How Restrictive Laws Affect the Framing of the Issues of Corruption in Sudan

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Abstract

This study aims at identifying how the restrictive laws affect the Sudanese newspapers' framing of the issues of corruption in Sudan. Therefore, the present study adopted a qualitative research method using in-depth interviews to adequately probe the perceptions of the Sudanese journalists and editors and explore how the restrictive laws affect the Sudanese newspapers' in framing the issues of corruption in Sudan. A purposeful sampling was adopted in selecting 20 Sudanese journalists across both governmental and private newspapers operating in Sudan. In order to achieve clearer understandings of the journalists' perspectives, the study adequately supported each theme with models generated by means of employing NVivo 8 software. The findings revealed that the Legislation is one of the key elements of the development of press industry by the Sudanese government through parliament to ensure press freedom. In addition, the Sudanese journalists indicate that the corporate ownership as well as market contexts are significant in determining the quality of information presented in the newspapers' political news coverage. Hence, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the newspaper ownership and the diversity of contents in newspapers. Consequently, there are negative effects of restrictive laws on the development of the Sudanese press industry in Sudan. Hence, the study calls for more attention towards the legislations in Sudan to insure the press freedom and the good work environment for journalists to carry out their role in raising the Sudanese citizens' awareness.

Keywords: Restrictive; Framing; Corruption; Sudan; Qualitative Research.

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1. Introduction

Recently, corruption has become a major problem faced by countries in the Third World, including Sudan. This corruption impedes progress and negatively affects the citizens of these countries [1]. Despite of having oil and other mineral resources in many African countries, such as Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and Sudan, the economic situation in these countries is catastrophic. This implies that these mineral resources have no significant impact on people since these resources are not exploited for the benefits of the people in these countries [2].

There is no doubt that the media is the heartbeat of any society. The main responsibilities of the media and the press are to reflect and assess on the conditions in any society. Despite the critical functions of newspapers as a watchdog, limited studies were conducted on how the press reports the issues of corruption in Sudan. Therefore, there is a need to explore how the newspapers shape issues of corruption in Sudan. The findings of the present study could probably lead to the development of the framework related to the study, thus contributing to the knowledge in this field.

The media have been used as a conduit for the long-term dissemination of information and a means of connecting individuals, the government and people all over the world [3]. This is not related to media-related authorities, and research studies in the crucial field of the media can be divided historically into four stages. The first phase, extending from 1900 to the late 1930s, reported the World War I. This resulted in deep fear for readers towards media messages and caused a kind of mental alertness. The second phase, which extended until 1960, focused on studying how the media influenced readers. In other words, media campaigns alone cannot affect people; rather, they reinforce positions that must be acquired as an informational effect [4]. [4] says people who change their orientation because of campaigns are very few. Thus, this phase is often described as a phase of no or minimal impact [5].

The third stage, initiated in 1970s, marks a reawakening in exploring media's effects [6]. In other words, this phase which lasted for a decade marks the rediscovery of powerful media [5]. During this phase, the focus was on studying cognitive effects of the mass media rather than investigating the attitudinal change brought by mass media [7]. Finally, the fourth stage, continuing till present, started early in the 1980s. This phase, which is marked by "social constructivism", exposes the relationship between media and their receivers (readership) in order to understand the powerful effects of mass media. Reference [5] describes this phase as one of the negotiated media influence. Reference [8] points out that mass media have a strong effect when they create a social reality through their framing of the real world in a predictable and patterned way, which has become an indispensable model for framing reality.

For instance, Reference [9] illustrated the media framing when reporting news and stories related to crime is not only an evidence of reporters' academic skills in his/her field but also a reflection of the true picture of the work environment of media personnel. Journalists or media personnel are educated and trained to search 'scoop' and present it to readers through their rhetoric in a way that will arouse the readers' interest to know more, and also to create a sensation. The editorial staff is responsible for monitoring and regulating all such 'scoops'. In this

regard, Reference [9] point out a few determinants that plays an important role in the selection of the final version of news to be published. For instance, the ruling elite controls and filter (censors) the news, the academic institutions and techno-bureaucrats investigate the writing skills, whereas the police and the public play key roles in creating the way the news is presented. In the context of the current study on crime in general and corruption, media's depiction of criminality totally depends upon how skillfully and practically they condemn criminals and perverted individuals and their acts as well.

