

## Confidence in News Media: Exploring Lebanon

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Little is known at the most basic levels about news media assessment in countries like Lebanon. While organizations like Gallup and Pew in the United States continue to issue periodical reports about press accuracy, fairness in dealing, confidence in news, bias in reporting, and many more issues information from other countries on the same issues are often more difficult to obtain. In countries such as Lebanon, where the news media play a crucial role in public indoctrination and mobilization, news media studies that are able to provide a realistic unbiased assessment of the news media are lacking.

This article seeks to lay a foundation for a triggering mechanism to assess and rate the different news media with Lebanon being the focus of this study. Thus, this research explores Lebanese public opinion towards the major issues of news media to provide estimated guidelines that may be assured or refined by further studies.

Therefore, the present study aims at highlighting the accuracy of news in Lebanon, the biases and trust of news organizations through a survey administered to a sample of 4,850 different Lebanese respondents over more than four years.

### *Literature Review*

The issue of trust in news media has been always a major concern for both governments and societies. In fact, many people have expressed a wide diversity of opinions about news reporting, its fairness, accuracy, deepness of coverage and biases. Three years ago, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, released the results of a survey of 1,506 Americans (Pew Research Center, September 13, 2009). The *New York Times* reported:

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On this year's survey, 63% of the respondents said news articles were inaccurate and only 29% said the media generally – gets the facts right – the worst marks Pew has recorded – compared with 53% and 39% in 2007 (Pérez-Peña, 2009).

In its report, The Pew Research Center presented a graph that demonstrates how American public opinion on news accuracy and fairness has been declining ever since Pew started its news survey in 1985. The graph depicted in Figure 1 shows that:

The public's assessment of the accuracy of news stories is now at its lowest level in more than two decades of Pew research surveys, and Americans' views of media bias and independence now match previous lows (Pew Research Center, September 13, 2009).

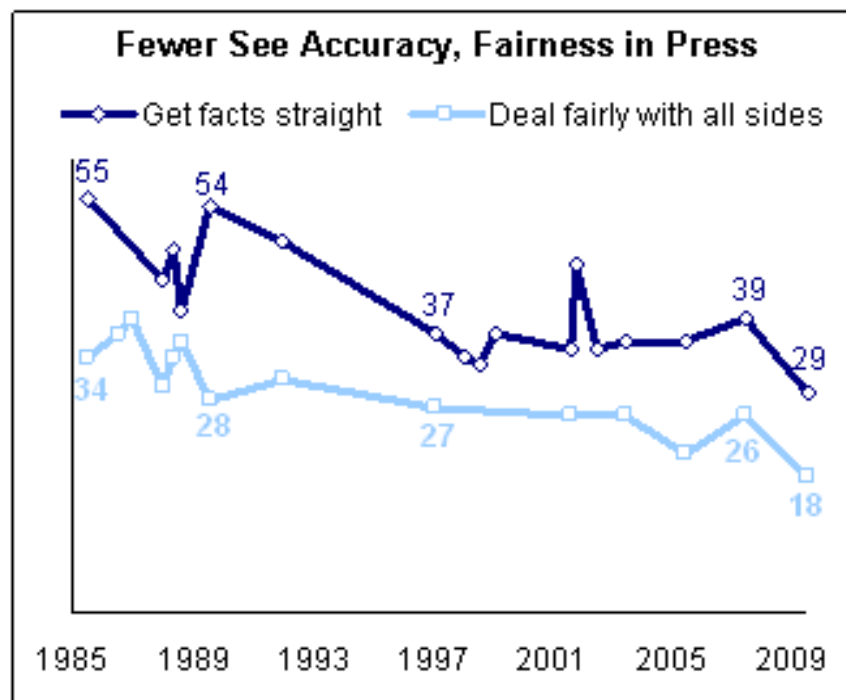


Figure 1. Press accuracy rating by public hits two-decade low in U.S. media (Pew Research Center, September 13, 2009)

On January 26, 2010; Christopher Weber wrote in *Politics Daily*:

A generation ago you would have expected Americans to place their trust in the most neutral and unbiased conveyors of news. Dean Debnam, president of Public Policy Polling, said in a press release: 'But the media landscape has really changed and now they're turning more toward the outlets that tell them what they want to hear.'

The Gallup corporation, a leader “in delivering relevant, timely, and visionary research on what people around the world think and feel” released a report on August 13, 2010, titled: “In U.S., Confidence in Newspapers, TV News Remains a Rarity. No more than 25% say they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in either” (Morales, 2010). One of the report’s implications was:

With nearly all news organizations struggling to keep up with the up-to-the-minute news cycle and remain profitable in the process, America’s low trust in newspapers and television news presents a critical barrier to success. Phil Rosenthal (2010) wrote in the *Chicago Tribune*:

A recently released Gallup Poll indicates that among US adults, only one in four have either a ‘great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of confidence in newspapers and just 22% have confidence in TV news. That’s an unbelievable figure... This mistrust of news outlets is reflective of a continuing trend...

