

Comparison of Obstacles Preventing the Development of Journalism Associations in Iran with Developed Countries

Dr. Mohammad Soltanifar

Faculty member at Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

Sara Mohammadpour Khabazi (Corresponding author)

PhD student in social communication sciences at Department of Mass Communication
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
E-mail: s.mohamadpour@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article aims to review the obstacles affecting the development of journalism associations using a compound method, content analysis, researcher made questionnaires. The obstacles are classified into five groups of professional, legal, economic, political and organizational. The research statistical population is an infinite one and includes all the journalism professors, journalists and board members of trade associations in two scopes of Iran and developed countries.

Keywords: Trade associations of journalism, Professional obstacles, Legal obstacles, Economic obstacles, Political obstacles, Organizational obstacles, Developed countries

Introduction

There is almost no single industry without competition. Media is an industry where the competition is intense and it has been used for various purposes by organizations regardless of their size and country of origin. Hence, businesses and organizations need the media for a rainy day; therefore effective and intimate relationship, in which respect and understanding of each party's interest is carefully considered, must be exercised. Journalists and reporters are busy people whom getting hold of are difficult in the dog-eat-dog world of the so-called information era. Thus the best possible way of contacting them should be identified by responsible individuals at organizations. This is a vital task which needs extreme care and skills to establish and manage effective media relations (Khodarahmi, 2009).

Media are now parts of almost everyone's everyday life throughout the globe. News in traditional media are usually covered by professional journalists and handled with relative objectivity (Tilley and Cokley, 2008). Rapid growth of new media and impacts of media, in general, is inexorable, particularly by presence of the internet, interactive and digital media. Once a press release and/or news are aired, it is done and surely would have impacts; however small they are. Technology changed the world and facilitated building up relationship with media and interacting with a wider audience than ever before (Khodarahmi, 2009).

For hundreds of years, people with the skills to ask the right questions and deliver information have been keys to society (Note 1). Journalism is no easy task at the best of times, but, just occasionally, there are moments when journalists and media are confronted by a story so big that it tests their notion of professionalism to the limit. The problem facing journalists is how to protect their independence when the world around them calls for their unquestioning allegiance to the cause, whether it is going to war or the struggle against violations of human rights. While journalists can do well, it is not their purpose. Most journalists may well sign up to the notion that democratic pluralism and respect for human rights form the core of a unifying political ideology, but few wish to be told to follow a particular policy or strategy.

The imperatives of journalism — truth-telling, independence and awareness of the impact of words and images on society — bolstered by political freedom and open government provide the backbone of democratic pluralism, but reporters are right to ask what becomes of scrutiny when journalism is the creature of political or social movements, no matter how well meaning they may be (International Council on Human Rights Policy, 2002). Indeed, Bill Kovach, former Director of the Neiman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University, notes that journalism is very limited in its ability to cover process — as opposed to events — in a meaningful way. Important changes in the world are communicated well by the media only when that change is the subject of full time reporting (International Council on Human Rights Policy's research team, 2001). Sig Gissler adds that the obstacles to better coverage lie in the nature of journalism — the hurly-burly pursuit of approximate truth, which often collides with deadlines, limited space and limited airtime, loose notions about what the audience wants (Alterman, 2001), the competitive pressure to be first and the myth of public apathy, namely that the audience is not interested in deeper exploration of issues (Gissler, 2000).

In addition, the editorial selection process is fundamentally event-determined. As Claude Moisy, former President of Agence France Presse, explains:

Except for the major breaking events that impose themselves for treatment, news organizations much more often select a story because it is already there, in the air, initiated by someone else, having already caught public attention, and in the process of becoming topical at that time and place. They deem that they could not afford not to cover it without failing in their obligation toward their audience or readership. Journalists and their editors are much more reactive than creative. That opens the way to lobbyists, including lobbyists for human rights. This reactivity to 'something that is in the air' also explains what the militants of a cause often deplore as a lack of consistency in the media coverage of their cause. Since the real motivation of the news people in treating a story with a human rights content is not generally to redress a wrong but to share in a collective sensitivity over a particular issue at a given time, they do not feel the necessity to pursue the coverage when they feel that the public attention wanes on that issue (Moisy, 2000).