The news published by newspapers is not just a report but implies wisdom which justifies how a crime news often dominates other stories related to various other stories of social injustice committed either by the state or voluntary organizations. However, such stories assume lesser importance, and sometimes, they are given less media's attention [9]. However, media do not refrain from reporting such events that might influence the public perceptions, and at the same time, they cannot omit them [9] as they potentially create social images and shape people's perceptions. This power of the media in framing issues could be probably associated with issues of corruption for the purpose of the current study.

It is worth mentioning that corruption is a global threat that negatively affects the state's efficiency, and the phenomenon of corruption is common among the developed and the developing countries [10, 11] though this phenomenon is more obvious in the developing countries, and it's devastating effects are particularly evident in Africa, which unfortunately has a high level of corruption [11, 12]. This corruption is basically present in the poor governance [13], as it hampers the balance of budget, the effectiveness of the governance, and the expenditure and mismanagement of budget functions [10] as well as delivery of public goods and services. In addition, corruption undermines social values when individuals become more easily engaged in corruption practices, viewing them as easier means of survival and a more profitable means of acquiring wealth more than the legal means [12]. Corruption has thus led to major setbacks in the overall progress made by many developing countries in Africa. A typical case is Sudan which, despite the rapid growth of the oil sector among many other sources of national wealth, is classified among the poorest and most corrupted countries in the world [11,14,15,16,17].

Similarly, Sudan ranked zero and occupied the lowest position along with Sao Tome, Democratic Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea in the [18] as in a study (2017) conducted on Sudan and 84 other countries. The factors contributing to this corruption situation and misuse of public funds in Sudan, include lack of effective management and oversight in the management of the public financial system, lack of transparency in the government's performance, lack of law enforcement and regulatory bodies, lack of checks and balances in the procurement of funds, and unskilled staff to maintain accounts [19, 20]. As [12] points out, once corruption becomes entrenched in a given society, its negative effects continue to increase. The several factors that contribute to corruption in Sudan could create more incidents of corruption in order to increase. It is therefore important to make concerted efforts to tackle corruption in the country and it is important to explore the factors that cause corruption; anti-corruption methods are also necessary [3]. Studies have identified the government's transparency and accountability, media awareness, press freedom, and citizens' rights to access information as key ways to reduce corruption [13,3,21]. Hence, the present study focuses on exploring corruption issues by the Sudanese press to study their effectiveness in fighting corruption, since Sudan has been suffering from the

negative effects of the civil war as well as economic, religious and ethnic unrest.

2. Issues and Gaps

Media contribute largely to the success of democracy in the world. The significant role of media is represented by having a large database of information, along with their contents and analyses, which could be a useful source for law makers to legislate laws and policies and for voters to choose their governments [22, 23, 24]. In addition, media are renowned for playing a crucial role in helping people fight against corruption. In other words, they can organize anti-corruption campaigns to educate people about corruption and develop awareness about its causes and the suitable solutions to follow in order to reduce its negative effects.

Though Sudan has many local and national newspapers, not enough attention has been directed towards the issues of corruption [25]. The main cause of this ineffectiveness is that all sources of information that the media depend on are often under the control of the ruling elite [9]. In other words, access to the government's information in Sudan is limited and this hinders the press as the fourth estate in performing their watchdog functions over the government. It also limits the social role of media as an important source of information or to raise the public awareness of corruption issues [25, 26]. However, journalists who are empowered to reveal the government's misdeeds have been under intense pressure and suffered from increasing detention by the security forces.

Media studies have recently shifted their attention to media frames and coverage of events. In the world of media, it is well known that media frames are designed strategically to achieve the desired result in the game; they help the media personnel regulate themselves to determine which particular players require more devotion and attention [27], how to report and narrate the winner or the loser by making the correct choices of rhetoric [28], what realities to highlight and what to ignore [9] in order to give more importance to some and underestimate others. Hence, the present study applied theories of Agenda Setting Theory and Media Framing Theory to identify how restrictive laws affect the Sudanese newspaper framing of the issues of corruption in Sudan.

