

Country Report

Journalists in Egypt

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Backgrounds of Journalists

The typical journalist in Egypt is likely to be male, in his mid-thirties with a university degree in journalism or communication. Of the 400 interviewed journalists, 254 were men, which accounts for 63.5 percent of the overall sample. On average, Egyptian journalists were 36.73 years old ($s=11.08$), and half of the surveyed journalists were younger than 35 years. Their level of education is high: 86.0 percent held an undergraduate degree, 10.5 percent had an MA degree. However, only 0.8 percent of journalists had obtained a doctoral degree, while another 0.8 percent had undertaken some university studies but had not completed their degrees. Across the whole sample of Egyptian journalists, 71.8 percent had specialized in journalism and/or communication.

Journalists in the Newsroom

The vast majority of journalists interviewed in Egypt held a full-time position (83.8%), whereas 10.3 percent of the respondents were employed part-time, and 6.0 percent worked as freelance-journalists. On average, Egyptian journalists had worked as journalists for 12.00 years ($s=8.93$), with the median falling at 10 years.

Over half of the journalists worked focused on a specific beat (50.7%), whereas the rest worked as general reporters (49.3%), most typically current affairs, foreign politics or crime and law. Half of Egyptian journalists (50%) only worked for a single newsroom, and the average was 1.5 newsrooms ($s=0.50$). 30 percent of journalists had additional jobs outside of journalism. 54.3 percent of journalists were members of the Egyptian press syndicate

Most Egyptian journalists worked across print-media, with 33.8 percent contributed to daily newspapers, 15 percent to magazines, and 7.5 percent to weekly newspapers. In broadcasting, 10 percent of the journalists worked for private or public service radio, and 28.5 percent for private or public television. Only a few journalists in the sample reported that they worked for news agencies (5.3%). Working primarily for online media was not very typical for the interviewed journalists either: None of them reported to work for online newsrooms of traditional media; also, none of them works for stand-alone online news sites.

Journalistic Roles

Egyptian journalists' most important role orientations are to be a detached observer, to report things as they are, to provide information people need to make political decisions, to let people express their views, to motivate people to participate in political activity, and to provide analysis for current affairs. As the reasonably low standard deviations indicates, there is little disagreement among journalists as to the importance of these roles.

The least important journalistic roles among Egyptian journalists were to convey a positive image of political leadership (21.4%), support government policy (22.1%), and to provide entertainment and relaxation (35.2%).

Still, a majority of journalists in Egypt found it important to influence public opinion, advocate for social change, monitor and scrutinize political leaders, and support national development. On the other hand, journalists were not as supportive of interventionist role orientations such as set the political agenda and providing advice, orientation and direction for daily life.

Table 1: Roles of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "extremely" and "very important"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Be a detached observer	398	92.2%	4.65	.67
Report things as they are	398	85.4%	4.36	.80
Provide information people need to make political decisions	398	82.7%	4.27	.91
Let people express their views	398	82.2%	4.29	.89
Motivate people to participate in political activity	398	79.9%	4.21	.92
Provide analysis of current affairs	398	79.4%	4.17	.86
Influence public opinion	398	78.9%	4.19	.95
Advocate for social change	397	76.3%	4.17	.97
Monitor and scrutinize political leaders	398	74.6%	4.05	1.00
Support national development	398	69.6%	4.04	1.10
Provide advice, orientation and direction for daily life	398	66.6%	3.90	.96
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	397	62.7%	3.84	1.14
Set the political agenda	398	56.0%	3.60	1.10
Monitor and scrutinize business	398	53.8%	3.56	1.13
Be an adversary of the government	398	52.3%	3.57	1.14
Provide entertainment and relaxation	398	35.2%	3.11	1.24
Support government policy	398	22.1%	2.61	1.30
Convey a positive image of political leadership	398	21.4%	2.60	1.27

Question: Please tell me how important each of these things is in your work. 5 means you find them extremely important, 4 means very important, 3 means somewhat important, 2 means little importance, and 1 means unimportant.