In this sense, therefore, a definition of what is newsworthy can come only from within the news organization. Though this question causes much anguish and frustration, it is a fundamental rule that in a free society the news organization is the absolute master of its own affairs. This is the essence of a free press. How an organization defines 'master' is strictly its own affair. Whether decisions are taken by a dictatorial owner, a powerful and persuasive editor, an editorial board or by staff consensus, editorial decision-making resides within the organization.

Journalists association is an NGO that can strengthen the class of journalists in the society and against the authorities and managers of press. Optimal functioning of the Association as the guild house for journalists can provide material and moral rights to these classes and may ultimately improve the performance of the press in society. Although nearly a century passes the establishment of the first forum in journalism, there are still obstacles before the forming and development of such associations.

While about 88 years passes the establishment of the first journalism association, still there exist obstacles in the path of development of them and achieving their optimal functioning (Kouhestani Nezhad, 2004). For example, the Association of Iranian Journalists with 12-years of existence has also been shut down in recent months due to weak political issues and there only remain the names of some other associations and unions in the last 50 years (Beheshti Pour, 2002).

This research aims to study some obstacle preventing the development of journalism associations in Iran in comparison with developed countries. The obstacles in this study are classified into five main categories as professional, legal, economic, political and organizational.

Research Objectives

Considering that this research aims to study the status quo of journalism associations in Iran in comparison with developed countries, it is tried to identify the obstacles preventing the development of these associations and to eliminate them. Hence, the main and subsidiary goals of the research are set as follows:

Main Goal

1. Identifying obstacles preventing the development journalism associations in Iran

Subsidiary Objectives

1. Identifying professional obstacles to development of journalism associations in Iran
2. Identifying legal obstacles to development of journalism associations in Iran

3. Identifying economic obstacles to development of journalism associations in Iran
4. Identifying political obstacles to development of journalism associations in Iran
5. Identifying organizational obstacles to development of journalism associations in Iran

Research Hypotheses

Main Hypothesis: There are obstacles to development of journalism associations in Iran.

Subsidiary Hypotheses

1. The professional obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.
2. The legal obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.
3. The economic obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.
4. The political obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.
5. The organizational obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.

Research Method

Considering that this research is studying obstacles to the development of journalism associations in Iran in comparison with some selected countries, no independent variables are applied and no variables are manipulated. Thus, research is descriptive and soundings. It should be noted that the research projects in the range of compound ones. I.e. using the quantitative research hypotheses, questionnaire, and the field implementation and on the one hand using the interview with a purposeful exploration structure and the method of content analysis on the other hand, the research is qualitative.

Statistical Population

The research population includes those people professional in journalism in three rows four groups. Since the journalism associations directly deal with journalists and the of the main tasks of existential philosophy of such associations is to defend the rights and material and spiritual interests of professionals in this field, all the Journalists Association members and non-members are included in the statistical population. In addition, the professors in the field of journalism and faculty members are another part of the statistical population and the other part include board members of journalism associations. Since access to all members of society was not possible, the research population was infinite.