Previous studies have focused on the role of media to curb corruption [29, 30] or the relationship between press freedom and corruption [31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 29]. Other studies have focused on the government's advertising and its relationship with media coverage of corruption scandals [37] whereas [38] focused on the impact of mass media on corruption in South Africa. However, limited studies focused on how the restrictive laws affect the framing of the issues of corruption in Sudan.

3. The History of Newspaper in Sudan

The Sudanese press played a great role in the national movement against colonialism. In addition, the Sudanese press continued their mission to raise awareness among citizens about the importance of democracy, freedom, and justice, and strongly defended the citizens' rights.

The first Sudanese newspaper emerged in the early twentieth century (in September 1903), whereas the "Sudan Gazette" appeared in 1902 [39]. The first popular biweekly newspaper was Al Sudan/The Sudan Times which was established by a Lebanese-Syrian expatriate company. This newspaper served as a media vehicle for government news in English and Arabic and was widely read. In 1912, another newspaper, called Sudan Herald with its Arabic edition Ra'id Al Sudan (Sudan Pioneer), was published by Greek expats, but it was highly monitored by the government and was considered as a foreign voice. These few newspapers served for a few years, but as the number of the educated Northern Sudanese increased, they revealed their willingness to have their own media platforms where they can voice their opinions to oppose the British colonialism and favor unity with Egypt and at the same time show their resistance for Egypt and raise demands for their country's independence. As a result, in 1919, Sudan's first newspaper, Hadarat Al Sudan (Sudan Civilization) or Al Hadara in Arabic language, started its publication, but it limited its content for the intelligentsia or the literary elite readers [25].

4. Issues of Corruption and Media Reportage in Sudan

Corruption has different faces, but the most discussed type of corruption in governance is financial corruption. The term corruption originally meant the process by which a well-functioning system of the government decays into one that fails to deliver and maltreats its citizens [40]. According to [41], corruption is defined as the efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means at the expense of the public. Corruption can also be the misuse of public power to achieve private benefits. Financial corruption is defined as the misuse of the governments' recourses to get personal gain [42]. This type of corruption can include selling the government's assets, embezzlement of government funds and accepting kickbacks or bribes. It seems that corruption is a global threat that draws back the development of nations particularly in Africa. Consequently, Africa is regarded as the most corrupted continent [11, 12]. Reference [2] revealed that despite of having oil and mineral resources in many African countries, such as Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo Nigeria and Sudan, the situations are getting worse rather than enhancing their citizens' living standards.

According to a report from the [43], Sudan is one of the most corrupted countries in Africa. Sudan is ranked 177th out of 183, scoring 1.6 on a 10-point scale of highly corrupted nations. In addition, in the citizen's survey of 2011 Global Corruption Barometer, 67% of citizens in Sudan believe that there was a rise in corruption in Sudan during the last three years prior to the survey. Reports [44] have also confirmed that Sudan has failed to overcome corruption due to its weak administration, lack of political will, and the blurred distinction between the state and the ruling party. For instance, according to [45] which has surveyed nations for imparting political and civil rights and freedom, including freedom of the press, Sudan is classified as the "worst of worst" among the worst 12 countries of the whole world. According to [46], financial corruption is deeply rooted in the Sudanese governance to the extent that individual politicians set a high bribe rate. The resultant widespread corruption leads to further raise in inequality and poor economic performance, and subsequently leads to the collapse of the government [1, 46].

However, the majority of recent research studies discuss issues of corruption in South Sudan. [47] for instance points out a series of impacts of political turmoil, unrest, and civil war on Sudan's national prestige. He

mentions how the challenges of governance and corruption have affected the oil and mineral resource in rich countries, including Sudan. In which the state's institutions are described by Smith as fragile, with low administrative capacity, ineffective financial control on revenues and expenditures, and the state and the ruling party practice their antagonistic relations. Similarly, corruption in police and security forces posed a threat to the internal security represented by the abuse of civil rights and the political ones of the citizens [43]. A lack of transparency is also visible in the oil sector that has resulted in long term political instability between the North and the South regions.