Professional Ethics

Overall, Egyptian journalists have strong ethical standards. The vast majority of respondents believe that journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics (89.3%). On the other hand, almost half of them declared that what is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment (see Table 2). Around three out of ten affirmed that sometimes what is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation and that it is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it.

Further, nearly all respondents believed it was never justified to publish stories with unverified content, to alter or fabricate quotes from sources, to accept money from sources, to use re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors, and to alter photographs.

Claiming to be somebody else, making use of personal documents (such as letters and pictures) without permission, paying people for confidential information, and using confidential business or government documents without authorization are also not considered ethical by a majority of Egyptian journalists.

Table 2: Ethical orientations of journalists

	N	Percentage saying "strongly" and "somewhat agree"	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalists should always adhere to codes of professional ethics, regardless of situation and context	400	89.3%	4.56	1.01
What is ethical in journalism is a matter of personal judgment	397	48.9%	3.30	1.49
What is ethical in journalism depends on the specific situation	398	39.2%	2.85	1.53
It is acceptable to set aside moral standards if extraordinary circumstances require it	397	34.0%	2.63	1.54

Question: The following statements describe different approaches to journalism. For each of them, please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree. 5 means you strongly agree, 4 means somewhat agree, 3 means undecided, 2 means somewhat disagree, and 1 means strongly disagree.

Table 3: Justification of controversial reporting methods by journalists

	N	Percentage saying "always justified"	Percentage saying "justified on occasion"
Exerting pressure on unwilling informants to get a story	398	14.1%	35.4%
Using hidden microphones or cameras	398	13.6%	34.2%
Getting employed in a firm or organization to gain inside information	398	11.8%	39.7%
Using confidential business or government documents without authorization	398	10.3%	40.2%
Paying people for confidential information	398	8.3%	41.0%
Making use of personal documents such as letters and pictures without permission	398	7.5%	30.9%
Claiming to be somebody else	398	6.5%	31.9%
Altering photographs	397	2.3%	12.6%
Using re-creations or dramatizations of news by actors	399	2.0%	4.3%
Accepting money from sources	398	2.0%	4.5%
Altering or fabricating quotes from sources	397	1.5%	5.5%
Publishing stories with unverified content	398	1.3%	8.8%

Question: Given an important story, which of the following, if any, do you think may be justified on occasion and which would you not approve of under any circumstances?

Professional Autonomy and Influences

The professional autonomy ranks low in the reports of the Egyptian journalists. In total, 43.0 percent of the respondents answered that they had complete or a great deal of freedom in selecting the stories, while 57.0 percent responded that they had some freedom, little or no freedom at all in selecting the stories. With regard to freedom in deciding which aspects to emphasize in a news story, only 47.3 percent reported that they have complete or a great deal of freedom. 43.5 percent say they very often or always participate in editorial and newsroom coordination.

News production is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the most important potential sources of influences are journalism ethics, availability of news-gathering resources, and time limits (see Table 4). About one out of five respondents found their work substantively influenced by friends, acquaintances and family, information access, colleagues in other media, business people, peers on the staff, and government officials. Furthermore, almost half of the journalists thought their work was influenced by audience research and data, feedback from the audience, relationships with news sources, media laws and regulation, and editorial supervisors and higher editors. Egyptian journalists seem to be moderately influenced by managers of news organization, competing news organizations, and owners of news organization.

Table 4: Perceived influences

	N	Percentage saying “extremely” and “very influential”	Mean	Standard Deviation
Journalism ethics	388	87.4%	4.47	.90
Availability of news-gathering resources	388	81.7%	4.21	.89
Time limits	387	74.7%	4.04	.99
Personal values and beliefs	361	71.5%	4.02	1.06
Editorial policy	386	70.7%	3.92	1.07
Information access	396	60.9%	3.61	1.50
Audience research and data	376	58.2%	3.63	1.06
Feedback from the audience	396	55.1%	3.42	1.37
Relationships with news sources	395	54.2%	3.39	1.48
Media laws and regulation	395	53.7%	3.44	1.38
Editorial supervisors and higher editors	385	51.7%	3.49	1.03
Owners of your news organization	362	49.2%	3.39	1.29
Managers of your news organization	383	48.8%	3.45	1.05
Competing news organizations	395	45.6%	3.23	1.29
Profit expectations	329	40.1%	3.07	1.23
Military, police and state security	395	39.0%	2.96	1.49
Advertising considerations	335	38.2%	3.07	1.24
Censorship	396	37.6%	3.06	1.30
Public relations	396	33.1%	2.85	1.45
Peers on the staff	358	28.2%	2.95	1.08
Pressure groups	396	28.0%	2.64	1.33
Politicians	394	27.4%	2.79	1.27
Government officials	396	26.8%	2.70	1.26
Business people	396	25.3%	2.45	1.43
Colleagues in other media	396	21.7%	2.61	1.23
Friends, acquaintances and family	396	21.0%	2.46	1.34