The aforementioned pessimistic view of the American public towards news media was slightly reduced on June 23, 2011, when Justin Ho concluded in ‘Faith in TV news on the rise’ that:

... confidence in many of America’s public institutions remains at rock-bottom levels-but faith in TV news is on the rise, a new poll found. A Gallup survey revealed that confidence in network and cable news saw a slight increase since last year, climbing to 27% from 22% the year before.

However, Ho continued:

... despite the recent boost, confidence in TV news remains 5% points below its historic average, and roughly three in four Americans still lack confidence in traditional news media – an institution whose confidence has been declining since the 1990’s.

Lyman Morales (2011) indicated that

Gallup’s annual update on confidence in newspapers and television news rebounded slightly in the past year, having been stuck at record lows since 2007.

Gallup Polls conducted on July 2010 and June 2011 indicated that America’s confidence in newspapers and television news has grown from 24% to 30% among men, and from 25% to 27%

among women. The results for the Gallup Polls were based on telephone interviews conducted on June 9-12, 2011, with a random sample of 1,020 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 US states and the District of Columbia (Gallup, 2012a, Gallup, 2012b). However, Ed Morrissey (2011) emphasized that although there was an actual takeaway observed, the confidence in national media remained remarkably low. He added: “we’re [not] experiencing a renaissance.” Herrmann (2011) highlighted the fact that:

Newspapers, at 28% in 2011, are still far below their historical average of 33% while television news at 27% is down from its historical average of 32% (According to Gallup, historical averages are based on all measurements since 1973).

As for TV news, *npolls* (2011) indicated that:

... a recent poll about TV news showed that majority of respondents believe that TV news channels are not neutral/unbiased and, for 4 persons among 5, TV networks are truly influenced by politics.

This poll was technically based on a sample of 5,006 mobile device owners who answered a survey between May 25 and 27, 2011.

Surprisingly most of the reports and statistics published or posted are for American media assessments. However, few other studies were reported for other parts of the world like Lebanon. On June 2004, The Institute for professional Journalists organized a conference on Media Ethics and Journalism in the Arab world (IPJ, 2004). During the conference opening ceremony, Kristen Maas, director of the Middle East office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, said:

Our task is to find and support ways and instruments that enhance responsible action. Responsibility however should not be loaded on the shoulders of journalists alone. What are the options for media professionalism and objectivity when there is an environment of institutional secrecy, rigid media legislations, restricted freedom of expression and political participation, and a number of social taboos? Journalists also need a sense of economic security, access to information, and the right to expression and to keep sources confidential.

Moreover, Maas did highlight that responsible reporting is tied to the protection of freedoms and rights of journalists, thus making the act of news accuracy critical under the political challenges, the weak culture of democracy, and the domination of news media under the control of politicians with big financial resources. These last three factors, in one way or another, have a

deep influence on executing trust studies and press accuracy ratings on news media in most third world countries with Lebanon being one of the cases (IPJ, 2004).

As noted above, the trends in rating media accuracy have been declining without being able to regain the high levels it processed a couple of decades ago. This decreasing trend has been dragging down both superpower countries like the U.S. and marginal developing world countries like Lebanon. It is clear that no matter which world we are dealing with, the public assessment of the trust in news media forms a critical issue under the prevailing political and social challenges.

### Research Methodology

This research is exploratory in nature and uses a poll questionnaire distributed to a convenience sample of respondents belonging to all classes of the Lebanese community. The questionnaire is in the form of a fast poll consisting of six opinions and values questions using five-point Likert scale followed by three demographic questions. The main criterion for selection was their willingness to respond to the poll.

The collection of data was performed over a span of four years covering nine academic semesters extending from Fall 2009 until the Spring 2012. Data were gathered at the beginning of each academic semester through an assignment that was part of a “Business Research Methods” course offered to graduate students in the MBA program at the Lebanese American University (LAU) in Beirut. The total sample consisted of 4,850 respondents. Each student registered in the course administered 50 questionnaires to a group of respondents (mainly family members, relatives, coworkers, classmates and friends). For each term, the questionnaires were collected from students. Table 1 shows respondents distribution during the four years.

Table 1:

Distribution of Research Respondents

Term	Abbreviation	Number of Respondents
Spring 2009	SP2009	1005
Fall 2009	FA 2009	585
Spring 2010	SP 2010	392
Summer 2010	SU 2010	355
Fall 2010	FA 2010	782
Spring 2011	SP 2011	490
Summer 2011	SU 2011	243
Fall 2011	FA 2011	465
Spring 2012	SP 2012	533
<b>Total</b>		<b>4850</b>

### Purpose and Objectives of the Research

This research aims at describing, answering and explaining a set of questions attached to a selected sample of respondents' opinions and values on media trust and assessment. The first objective is to assess opinions on six issues:

- What media leads us to think about?
- What is the extent of media converge?
- What is the level of objectivity in media coverage?
- Accuracy and fairness of news reporting.
- Purpose of news media as seen from media owner's view.
- Holiness of the news media profession.

The second objective of the present research goes beyond descriptive research to examine relationships between news media and the respondents' demographic profiles. Six sets of hypotheses are examined.