Reference [49] emphasizes that media coverage can easily turn people hostile towards corrupted politicians, thus leading to such consequences in the form of an electoral defeat of a single politician or even crumbling the government. Such media coverage can also force people to put pressure on the government to carry out reforms in laws and regulations that are potential causes for the corruption practices. Reference [49] suggests that media could publish such stories that not only assess the important issues but also uncover corruption and other flaws and weaknesses in public institutions, like courts, police and anti-corruption agencies and develop public pressure for reforms.

Therefore, this study explores how the press or media in Sudan can address anti-corruption issues in the country. Though Sudan has many local and national newspapers, the issues of corruption have not been extensively explored. The main cause of this ineffectiveness is that all sources of information that the media depend on are often under the control of the ruling elite [9].

A big challenge for conducting this study is that there is little available data or media coverage of corruption and the state of governance in Sudan. Previous studies have showed only the relationship between good governance in countries and active media coverage of politics [31]. Other researchers found a correlation between media coverage and voters' knowledge [50]. Reference [51] examined facts about media ownership in 97 countries and revealed that media in these countries are usually owned and controlled by the government or private elite families. As a result, media in these countries enjoy less press freedom and are denied other privileges. According to these scholars, the adverse effects of the government's ownership and curtailment of freedom of expression can be seen more prominently on newspapers more than television houses. Such conditions thus imply that the government's ownership of the media can reduce its effectiveness and increase corruption. In addition, Media's content is often shaped and molded to satisfy the economic needs. For example, a news item related to corruption may be less often designed to inform and more to sell. It seems that descriptions and narratives about people's plight and violence are sold faster [9]. All these facts indicate that whether it is the control of media through ownership or due to financial pressures obliging media clients' advertisements, there is always a deep impact on media activities and media coverage of significant issues like corruption.

In this regard, Reference [28] recommends that media should be more accountable and accept the responsibility of becoming free and fearless media. He advises journalists to work hard in order to build their image in public which is possible only if they demonstrate their freedom, objectivity and professionalism. He also advises the owners of the media to ensure timely payment of journalists' wages in order to motivate them to write more independently and fearlessly on the corruption practices in the society.

Media studies have recently shifted their attention to media frames and coverage of events. In the world of media, it is well known that media frames are designed strategically to achieve the desired result in the game; they help the media personnel regulate themselves to determine which particular players require more devotion and attention [27], how to report and narrate the winner or the loser by making the correct choices of rhetoric [52], and what realities to highlight and what to ignore [9] in order to give more importance to some and underestimate others. Undoubtedly, these framing components affect the readers and their understanding of reality [27].

In its life span, any news event is often reframed frequently and occasionally to confirm its various attributes, and also to keep it in the spotlight [53]. Frames may change in a topsy-turvy manner, particularly when media investigation is seen favoring constantly one side, making people suspect of the bias. Such a bias takes place when media framing exhibits consistent patterns in their coverage, suggesting some influence or the use of the government's authority [54]. Such a biased media framing also consolidates the position of one side, giving it free rein to do anything it wants without any fear of punishment [54].

Another advantage of media framing is felt when a political scandal takes place and any individual or agency is trying to make an impact to curb or distort it. Doubts are raised to explore whether the media frames are neutral, biased or arbitrary and whether their description of events favor a specific side, or they narrate their own version for either side to prove their neutrality. This will greatly help the future media studies determine what "drives" the news [52]. Equally significant is partisanship or bias that makes an impact on media's reports on political events. A biased media report presents the political issue only from one angle and ignores the opposite views, which is seen as a big hurdle for the media in fulfilling their responsibilities to offer unbiased and reliable information [55].

Previous studies have focused on the role of media to curb corruption [29, 28] or the relationship between press freedom and corruption [31, 32, 33, 34, 35,36, 29]. Other studies focused on the government's advertising and its relationship with media coverage of corruption scandals [37]. Reference [38] focused on the impact of mass media on corruption in South Africa. However, few studies have focused on newspapers framing issues of corruption. Therefore, the present study focuses on how the Sudanese newspapers frame the news of issues of corruption in Sudan.