Research Sample, Sampling Method & Data collecting Tools

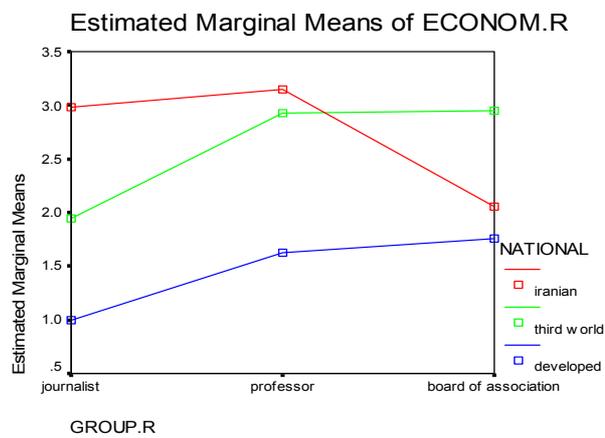
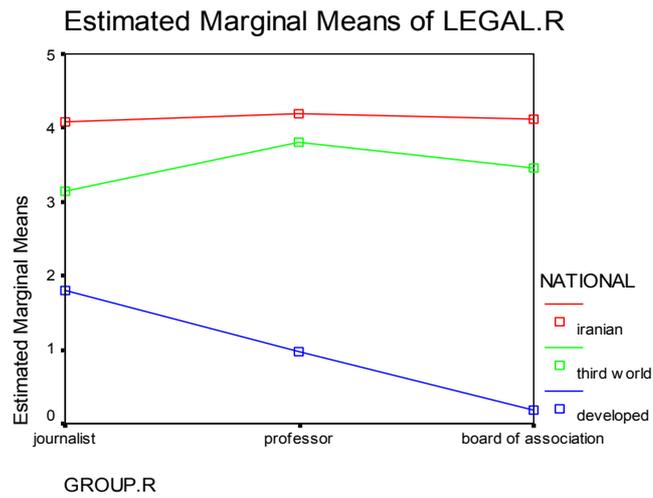
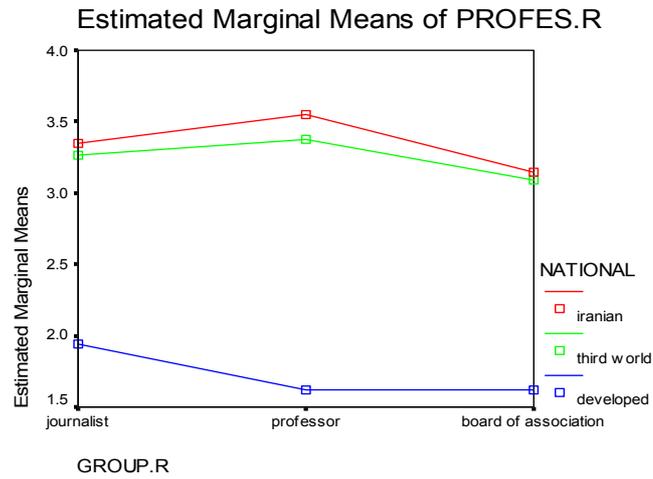
As the research population was rather indefinite, the data was collected via e-mail. From among over 3000 sent email, 136 were replied of which 134 people make up our respondents. Since the research method was combined of qualitative and quantitative methods, in the second phase of questionnaire responses provided through web, open questions were also submitted and a number of 20 people responded to them. In addition, in the legal section, the rules related to trade unions and the press was also analyzed. Finally, it was suggested that sampling method in this study was non-accidental but rather it was quite purposeful.