The first set of hypothesis examines the dependence between age and whether media news tell us what to think about (the agenda-setting function):

*H1<sub>a</sub>: Age of respondent and his/her opinion on media news 'after reporting thoughts' are independent variables, i.e. respondent's age and the media telling the respondent what to think about.*

The second hypothesis (*H1<sub>b</sub>*) assesses if the level of education and the post news reporting thoughts are dependent, specifically:

*H1<sub>b</sub>: The educational level of respondent and post news reporting thoughts are independent, i.e. the respondent's educational level and the media telling the respondent the course of what to think about later are independents.*

The third hypothesis (*H1<sub>c</sub>*), investigates the monthly income to determine whether the media telling us what to think about is dependent on our financial status.

*H1<sub>c</sub>: The respondent's monthly income and his belief that media tells what to think of are independent, i.e. monthly income of respondent does not influence the respondent post news media thoughts.*

The next set of hypotheses includes three hypotheses formulated to examine the dependency between the "superficiality in news selection" versus age, education and monthly income. So,

*H2<sub>a</sub>: The respondents' assessment of 'major media selection of news' and their ages are independent.*

*H2<sub>b</sub>: The respondents' assessment of 'major media selection of news' and their highest level of education are independent.*

*H2<sub>c</sub>: The respondents' assessment of 'major media selection of news' and their monthly incomes are independent.*

A third set of hypotheses intend to investigate the relationship between age, education, and monthly income versus the "feeling that news media are subjective." These are:

*H3<sub>a</sub>: The respondent's age and the feeling that news media are subjective are independent.*

*H3<sub>b</sub>: The respondent's highest level of education and the feeling that news media are subjective are independent.*

*H3<sub>c</sub>: The respondent's monthly income and the feeling that news media are subjective are independent.*

The fourth set of hypotheses, examines another aspect of media news trust, mainly the relationship of news reporting accuracy and fairness as related to age, educational level and monthly income.

*H4<sub>a</sub>: The respondent's age and the assessment of news reporting accuracy and fairness are independent.*

*H4<sub>b</sub>: The respondent's highest level of education and the assessment of news reporting accuracy and fairness are independent.*

*H4<sub>c</sub>: The respondent's monthly income and the assessment of news reporting accuracy and fairness are independent.*

The fifth set of hypotheses examines the relationship between age, educational level, and monthly income versus the respondents' assessments of the influence of the news media owner on news reporting.

*H5<sub>a</sub>: The respondent's age and the assessment of media owner influence on news reporting are independent.*

*H5<sub>b</sub>: The respondent's highest level of education and the assessment of media owner influence on news reporting are independent.*

*H5<sub>c</sub>: The respondent's monthly income and the assessment of media owner influence on news reporting are independent.*

The sixth set of hypotheses examines the individual relationship between age, educational level, and monthly income versus the assessment of holiness of the news reporting profession. Thus, the last set is:

*H6<sub>a</sub>: The respondent's age and the assessment of the holiness of the news reporting profession are independent.*

*H6<sub>b</sub>: The respondent's highest level of education and the assessment of the holiness of the news reporting profession are independent.*

*H6<sub>c</sub>: The respondent's monthly income and the assessment of the holiness of the news reporting profession are independent.*

Beside the aforementioned objectives, this article compares the results obtained to those reported in the literature mainly by Gallup and Pew in the USA.

### *Results – Sample Demographics*

Respondents mainly belong to a highly educated group as both the median and the mode indicated the highest educational degree as “BS University Degree.” This result did not change during all the terms throughout the polling. This result is justified in that the graduate students who administered the poll found that their most convenient respondents were among their classmates, other university students, and their fellow work colleagues.

The respondents' age groups were mainly concentrated in the two age groups 19 to 25 years, and 26 to 39 years (as detected in the mode and median). These age categories indicate that the majority of respondents belong to an adult group. Finally, the answers to the monthly income had their median and mode in the category 1 Million LBP. to 2 Million LBP. This finding clearly indicates that the majority of the respondents belong to a social middle class as compared with other Lebanese social classes. Details are provided in Table 2.



Table 2:  
Sample Demographics

Term	Demographic Item	Mode	Median
Spring 2009	Age	19 – 25	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LL	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Fall 2009	Age (Years)	16 – 39	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LL	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Spring 2010	Age (Years)	19 – 25	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LL	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Summer 2010	Age (Years)	26 – 39	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LBP	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Fall 2010	Age (Years)	26 – 39	26 – 39
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LBP	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Spring 2011	Age (Years)	26 – 39	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LBP	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Summer 2011	Age (Years)	26 – 39	26 – 39
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LBP	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Fall 2011	Age (Years)	26 – 39	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LBP	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions
Spring 2012	Age (Years)	26 – 39	19 – 25
	Highest Education Degree	BS – University Degree	BS – University Degree
	Monthly Income, LBP	> 1 Million– 2 Millions	> 1 Million– 2 Millions

Note: \$1USD=1,503.76 LBP (Lebanese Pounds)

### Descriptive Analysis of Poll Items

Jamieson (2004) stated clearly that Likert scales fall within the ordinal level of measurement. Moreover, her paper emphasizes the fact that the responses in Likert scales cannot have equal intervals between the pairs of adjacent responses. A reaction to Jamieson’s article was published by Pell (2005) where the conclusion was that it is acceptable in many cases to consider Likert scales’ responses as interval levels of measurement, in particular when the data are of appropriate size and shape. This same argument is supported by (Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 475) where they agree that many attitude investigators do consider Likert scales to be interval levels of

measurements especially when their sample is large and randomly selected. On this basis the Likert scale was treated as an interval scale thus allowing the calculations of means and standard deviations.