The present study applied theories of media framing to examine the coverage of corruption in the Sudanese Press. The focus is on framing in news room and its internal factors. These include issues of editorial policies and news values. The study also examines the external factors, such as ownership, legislation and access to the government's information and the economic interests in relation to framing and coverage of the issues of corruption in Sudan. In addition, the study addresses the issue of corruption in Sudan within the context of Sudanese press by investigating how the Sudanese press frames the coverage of issues of corruption in Sudan. This is achieved through conducting a content analysis of four Sudanese newspaper on their coverage of the issues of corruption. The period for the study covers from April 2014 to April 2015. The newspapers are Aldar, Al Intibaha, Assayha and Sudan vision daily, which publish letters to the editors as well as columns that reflect the view on newspapers coverage of the issues of corruption in Sudan.

5. Restrictive Laws

Laws and regulations all over the world restrict the ruling government to exercise any limit on media to report and share information with the public. Despite this fact, several nations have been subjected to censorship and curtailed the freedom of the press in the form of banning international and national media or imposing dictatorial mandates on domestic news coverage. Eritrea tops this list as it is rated as the most censorship country, followed by North Korea, Syria, and Iran. These four nations have suffered a lot due to their geopolitical and nuclear stability, and hence necessitated huge restrictions on information sharing and dissemination of ideas through press. Similarly, a few Arab countries also fit into this authoritarian media system model, where the governments strongly regulate and control journalists and media personnel, thus creating press that support the state's policies rather than acting as a watchdog.

According to [56], the authoritarian model cannot be applied to Arab media systems (including Sudan), and journalists or editors are very sensitive to the political realities of their country. Reference [57] points out that the political reality, in fact, refers to journalists who are subjected to major challenges, such as laws restricting freedom and exposing to economic pressures that negatively affect journalists' performance as well as lack of legal protection for journalists, transparency and accountability of officials. In addition, there is a lack of original studies on Arab laws (including Sudan) and how these laws affect the press and the press industry in the Arab world [57].

According to [58], three factors are responsible for any dedicated research on media laws in the Arab world. First, there is a lack of academic freedom in the Arab region, which is a major obstacle to research in the media. Academics in Arab universities, intellectual elites and the practice of other journalists exercise self-censorship if they express views on "sensitive" subjects that lose their position and are expelled from the hosting countries. Second, the language proves that there is a big barrier in many Arab countries, where media laws are written in Arabic without English translation. As a result, English-speaking academics and the elite students, who have more knowledge of international approaches to these laws, are unable to examine any material as a source, whereas Arabic-speaking researchers avoid any serious study of media regulation. Finally, there is a general lack of transparency (in all areas, including media laws), making it difficult to obtain source materials and other specific information either in Arabic or English [59].

The Arab countries are among the worst in the world in terms of international press freedom rankings and journalists' environment because of the large restrictions that affect the press industry. These rankings are arranged by a joint committee of two NGOs, Reporters Without Borders (Paris) and Freedom House (Washington, D.C.). This committee has a standard method of arrangement that is applied to each country. They ask professional journalists, academic researchers, and media monitors to document abuses represented by arresting, imprisonment, and harassment of journalists, the ability of the media to investigate and criticize the government, self-censorship, financial and ownership of media outlets, and the legal framework of each country [59]. According to Freedom House, Sudan was classified as the "worst" among the 12 worst-hit countries in terms of the political and civil rights as well as press freedom [26]. As a result of the pressure on press in Sudan, the newspapers were subjected to huge financial losses in the form of low advertisements, repeated

confiscations of newspapers printed by the press, and instable working environment for journalists who do not get their salaries for months [60].

According to the [60], there are new ways and forms of censorship imposed by the authoritarian government on the press in Sudan represented by controlling what is published in newspapers and also through economic pressure, suspension and confiscation. The security services are directly involved in the pre-printing, night-after-night, post-printing and post-printing controls, which cost the newspapers a significant financial loss after printing.

As a result, all these licenses of journalists and media personnel were taken from the SJU and transferred to the National Council for Press and Publications (NCPP), that monitors the press in Sudan and is entitled to issue licenses to newspapers or magazines. There is a great regard for NCPP in the eyes of journalists since it is a governmental entity with good leadership and is under the supervision of the presidency, who appoints its secretary-general. Al-Amin views this changeover as positive since NCPP is the right entity to control the distribution of the press licenses.