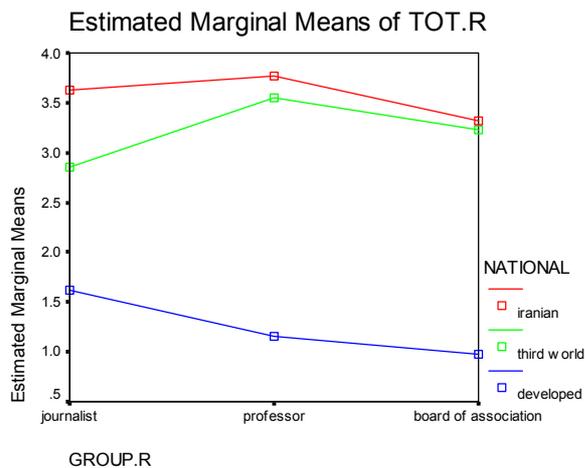
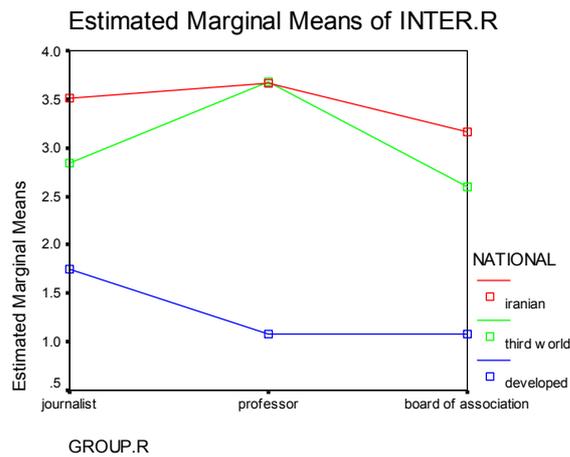
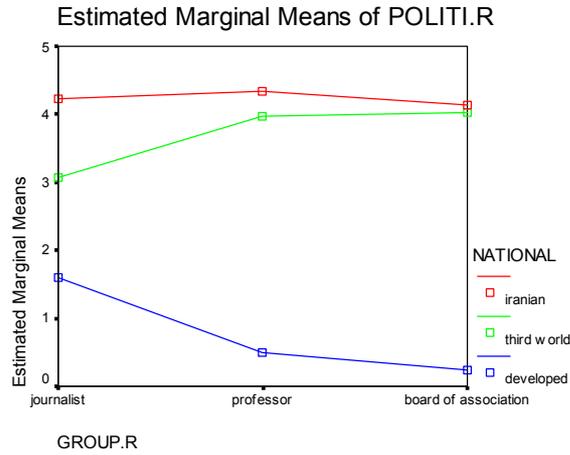
Research Finding

Insert Table 1 Here

According to the table 1, there is a small difference between the index, mean and median and since T coefficient and elongation coefficient is less than 1, it can be stated that distribution above shows the normal assumption capable and the mean can be used as central tendency index and parametric statistics models can be applied.

Estimated Marginal Means in Iran, Developing and Developed Counties





Research Findings

Hypothesis 1: The professional obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.

Research findings showed from the perspective of Iranian samples, there is a significant difference between the theoretical and experimental means in the level of $\alpha = 0.01$ among the component of the "existence of state-run press, the press becoming the political arena pony, non awareness of journalists about their associational rights, the lack of a comprehensive development system of the press, poor professional journalists, non-compliance of

the state of Iranian press with the press theory, lack of pluralism in journalism, dispersion of journalists, lack of culture of collective and organizational work among journalists, lack of a clear position of the press in the society, journalists not welcoming membership in associations, journalists pessimism toward associations, business-orientation of the press and attending of unrelated studies in this field". Therefore, the effect of the above-mentioned components in preventing the development of association is higher than average or expected amount. However, from the viewpoint of developed countries the effect of the above mentioned components is almost at an average level.

Hypothesis 2: The legal obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.

Research findings showed from the perspective of Iranian samples, there is a significant difference between the theoretical and experimental means in the level of $\alpha = 0.01$ among the component of the weakness of the press law, lack of proper implementation of existing laws, poor union law system, poor labor law and poor constitution. Therefore, considering that in all components, the experimental mean is higher than the theoretical mean, it can be claimed that from the perspective of Iranian samples, the effectiveness "of legal obstacles in trade unions" is above average. From the perspective of the samples in developed countries, the regulations of associations are hardly affected by the obstacles before them.

Hypothesis 3: The economic obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.

Research findings showed from the perspective of Iranian samples, there is a significant difference between the theoretical and experimental means in the level of $\alpha = 0.01$ among the components of the government refraining to grants directly and indirectly, domestic economy crisis and lack financial contributions from owners of capital. Therefore, from the viewpoints of the Iranian samples, the influence of above factors in preventing the development of associations is above average. Since in the components of "global economic crisis", no significant difference was observed between theoretical and experimental means, from the Iranian perspective it can be said the effect of "global economic crisis in lack of development of trade unions is moderate.