The poll consists of mainly six 5-level Likert scale items related to the respondents’ opinions as indicated previously in the research objectives section. For simplicity and clarity the 5-level Likert scale measurements were coded as follows:

- 1 for Highly Disagree
- 2 for Disagree
- 3 for Neutral
- 4 for Agree
- 5 for Highly Agree

Moreover, to draw clear distinction lines in the responses, the researchers created two new categories by grouping the agreement responses categorized as “Highly Agree and Agree” together and similarly with the disagreement responses categorized as “Highly Disagree and Disagree.” Results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. The neutral responses are reported in Table 5.

*Table 3:*  
Percentages of Agree plus Highly Agree for the 6 Items

	Statement	SP 2009	FA 2009	SP 2010	SU 2010	FA 2010	SP 2011	SU 2011	FA 2011	SP 2012	All Terms
Q1	Media Tells us what to think ...	50.6%	54.2%	57.9%	49.1%	53.0%	56.9%	53.8%	42.5%	54.4%	53.3%
Q2	Major media are superficial ...	53.7%	49.2%	53.8%	52.4%	58.6%	52.2%	52.5%	59.5%	62.8%	55.2%
Q3	Major media are subjective ...	61.4%	58.6%	63.7%	66.8%	62.6%	57.7%	59.3%	75.4%	72.2%	63.8%
Q4	News reporting inaccurate & unfair	49.4%	50.4%	44.5%	52.5%	55.3%	48.9%	51.0%	57.7%	46.7%	50.1%
Q5	Media purpose not to tell it like it is	63.3%	62.5%	62.5%	55.5%	64.5%	62.2%	62.2%	66.2%	70.7%	63.7%
Q6	News today no longer holy ...	59.0%	58.2%	65.0%	59.7%	66.0%	60.5%	55.5%	68.7%	77.0%	63.4%
	Average Question Percentage	56.2%	55.5%	57.9%	56.0%	60.0%	56.4%	55.7%	61.7%	64.0%	58.3%
	Maximum Question Percentage	63.3%	62.5%	65.0%	66.8%	66.0%	62.2%	62.2%	75.4%	77.0%	63.8%
	Minimum Question Percentage	49.4%	49.2%	44.5%	49.1%	53.0%	48.9%	51.0%	42.5%	46.7%	50.1%
	% Std Deviation Across Questions	5.82%	5.16%	7.77%	6.38%	5.22%	5.03%	4.27%	11.37%	11.61%	6.12%
	Percentages shown correspond to all those who support the statement										

Table 4:

Percentages of Disagree plus Highly Disagree for the 6 Items

	Statement	SP 2009	FA 2009	SP 2010	SU 2010	FA 2010	SP 2011	SU 2011	FA 2011	SP 2012	All Terms
Q1	Media Tells us what to think ...	29.4%	27.4%	26.3%	28.7%	26.4%	25.5%	31.0%	26.7%	25.0%	27.3%
Q2	Major media are superficial ...	26.5%	24.1%	27.1%	27.0%	22.4%	27.3%	27.1%	23.0%	17.9%	24.5%
Q3	Major media are subjective ...	21.9%	21.7%	20.7%	16.0%	19.1%	23.2%	21.8%	12.6%	12.9%	19.1%
Q4	News reporting inaccurate & unfair	26.0%	22.3%	35.8%	24.3%	19.7%	25.7%	26.4%	16.8%	24.4%	24.1%
Q5	Media purpose not to tell it like it is	22.6%	19.5%	24.3%	27.3%	21.8%	21.5%	25.9%	19.2%	20.5%	22.1%
Q6	News today no longer holy ...	18.8%	14.9%	18.9%	13.5%	13.5%	23.3%	21.6%	12.8%	7.6%	15.9%
	Average Question Percentage	24.2%	21.7%	25.5%	22.8%	20.5%	24.4%	25.6%	18.5%	18.1%	22.2%
	Maximum Question Percentage	29.4%	27.4%	35.8%	28.7%	26.4%	27.3%	31.0%	26.7%	25.0%	27.3%
	Minimum Question Percentage	18.8%	14.9%	18.9%	13.5%	13.5%	21.5%	21.6%	12.6%	7.6%	15.9%
	% Std Deviation Across Questions	3.81%	4.23%	5.96%	6.44%	4.28%	2.12%	3.54%	5.62%	6.79%	4.10%
Percentages shown correspond to all those who don't support a statement											

Table 5:

Percentages of Neutral for the 6 Items

	Statement	SP 2009	FA 2009	SP 2010	SU 2010	FA 2010	SP 2011	SU 2011	FA 2011	SP 2012	All Terms
Q1	Media Tells us what to think ...	20.0%	18.4%	15.8%	22.2%	20.6%	17.6%	15.2%	30.8%	20.6%	19.4%
Q2	Major media are superficial ...	19.8%	26.7%	19.1%	20.6%	19.0%	20.5%	20.4%	17.5%	19.3%	20.3%
Q3	Major media are subjective ...	16.7%	19.7%	15.6%	17.2%	18.3%	19.1%	18.9%	12.0%	14.9%	17.1%
Q4	News reporting inaccurate & unfair	24.6%	27.3%	19.7%	23.2%	25.0%	25.4%	22.6%	25.5%	28.9%	25.8%
Q5	Media purpose not to tell it like it is	14.1%	18.0%	13.2%	17.2%	13.7%	16.3%	11.9%	14.6%	8.8%	14.2%
Q6	News today no longer holy ...	22.2%	26.9%	16.1%	26.8%	20.5%	16.2%	22.9%	18.5%	15.4%	20.7%
	Average Question Percentage	19.6%	22.8%	16.6%	21.2%	19.5%	19.2%	18.7%	19.8%	18.0%	19.6%
	Maximum Question Percentage	24.6%	27.3%	19.7%	26.8%	25.0%	25.4%	22.9%	30.8%	28.9%	25.8%
	Minimum Question Percentage	14.1%	18.0%	13.2%	17.2%	13.7%	16.2%	11.9%	12.0%	8.8%	14.2%
	% Std Deviation Across Questions	3.76%	4.57%	2.42%	3.71%	3.68%	3.47%	4.34%	7.05%	6.76%	3.89%
Percentages shown correspond to those who are neutral about a statement											

Table 6 shows that on the average (58.3%) of the 4,850 respondents agree that the Lebanese media are superficial, biased, unfair, inaccurate, leading, and even contribute against the welfare of the profession. Another 19.6% of the respondents expressed neutrality in their opinions, which according to the authors' experiences, matches part of the Lebanese population's attitude when confronted with challenging statements, while 22.2% of the sample population disagreed with the first group.

Table 6:

Overall probability distributions for the poll questions

Item	Statement	Average % of	Average % of	Average
		All Terms	All Terms	% of All Terms
		Agreement	Neutral	Disagreement
Q1	Media tells us what to think about	53.3	19.4	27.3
Q2	Major media are superficial in selection of news	55.2	20.3	24.5
Q3	Major media are subjective in selection of news	63.8	17.1	19.1
Q4	News Reporting is inaccurate and unfair	50.1	25.8	24.1
Q5	Purpose of media to tell it as media owners wants	63.7	14.2	22.1
Q6	News no longer a holy profession	63.4	20.7	15.9
	Average Question Percentage	58.3	19.6	22.2
	Maximum Question Percentage	63.8	25.8	27.3
	Minimum Question Percentage	50.1	14.2	15.9
	% Std Deviation Across Questions	6.12	3.89	4.10

*Tests for the Research Hypotheses*

Table 7 presents the summary of the Chi-Square tests performed in order to evaluate acceptance or rejection of each of the 18 hypotheses presented in the objectives section. The Chi-Square tests were performed on the whole set of data collected from the 4,850 respondents. The Chi-Square cross tabulation test is used to determine if any statistically significant relationship exists between two variables. For purposes of Chi-square analysis, only the valid cases were considered, i.e. for each crosstab the missing entries corresponding to no answers were excluded. Table 7 demonstrates clearly that all the crosstabs are statistically significant at .05 level of significance, making a clear dependency between the age, educational degree, and income versus each of the statements corresponding to Questions 1-6. Therefore, all the Null Hypotheses are rejected confirming that the respondents' age, education level, and income are factors that influence the respondents' opinion as related to the poll statements. In this case and as observed earlier in the demographic characterization of the sample, respondents are mature, educated and with average financial status, facts that lead us to believe that their opinions are valid and reflect the general population's states-of-mind.

Table 7:

## Summary of the Chi-Square Crosstab Results

<b>Q1:</b> The media tells us what to think about.	<b>H1<sub>a</sub>: Age and Q1</b> Chi-Square=95.185 P = 0.000 Answer to Q1 depends on respondent's age.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H1<sub>b</sub>: Education and Q1</b> Chi-Square=40.044 P = 0.005 Answer to Q1 depends on respondent's educational degree.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H1<sub>c</sub>: Income and Q1</b> Chi-Square=48.136 P = 0.000 Answer to Q1 depends on respondent's Income.  Reject Null Hypothesis
<b>Q2:</b> Major media are superficial in their selection of news.	<b>H2<sub>a</sub>: Age and Q2</b> Chi-Square=43.494 P = 0.000 Answer to Q2 depends on respondent's age.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H2<sub>b</sub>: Education and Q2</b> Chi-Square=43.887 P = 0.002 Answer to Q2 depends on respondent's educational degree.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H2<sub>c</sub>: Income and Q2</b> Chi-Square=31.756 P = 0.011 Answer to Q2 depends on respondent's Income.  Reject Null Hypothesis
<b>Q3:</b> Major media are subjective in their selection of news.	<b>H3<sub>a</sub>: Age and Q3</b> Chi-Square=39.097 P = 0.001 Answer to Q3 depends on respondent's age.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H3<sub>b</sub>: Education and Q3</b> Chi-Square=77.623 P = 0.000 Answer to Q3 depends on respondent's educational degree.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H3<sub>c</sub>: Income and Q3</b> Chi-Square=62.194 P = 0.000 Answer to Q3 depends on respondent's Income.  Reject Null Hypothesis
<b>Q4:</b> News reporting is inaccurate and unfair.	<b>H4<sub>a</sub>: Age and Q4</b> Chi-Square=63.254 P = 0.000 Answer to Q4 depends on respondent's age.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H4<sub>b</sub>: Education and Q4</b> Chi-Square=34.424 P = 0.023 Answer to Q4 depends on respondent's educational degree.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H4<sub>c</sub>: Income and Q4</b> Chi-Square=32.672 P = 0.008 Answer to Q4 depends on respondent's Income.  Reject Null Hypothesis
<b>Q5:</b> Purpose of media is not to tell it like it is but as owner wants it to be.	<b>H5<sub>a</sub>: Age and Q5</b> Chi-Square=40.193 P = 0.001 Answer to Q5 depends on respondent's age.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H5<sub>b</sub>: Education and Q5</b> Chi-Square=89.274 P = 0.000 Answer to Q5 depends on respondent's educational degree.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H5<sub>c</sub>: Income and Q5</b> Chi-Square=56.266 P = 0.000 Answer to Q5 depends on respondent's Income.  Reject Null Hypothesis
<b>Q6:</b> News no longer a holy profession ... Hell with public service.	<b>H6<sub>a</sub>: Age and Q6</b> Chi-Square=51.533 P = 0.000 Answer to Q6 depends on respondent's age.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H6<sub>b</sub>: Education and Q6</b> Chi-Square=44.431 P = 0.001 Answer to Q6 depends on respondent's educational degree.  Reject Null Hypothesis	<b>H6<sub>c</sub>: Income and Q6</b> Chi-Square=51.091 P = 0.000 Answer to Q6 depends on respondent's Income.  Reject Null Hypothesis

*Reliability and Validity Analysis*

Two major concepts that researchers ask for in any exploratory or causal research are research reliability and validity. Reliability is the degree of consistency of the respondents' data, in other words, is the assessment of the ability to repeat the same measurements. According to Hair, et al. (2010), a diagnostic measure of reliability is the reliability coefficient which assesses the consistency of the entire scale with Cronbach's alpha being the most widely used measure. "The generally agreed upon lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, although it may decrease to 0.6 in exploratory research" (Burns & Burns, 2008). Table 8 shows the rules of thumb for Cronbach's Alpha.

*Table 8:*  
Rules of Thumb for Cronbach's Alpha

Range for Cronbach's Alpha	Strength of Internal Consistency
< 0.6	Poor
0.6 to <0.7	Moderate
0.7 to < 0.8	Good
0.8 to < 0.9	Very Good
0.9	Excellent

Validity enables researchers to compare the theory against reality, i.e. they see how well the theory fits the data. Convergent validity is when the items that are indicators of a specific construct (like the poll in this research) share a high proportion of variance in common. To estimate convergent validity, the size of the factor loadings can be considered. In the case of a high convergent validity, high loadings on a factor would indicate that they converge on a common point. At a minimum, all factor loadings should be statistically significant, where a good rule of thumb is that the standardized loading estimates should be 0.5 or higher (Hair, et al., 2010).

The first step in a reliability and validity analysis is to find the correlation matrix between the pairs of items in the questionnaire. This matrix is presented in Table 9. Notice that we have used the Spearman's coefficient of correlation, which is more suitable for our kind of ordinal data in contrast to the Pearson's coefficient that is more suitable for interval or ratio measurements.

The six by six correlation matrix shows that all the items pertaining to the main six questions of the poll are positively inter-correlated. That is exactly what is needed. The fact that items are positively related is consistent with the idea that they measure the same construct (Berman & Reise, 2012).

The existence of correlations among the variables that correspond to the poll's items means that the variables can be represented by a combination of indices that describe the variation in the data. While, if the variables of the poll's items were uncorrelated, then no convergence can occur

into a set of indices (Manly, 2005). Table 9 indicates that there are significant positive correlations pair-wise among all the items of the poll where all significant p's show statistically significant correlations at 5% level of significance. Therefore, the items in question measure the same construct.