Several studies recognize mass media development as crucial to the anti-corruption program. In other words, mass media plays a dual role in the fight against corruption. First, it makes people aware of the corrupted practices in media, its causes, consequences and possible remedies. Secondly, it investigates and reports incidents of corruption of regulatory and prosecutorial bodies [29]. Hence, media can be effective in curbing corruption by depending on access to information, freedom of expression and a professional and ethical code of investigative journalism [30].

6. Censorship

According to [61], the most liberal media is found in industrially developed countries with rich economies and consistent democracies. Countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia have high score points in terms of press freedom, whereas Arab countries, including Sudan, were among the lowest ones in relation to freedom of the press.

Reference [62] emphasizes the importance of media freedom for good governance, where the media plays the role of the guardian dog of the government's performance. Hence, it is a myth that political institutions in democratic countries determine the freedom of the media and there is evidence that many non-democratic countries have given the media a high level of freedom more than any other democratic country. In addition, it was noted that the level of freedom of information fluctuates from top to bottom in many countries throughout the political institutions [63].

In Sudan, freedom of press and views are guaranteed under the Interim National Constitution of 2005 as contained in article 39. However, the authoritarian governments, through laws such as the Press and Publications Act 2009, the 1999 Penal Code, and the 2009 National Law of 2010, have restricted this freedom by allowing the government to impose severe restrictions on press freedom, including a ban on media content that ignites ethnic and religious sentiments that may incite violence. If such an event occurs, editors will be

responsible for all contents published in their journal [26].

Sudan's press law requires the journalists to register at the National Press and Publications Council, which is a regulatory entity monitored by its president, who appoints its members and who has the authority to order newspapers to close for three days without a court order. The National Press and Publications Council conduct a test for each journalist before obtaining a license. The Ministry of Information Media licenses are issued in a politically biased manner, giving priority to pro-government newspapers in private and independent institutions [26]. According to [64], journalists in Africa suffer from intimidation and are sometimes imprisoned. The weak legal system of independent media and weak regulations of the government have further worsened the level of professionalism of media in Africa.

 [65] have noted that economic factors are a major constraint on the freedom of prudence, making the media financially dependent on collective markets. For example, a few powerful media conglomerates monopolize media ownership and newspapers. Economic factors, security issues, data protection issues and the war on terror also have a major impact on the freedom of the media. In addition, post-communist countries have other issues, such as small markets, monopolies, and political control of the press, which are major challenges to the press freedom [65].

Reference [63] suggested a model for the government's control of the media. This model aims at showing the differences in media freedom across nations over a period. Hence, in this study, the authors opine that the media bias is greater under state ownership of the media because the government is likely to have a vested interest in immobilizing its citizens and not allowing them to take any actions with political objective. Similarly, in another study, [63] suggested a theoretical model to explore the government's control of the media content due to an increase in the media bias and the government's desire to exercise full direct control of the media. This model is based on the principle that bias has two-fold effects. First, it reduces the informational content in the news. Second, it decreases the view of those who value that information. This model is based on empirical predictions of the relationship between media freedom and various features of the political-economic environment.

7. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions of this study, in-depth interviews were conducted. An in-depth interview is a qualitative research approach. The qualitative research was used in this study for the following reasons. The qualitative research has features to describe the issue with rich details. According to [66], the qualitative research involves different methods, such as interpretative and naturalistic procedures for exploring the phenomenon. In addition, the qualitative research could help the researchers conduct the research in a normal setting and allow them to explore the phenomenon by examining words, reports, photos and other materials [67]. In this regard, Reference [68] defined qualitative research as a shape of systematic empirical investigation into meaning. Reference [69] described the manner for qualitative data analysis as what enables the researchers to classify, compare and regulate the data. Similarly, Reference [70] noted that a qualitative data analysis has a distinct approach with the integration of analysis and explanation through the merging of data collection with data analysis.

