة عملهم وقدرتهم التنافسية في قطاع العمل الصحفي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تكنولوجيا الإعلام الجديد، الصحافة الاستقصائية، التدريب الإعلامي، مهارات الصحفيين، رقمنة المعلومات.