**Table 9:**  
The Nonparametric Spearman's Correlation Matrix for the Six Items

			Correlations					
			Media tells us what to think about	Major media are superficial in selection of news	Major media are subjective in selection of news	News reporting is inaccurate and unfair	Purpose of media to tell it as media owner wants	News no longer a holy profession
Spearman's rho	Media tells us what to think about	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.210**	.167**	.121**	.155**	.126**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	4847	4837	4832	4836	4841	4832
	Major media are superficial in selection of news	Correlation Coefficient	.210**	1.000	.234**	.288**	.175**	.244**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	4837	4840	4826	4829	4834	4825
	Major media are subjective in selection of news	Correlation Coefficient	.167**	.234**	1.000	.246**	.190**	.182**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.	.000	.000	.000	
N		4832	4826	4835	4824	4829	4821	
News reporting is inaccurate and unfair	Correlation Coefficient	.121**	.288**	.246**	1.000	.313**	.369**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	.000	.000	
	N	4836	4829	4824	4839	4834	4825	
Purpose of media to tell it as media owner wants	Correlation Coefficient	.155**	.175**	.190**	.313**	1.000	.350**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.	.000	
	N	4841	4834	4829	4834	4844	4830	
News no longer a holy profession	Correlation Coefficient	.126**	.244**	.182**	.369**	.350**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.	
	N	4832	4825	4821	4825	4830	4835	

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 10.**  
Cronbach's Alpha

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.613	.617	6

**Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q1	17.67	12.020	.239	.611
Q2	17.57	11.468	.364	.561
Q3	17.36	11.767	.295	.588
Q4	17.63	11.119	.430	.535
Q5	17.41	10.810	.351	.567
Q6	17.33	11.321	.410	.544

Table 10 shows the obtained Cronbach’s alpha which according to the aforementioned rules of thumb supports the reliability of the poll with a value of 0.613, thus, assesses the consistency of the entire measuring scale to be within the limits accepted for exploratory research.

The next step is to consider the construct validity which involves relating a theoretical concept to a specific measuring device or procedure, or as stated by Burns & Burns (2008, p. 430): “Does the measuring instrument tap the concept as theorized?” Burns & Burns propose that Factor Analysis can be used to assess construct validity. However,

... the Cronbach Alpha process of assessing internal reliability is in a sense demonstrating construct validity when it shows items all loaded together as one coherent scale.

Table 11 shows that there is one principal component which according to Hair et al (2010), in the case of a high convergent validity, high loadings on a factor would indicate that they converge on a common point. At a minimum, all factor loadings should be statistically significant; where a good rule of thumb is that the standardized loading estimates should be 0.5 or higher.

*Table 11:*

Only One component is extracted with High Loadings Proof of Construct Validity

Component Matrix <sup>a</sup> Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis a. 1 component extracted	Component 1
News Reporting is inaccurate and unfair	0.695
News no longer a holy profession	0.672
Major media are superficial I selection of news	0.601
Purpose of media to tell it as media owners wants	0.601
Major media are subjective in selection of news	0.507
Media tells us what to think about	0.418



### *Conclusion and Implications*

This research was motivated by the fact that news media assessment merits more interest and investigation. That's why the details of the analysis were included in this research to provide interested researchers the opportunity to grasp better the roadmap presented herein.

Several insights could be inferred from this research. First, in relation to answering two important research questions "are there biases of news organizations in Lebanon, and is there trust in news organizations in Lebanon", quantitative evidence was obtained to manifest that Lebanese feel that news organizations in Lebanon are biased and that Lebanese assess news media negatively. Worth mentioning that findings support the notion that respondents who are mature, educated, and with average financial status are excellent representation of the Lebanese population to provide their opinions about the aforementioned questions. Results are statistically significant.

The findings of news media assessment in Lebanon indicate among many other issues the high dissatisfaction of the public in general and, in particular, those who are highly educated within the middle income class. Having considered a relatively high sample (4,850), with data collected over four years at nine different sampling instances, the results of the data analysis with their successful reliability and validity tests can form a valid reference foundation for news media evaluation in Lebanon and elsewhere. It is worthy to recognize here that the poll administered lacks the breadth of questions that a researcher looks for; however, there is deepness in the time frame and sample size that makes this poll and its results an attractive exploration.

Finally, to compare the findings of the current work with other reported figures, the totality of unsatisfied respondents (those who Disagree and Highly Disagree) were summed per sampling term per question and the corresponding percentage was calculated, then the average of the six percentages corresponding to the six questions was obtained and included in the graph of Figure 2.

The graph depicted in Figure 12 shows how the negative public opinion on news and media has been following an increasing trend for the past four years. In Spring 2012, the negative assessment reached a record of 64% that almost matches the 63% reported in the USA during 2009.

Similarly, the totality of satisfied respondents (those who Agree and Highly Agree) were summed per sampling term per question and the corresponding percentage was calculated, then the average of the six percentages corresponding to the six questions was obtained and included in the graph of Figure 3.