Therefore, in the present study, the qualitative approach focuses on collecting and analyzing the perceptions of stakeholders on the issues of corruption in the Sudanese newspapers. In addition, the present study focuses on how the external and internal factors affect the newspaper framing of corruption in the Sudanese newspapers. To achieve this objective, this study involves conducting in-depth interviews to collect data from the Sudanese editors and journalists to get their perspectives about the Sudanese newspaper framing of the issues of corruption in Sudan.

Finally, the qualitative interviews facilitate examining and understanding the opinions and views of the informants in order to explore how restrictive laws affect the Sudanese newspapers' framing of the issues of corruption in Sudan.

A purposeful sampling was adopted in selecting 20 Sudanese journalists and editors across both governmental and private newspapers operating in Sudan. In order to achieve clearer understandings of the journalists' perspectives, the study adequately supported each theme with models generated through employing NVivo 8 software.

7.1 Time Period for the Study

The time period for the study extended from April 2016 to March 2017. This period was chosen because Sudan suffers politically from difficult circumstances because of the anniversary of demonstrations that took place in September 2013, whereby a number of demonstrators was killed. Second, there is an increase in the rate of the corruption in Sudan, and the emergence of the issue of the most famous cases of corruption preoccupied the public opinion during this time. For instance, the cases of financial corruption in the office of Governor of Khartoum State and the issue of corruption in Sudan Cotton Company happened during this period.

7.2 Research Preparation Process

The first stage of the study is the dual process of development and testing the interview protocol and the interview questions in order to make sure that they meet the objectives of the research. The interview questions were tested with some colleagues who had carried out a similar research to make sure that the questions are clear. Arising from this, all necessary amendments were made on the interviews protocol to ensure clarity and clear understanding by the participants. According to [72], a pilot test can assist the researcher in identifying if there are mistakes or other weaknesses in the interviews design. The interview protocol is designed to elicit answers to all the research questions, but at the same time, all the questions are framed to be flexible and easy to be understood. Similarly, follow up questions are listed side by side of the interview questions for easy and adequate response.

The suggestions offered in [71] were applied. First, the setting and venues for each interview was selected. Second, the purpose of the interview was explained to all the interviewees as well as the assurance of confidentially of the information. Finally, each interviewee had the opportunity to ask for clarification or present any suggestion that may help run the interview.

In addition, having adequately determined the appropriate editors and journalists to be interviewed, the researcher ensured that their contacts and appointments with each interviewee were confirmed.

7.3 Sample Design

The selection of the sample for this study was based on a purposeful sampling procedure. QA qualitative research, according to [73], are mostly examined through a purposeful sampling. Hence, in [74], it was noted that, for a research that aims at examining the opinions and studying the involvement of moderately standardized individual, 12 interviewees are considered appropriate. Consequently, in the current study, twenty interviewees of journalists and editors (three journalists and/or editors from each one of the four Sudanese newspapers, namely Aldar, Al Intibaha, Assayha and Sudan vision, were selected for an in-depth interview.

Selecting the informants is the most important criteria when studying groups [75]. Therefore, the researcher employed in the present study the following criteria for selecting the participants:

1. The interviewee must have a considerable level of skills, experience, and expertise in news editorial and news writing for a minimum of two years.

2. The interviewee is willing to participate in the interview.

7.4 Data Collection

An in-depth interview was employed for the collection of data. In line with this, the interview questions were designed as open-ended. The interview questions could explore the experience of editors and journalists on issues of corruption in Sudan. It also allowed the interviewer to ask probing questions. The interview guide, according to [76], encompasses the topic, questions and issues that the researcher aims to cover during the interviews.

In order to have reliable responses, the interviewees were informed about the objectives of the study before each interview. This is advocated by [77] who noted that giving the interviewees an idea of what to expect from the interview will increase the aspect of honesty and is also a fundamental part of the informed consent process.

All the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and notes were taken during interviews to highlight the most significant issues. The tape recording is one of the best devices for gathering an accurate version of any interviews [66, 73].

7.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis was carried out using, particularly athematic analysis of the data. NVIVO 11 was used to simplify the process of storing, coding, analysis and preparation of the graphical representation of data. Using Nvivo 11 could make the process faster, accurate and easier for the researcher to handle the many different codes, identify different relationships, and enable diagrams of emerging findings and preparation of the research

reports.

