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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Identifying Strategies to Enhance the Social Responsibility of Journalists within the Framework of the Press Law

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Interdiction:

This study aims to identify and propose solutions for strengthening the social responsibility of journalists within the framework of the Press Law of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Social responsibility in journalism constitutes a fundamental professional principle within the media sector, playing a pivotal role in enhancing public trust, ensuring transparency, and improving the quality of information dissemination. Given the significant influence of media on public opinion, the social responsibility of journalists is crucial for ensuring informational accuracy and promoting reliable news reporting. Accordingly, the present research examines this responsibility within the context of existing Iranian laws and regulations and offers actionable recommendations to enhance journalists' social responsibility. The primary objective is to explore the multidimensional nature of social responsibility in journalism and to propose strategies that can reinforce this responsibility among Iranian journalists. Responsible journalism not only increases audience confidence in the media but also mitigates the spread of misinformation and promotes fact-based news in society. Thus, strengthening social responsibility in journalism is a necessity, and this study is designed to address it systematically.

Method:

This research is classified as applied research and employs a survey-based methodology. In terms of data type, it is a quantitative study. The target population consists of active journalists working across various media outlets nationwide. A convenience sampling method was used, yielding a sample size of 145 respondents. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire specifically designed to assess various dimensions of journalists' social responsibility. The validity and reliability of the instrument were confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, indicating that the tool is reliable for measuring the variables under investigation. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and AMOS software, enabling advanced statistical analyses and structural equation modeling. To test the research hypotheses and prioritize the dimensions of journalists' social responsibility, one-sample t-tests, first-order confirmatory factor analysis, and Friedman tests were employed.

Findings:

The results indicate that strategies aimed at strengthening journalists' social responsibility are critically important and have a significant impact on enhancing their professional performance. These strategies, ranked by priority and importance, include: (1) job security, (2) support from professional associations, (3) professional independence, (4) objectivity and impartiality, and (5) specialized education.

Job security emerged as the most critical factor in enhancing social responsibility. The findings suggest that journalists perform their duties most effectively when they enjoy job security and are free from concerns about job loss. Fear of unemployment can hinder objective and responsible reporting, particularly under economic pressure. Previous studies corroborate that lack of job security leads to self-censorship and reduced quality of published media content.

Support from professional associations was identified as another key factor, playing an essential role in protecting journalists' rights against pressures from powerful economic entities. Trade unions and professional associations can safeguard journalists' professional independence, which not only preserves individual rights but also improves the overall quality of news dissemination. This is especially important when journalists face censorship or interference.

Professional independence is another critical factor. It requires that journalists remain free from external influences—such as economic or cultural pressures—when producing news. Such independence allows for free and impartial reporting and is a foundational principle of professional journalism, ensuring that news reports remain accurate and unbiased.

Objectivity and impartiality are considered essential tenets of responsible journalism, significantly influencing public trust in the media. Journalists should report news based on facts and avoid incorporating personal opinions or biases. Adherence to these principles helps position media outlets as trustworthy sources of information. In this regard, specialized education can significantly improve journalists' ability to produce objective and impartial reporting.

Finally, specialized education in journalism emerged as one of the most influential factors in enhancing social responsibility. Specialized training helps journalists improve their professional skills and knowledge, enabling them to navigate ethical challenges and make informed decisions in their reporting. Furthermore, such education assists journalists in staying current with global standards and best practices, ultimately improving the quality of their work.

The findings also revealed that political or personal orientation did not have a significant impact on the level of social responsibility among journalists. This suggests that social responsibility in journalism is more strongly influenced by professional and structural factors than by individual viewpoints. In other words, structural factors such as job security, professional independence, and education exert a greater influence on social responsibility than individual leanings.

Conclusions

The results of this research suggest that strengthening journalists' social responsibility requires the establishment of appropriate legal, educational, and structural frameworks. Job security and support from professional associations are identified as the most influential factors in this regard. Moreover, the development of specialized education and the creation of an environment conducive to objectivity and impartiality in reporting can play a crucial role in improving journalists' professional performance. The study concludes that enhancing journalists' social responsibility not only improves the quality of media performance but also contributes to increasing public trust and enhancing societal awareness.

Therefore, it is recommended that policymakers and media managers take effective measures to improve the professional status of journalists, taking into account the findings of this study. Strengthening journalists' social responsibility will not only improve media performance but can also help increase public trust and awareness, thereby reinforcing the position of the media in society.

Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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Ethical considerations

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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