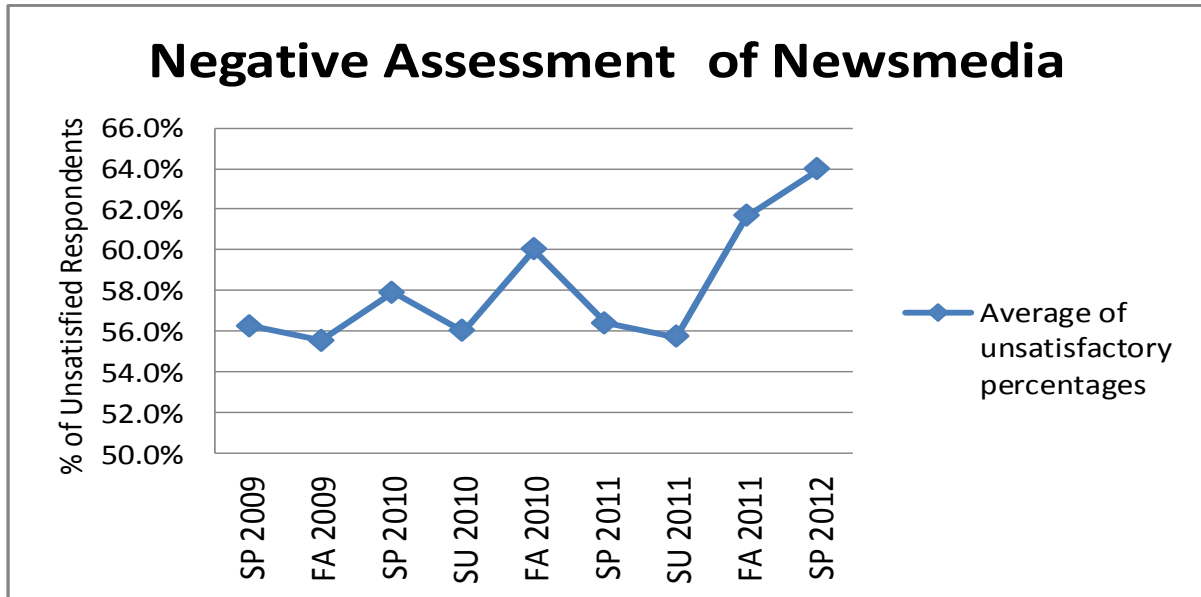


Figure 2. Percentage of Unsatisfied Respondents with News Media

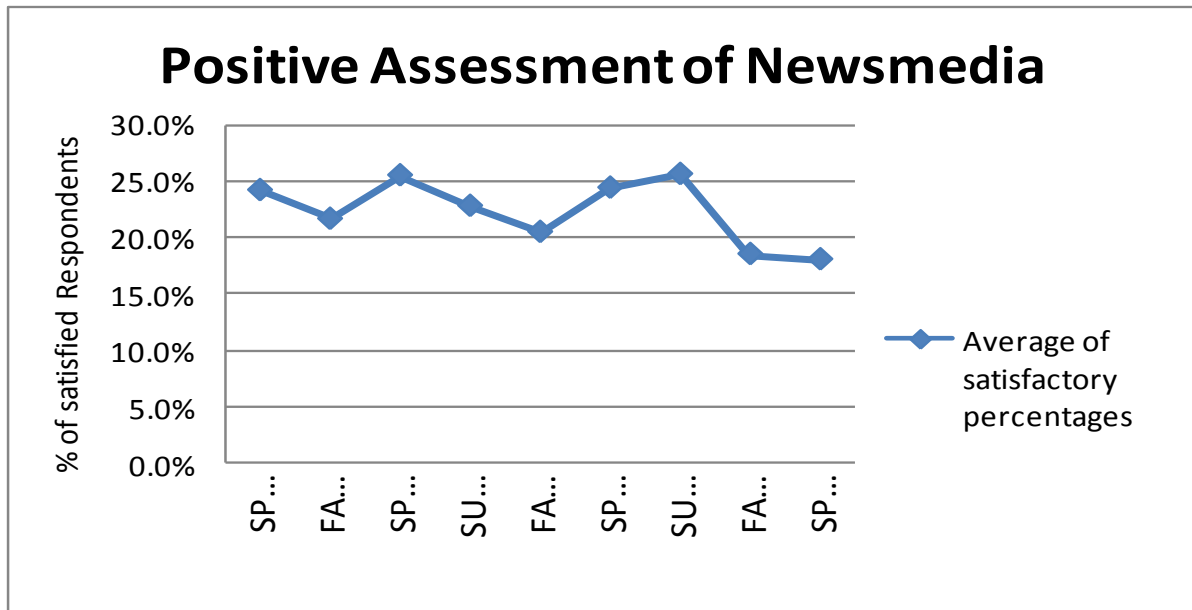


Figure 3. Percentage of Satisfied Respondents with News Media

The graph in Figure 3 shows how the positive public opinion on news and media has been following a decreasing trend for the past four years. In Spring 2012, the positive assessment reached a record of 18.1% indicating the low confidence that the Lebanese population holds for

news and media, indicating the low trust and poor performance of the news media as assessed by the Lebanese public.

One important implication of the research findings is that the present formal ethics awareness of news media organizations in Lebanon is not comprehensive enough to make Lebanese appreciate reported news, and is in need of considerable review.

Another insight that is considered an important outcome of the research is its academic contribution to the few publications found on the subject matter in Lebanon and the region as compared to the massive research reported in the western countries.

Finally, it is important to note that the results of the current research will provide exploratory findings that can be used by other researchers, Middle Eastern or others. Consequently, cross-cultural comparisons could be performed. Moreover, another contribution of the current study is its stimulating effect that might lead other academic and professional media researchers to probe and test the effectiveness of the analysis roadmap utilized in the current research.

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### End Note

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