8. General Findings

The research question in the area under study has been used to achieve the objective of the study. In the same vain, it has been revealed that the Legislation and Press Freedom are one of key elements of development of press industry by the Sudanese government through parliament to ensure press freedom.

According to the informants, the legal obstacle including defamation laws, national unity and the threat to national security (called the Information Act, the Press Law, the Criminal Law) have restricted the press in their quest for access to information in spite of the approval of the freedom of information ACT (FOI).

The press industry in Sudan is directly related to the overall situation in the country. The press will not evolve if there is no comprehensive and complete reform of the system in the case of Sudanese laws to be compatible with democracy. This reformation will ensure the appropriate legislative environment to provide freedom of the press and ensure the existence of investigative journalism and the ability to address sensitive issues, such as the financial corruption in the public sector Governmental organizations. The findings also revealed that the press industry in Sudan is linked to the general situation in the country.

9. Discussion and Conclusions

The Interim National Constitution of 2005 guaranteed the protection of freedom of views and press under the Article 39 and access to information for transparency, accountability and efficiency. However, despite the previous constitutional provision and other similar laws, access to information, public records and official documents, has not been available despite the Freedom of Information Act. The Sudanese government issued the Freedom of Information Act, which was approved by the Sudanese parliament in January 2015.

Several factors limit the application and effectiveness of the Freedom of Information Act. The main obstacles are illiteracy and poverty. Most of the population is either uneducated or ignorant of the Freedom of Information Act. They consider the use of the Freedom of Expression Act to be held accountable by a public institution is time-wasting and futile. This confirms that having laws is not enough to be applied. Therefore, the real willingness of the government and citizens to apply the laws will be effective in providing the freedom of expressing views, access to information, and other values of freedom.

The institutions that would activate the Freedom of Information Act is the judicial institution and the judicial services that hinder progress on this issue. As a result, the law has been ineffective in most of the federal states. It is equally important to reiterate the inappropriate position of public officials, who are still reluctant to provide the required information despite the adoption of the law, as well as a lack of awareness of the existence and importance of citizenship by citizens and the journalists.

The delay in the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act has hindered access to official documents and reduced the quest for accountability of officials. Theoretically, the government claims that the governmental

documents are available for public scrutiny and that irregularities by public officials lead them to justice.

However, the official secrecy, the difficulty of access to the government's information, corruption and the broad powers of the unconstitutional public officials undermine the institutionalization of practice.

10. Limitation of the Study

The present study adopted a qualitative research method using in-depth interviews to adequately probe the perceptions of the Sudanese journalists and editors in four Sudanese newspapers, namely (Aldar, Al Intibaha, Assayha and Sudan vision daily). The study involved exploring how the restrictive laws affect the Sudanese newspapers in framing the issues of corruption in Sudan. A purposeful sampling was adopted in selecting 20 Sudanese journalists across both governmental and private newspapers operating in Sudan. In order to achieve clearer understandings of the journalists' perspectives, more studies are needed that could include journalists and editors in other Sudanese newspapers. Further researches are also required to understand how the restrictions such as legislations and controlling of the media in Sudan limit the Sudanese newspaper to do their role as watchdog on the government's activities.

11. Recommendation of the Study

Based on the results obtained from this study, the authoritarian government in Sudan controls a great deal of what is published in newspapers through laws that restrict the press freedom and hinder the activation of laws that guarantee free access to information. It is therefore recommended that the State of Sudan reconsider the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

In addition, the state should release the restrictive laws, such as National Security Act, the press law, the criminal law and the law on informatics and activate and develop the laws provided by the country's national constitution to guarantee the basic human rights of freedom of thought, expression, press, and access to the government's information, thus strengthening the relationship between the government and its citizens and fighting corruption. In conclusion, the Sudanese press should raise awareness among citizens and journalists in particular the importance of activating the law related to access to information, which was approved by the Sudanese parliament in January 2015. Consequently, the development and activation the law could achieve free access to information, raise the values of transparency, and fight corruption in the country.

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