According to the results, the type of economic obstacles in Iran is different from the ones in developed countries in that despite the Iranian samples, the statistical samples in developed countries believe that journalism associations function independent from the governmental financial aids. In the viewpoint of the samples in developed countries, the internal and external economic crises are affective at a moderate level.

Hypothesis 4: The political obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.

Research findings showed from the perspective of Iranian samples, there is a significant difference between the theoretical and experimental means in the level of $\alpha = 0.01$ among all components except the component of "external conflict and war" there. Therefore, considering that in the components of "government seizing the press, the lack of organizationalization of civil society, governments lack of attention to the position of trade associations of journalists, government lack of belief in union activities, government abuses to privacy freedom of speech and writing, press censorship by the government, journalists detained by the government, authority-oriented governments, organizations board detained by governments, lack of transparency in the affairs of society, government abusing organizations, governmental agencies intense focusing idealism , domestic political crisis, lack of proper media strategy provided by the government, lack of political participation and the birth of organizations in the theory of authoritarian, the empirical mean is higher than theoretical mean, it is stated that from the Iranian samples perspective, the effect of the above components in preventing the development of associations is above average. It should be noted that in the component of "external conflicts and wars" no significant difference was observed between theoretical and experimental means. Thus, it can be said that from the Iranian samples perspective, the effectiveness of the above components in associations is moderate.

In general, Iranian professors believe more than other samples in developed countries that political obstacles affect the prevention of development of journalism associations.

Hypothesis 5: The organizational obstacles prevent the development of journalism associations in Iran.

Research findings showed from the perspective of Iranian samples, there is a significant difference between the theoretical and experimental means in the level of $\alpha = 0.01$ among all components of organizational obstacles. Therefore, considering that in the above factors the experimental mean is higher than the theoretical mean, it can be stated that from the Iranian samples' perspective, the effect of "organizational obstacles in trade unions" is above average.

Iranian professors believe more than other samples in developed countries that organizational obstacles affect the prevention of development of journalism associations.

Conclusion

This research studied the obstacles preventing the development of journalism associations in Iran in comparison with developed countries. With regard to the importance of economic issues in the development of the organizations and the necessary of financial resources safety to prevent such consequences as dependency, it is proposed this field to be studied as future research. Studying the issue of how much the journalism trade associations are independent from outside financial resources also seem necessary.

While Iranian samples have emphasized on the effect of foreign wars and conflicts less than average, historical studies have showed that over the years that Iran was involved in the war with Iraq, there existed no journalism trade associations. It is recommended that the impact of such issue in preventing the development of journalism trade association and indeed their non-existence to be studied, because it appears this very component to be impressive in non-existence of organizations during 1980-1999. Perhaps because approximately over 20 years is passed the war and the lack of exposure in such conditions, the impact of this component is forgotten.

Comparison between the two statistical populations of Iranian and developed countries showed that from the viewpoint of developed countries the effect of the above mentioned components is almost at an average level.

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Note

Note 1. <http://www.yzu.edu/majors/journal.pdf>

Table 1. Statistical Indices of "Existing Obstacles" of the Research Samples

Variables	Central Tendency Indices			Dispersion Indices			Distribution Indices		
	Index	Median	Mean	Variation Range	Variance	Standard Deviation	Standard Error	T Coefficient	Elongation Coefficient
Professional obstacles	68	68	52.07	82	272.24	16.49	1.35	-0.90	0.48
Legal Obstacles	19	19	17.17	25	57.74	7.59	0.62	0.28	0.58
Economic Obstacles	16	15	13.45	25	36.57	6.04	0.49	-0.57	-0.14
Political Obstacles	60	60	59.68	84	689.11	26.25	84	-0.46	0.66
Organizational Obstacles	62	62	67.34	107	649.22	25.47	2.08	-0.98	0.09
Total	17.53	17.53	15.68	23.90	31.02	5.56	0.46	31.02	0.49