Question: Here is a list of potential sources of influence. Please tell me how much influence each of the following has on your work. 5 means it is extremely influential, 4 means very influential, 3 means somewhat influential, 2 means little influential, and 1 means not influential.

Journalism in Transition

Journalism is currently in a state of change. According to Egyptian journalists, the importance of technical skills, the credibility of journalism, the use of search engines, the relevance of journalism for society had most profoundly changed over the last five years (see Table 5). Overall, the journalists’ responses point to a substantive deterioration of the importance of having a university degree, of having a degree in journalism or a related field in the profession, of the average working hours of journalists and of time available for researching stories. A significant minority of the interviewed journalists reported an increase of the importance of their professional freedom and their interactions with their audiences.

The perceived influences on journalism and news production have changed as well. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter, audience feedback, pressure toward sensational news, and audience involvement in news production rank on top of the changes in influences on journalism. An increase is reported for all the variables included in Table 6, such as journalists’ freedom to make editorial decisions, time available for researching stories, and the average working hours of journalists.

The questions about changes in journalism were only presented to journalists who had five years or more of professional experience.

Table 5: Changes in journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "increased"	Percentage saying has "decreased"
Technical skills	235	80.0%	2.6%
The credibility of journalism	234	79.1%	6.0%
The use of search engines	236	77.5%	5.1%
The relevance of journalism for society	233	76.8%	4.7%
Interactions of journalists with their audiences	237	73.4%	5.1%
Journalists' freedom to make editorial decisions	227	61.7%	4.8%
Time available for researching stories	227	55.9%	4.4%
Average working hours of journalists	228	44.7%	9.2%
Having a degree in journalism or a related field	233	42.9%	14.6%
Having a university degree	234	41.0%	13.7%

Question: Please tell me whether you think there has been an increase or a decrease in the importance of following aspects of work in Egypt. 5 means they have increased a lot, 4 means they have somewhat increased, 3 means there has been no change, 2 means they have somewhat decreased, and 1 means they have decreased a lot.

Table 6: Changes in influences on journalism

	N	Percentage saying has "strengthened"	Percentage saying has "weakened"
Social media such as Facebook and Twitter	227	77.5%	5.7%
Audience feedback	226	73.5%	8.8%
Pressure toward sensational news	226	72.1%	11.1%
Audience involvement in news production	227	67.0%	14.1%
Profit making pressures	224	61.6%	16.5%
Competition	223	61.0%	8.5%
Advertising considerations	224	59.4%	17.4%
Journalism education	221	52.0%	11.3%
Ethical standards	224	50.9%	12.9%
Public relations	225	43.1%	15.6%
User-generated contents, such as blogs	223	38.1%	15.7%
Audience research	225	35.6%	18.7%

Question: Please tell me to what extent these influences have become stronger or weaker during the past five years in Egypt. 5 means they have strengthened a lot, 4 means they have somewhat strengthened, 3 means they did not change, 2 means they have somewhat weakened, and 1 means they have weakened a lot.

Methodological Information

Size of the population:	10,000 working journalists (estimated)
Sampling method:	stratified proportionally systematic sampling for newsrooms and purposively chosen based on quota for journalists within newsrooms
Sample size:	400 working journalists
Interview methods:	face-to-face
Response rate:	95%
Period of field research:	06/2012-10/2012