

أنماط السرد الصحفي والمصادر المستخدمة في تغطية الإعلام المصري للتنوع البيولوجي: دراسة حالة لمؤتمر COP15

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ملخص الدراسة:

حظي التنوع البيولوجي واستمرارية تباين الكائنات الحية في نظام الأرض الإيكولوجي باهتمام متزايد من العلوم الطبيعية خلال العقد الماضي، ومن العلوم الاجتماعية من خلال الاهتمام الإعلامي بتغطية التنوع البيولوجي في سياق قضايا التغير المناخي. في عام 2022، أظهرت وسائل الإعلام المصرية اهتمامًا متزايدًا بتغطية قضايا التنوع البيولوجي والتغير المناخي بالتزامن مع استضافة مصر لمؤتمر الأمم المتحدة لتغير المناخ COP27.

وبناءً عليه، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الآليات التي استخدمتها الصحف المصرية في تغطية أخبار التنوع البيولوجي، والتعرف على الأساليب السردية وأنماط التحرير المستخدمة. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، تسعى الدراسة للتعرف على حجم التغطية التي خصصتها الصحف المصرية لأخبار التنوع البيولوجي.

لتحليل تغطية وسائل الإعلام المصرية للتنوع البيولوجي، تستخدم الدراسة الكيفية المنهج المسحي وتوظف أداة تحليل المضمون الكيفي لتحليل تغطية ثلاثة صحف، هم: الأهرام، واليوم السابع، والدستور، لتمثيل الصحف الحكومية والخاصة والحزبية على التوالي. تم تحليل تغطية الصحف الثلاثة بالتطبيق على مؤتمر الأمم المتحدة للتنوع البيولوجي الذي عُقد في ديسمبر 2022. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الصحف الثلاثة تباينت في تغطية التنوع البيولوجي. ومع ذلك، على الرغم من الاختلاف في أنماط الملكية، فإن الصحف الثلاثة اعتمدت بشكل رئيسي على نفس نوع المصادر من خلال الاعتماد على المسؤولين والجهات الرسمية، واستخدام نفس اتجاه السرد الذي تركز فقط على الجوانب الإيجابية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التغطية الإعلامية، التنوع البيولوجي، COP15، السرد الصحفي، تغير المناخ

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Egyptian Media Reporting on Biodiversity Sourcing Patterns and Press Narratives: A Case Study on COP15

Abstract:

Biodiversity and the continuity of species' variation on the earth's ecosystem have been receiving increased interest from the natural sciences over the past decade and social sciences through the media interest in reporting on biodiversity in the context of climate change issues.

In 2022, the Egyptian media has witnessed a progressively growing interest in reporting on biodiversity and climate change issues in correlation with Egypt's hosting of the UN conference of Climate Change COP27. Consequently, this study analyzes the reporting techniques used by Egyptian newspapers in covering Biodiversity news, the press narratives they used, and the sourcing patterns. Furthermore, the study identifies the amount of coverage Egyptian newspapers dedicated to biodiversity. To analyze the Egyptian media reporting on biodiversity, the study uses a qualitative content analysis applied to three newspapers, Al-Ahram, Youm7, and El Dostour, to represent state-owned, private, and partisan newspapers, respectively. The three papers are analyzed in the application at the UN biodiversity conference that took place in December 2022.

The study findings revealed that the three newspapers differed in biodiversity coverage. However, despite the difference in the sample's ownership, the three newspapers mainly relied on the same type of sources through dependency on officials, and the same narration direction solely focused on positive aspects.

Keywords: Media Reporting, Biodiversity, COP15, Press Narrative, Climate Change

Introduction:

Biodiversity refers to differences and diversity between organisms of all origins. All ecosystems and biological complexes are included on land, marine, water, and others. The variety of life, from genes to ecosystems, is explained primarily by biodiversity, including the presence of these organisms, their genetic variants, their habitats, the ecosystems they live in, and other evolutionary processes that support the system (Kumbhar, 2019). Biodiversity imbalance causes habitat loss and change; the introduction of genetically modified creatures, pollution, climate change, and overuse of natural resources are the causes of biodiversity extinction.

As well as the loss of balance and disruption of the natural food network, biodiversity loss can harm our environment. Thus, biodiversity protection is now a high priority because we know how important it is for our survival. Furthermore, today's media has a significant influence on people's behavior. What a person watches and listens to daily ideally determines their mentality. Therefore, the press significantly affects human society.

The media is critical in educating the public about the value of biodiversity. Tools or communication methods used to store and transmit information or data are called modes. Media communication industries include publishing and broadcasting (radio and television), photography, advertising, film, and print media. Public media must provide services and programs that inform, educate, enlighten, and enrich the public.

Research Objectives:

1. To find out the amount of coverage of biodiversity issues in selected newspapers.
2. To find out the techniques the journalist chooses to cover biodiversity issues in selected newspapers.
3. To identify the press narratives covering biodiversity issues in selected newspapers.

4. To identify the sourcing patterns in coverage of biodiversity in selected newspapers.
5. To find out what sources the journalist depended on when covering biodiversity-related issues.
6. To find out the similarities and differences between the coverage of the selected newspapers regarding biodiversity issues.

Results Importance:

Because Biodiversity plays a crucial role in shaping our ecosystem through sustainable development, it is vital to study how newspapers report about it, figuring out the sourcing patterns used to ensure the commitment of the press in doing its role accurately.

Research Problem:

Recently, interest in environmental balance and climate issues, especially biodiversity, has increased worldwide amid varying media coverage between global and local means. Therefore, this research's problem lies in determining the role of the Egyptian press and whether it plays a crucial role in biodiversity issues.

Literature Review:

This research review of the literature will be divided into two dimensions. The first will be about the biodiversity coverage in media, and the second will be about the press narratives and sources patterns in news coverage.

Biodiversity coverage in Media:

The frequency of biodiversity coverage in online media in different countries was examined in (AdrienChevallier, et al., 2019) study via an extensive qualitative assessment to detect the central issues covered and how they differ across time and geographic scales. It was found that the presence of biodiversity in the media coverage correlates with the "national media interest in biodiversity is multifactorial and may strongly depend on the link a country has between its economy and natural resources, its political influence on the media and the holding of major environmental summits coupled with concrete political actions."

Moreover, (Legagneux, et al., 2018) study presented a collective comparison between the articles published about climate change and biodiversity. It was revealed that climate change issues took more attention in media coverage than biodiversity. In addition, climate change in the media was related to a few topics of the daily routine; however, biodiversity is not connected to anything that analyzes the non-existence in the coverage.

The (Sadath, Kleinschmit, & Giessen, 2013) study pointed out differences in the national and international media reporting on biodiversity by using the quantitative content analysis of reports on tiger–human interaction issued between 2005 and 2010 in an international newspaper and a national one from Bangladesh. Results indicated that the frames differed in the coverage between the national and international. Moreover, in the (Rija & Kideghesho, 2020) study, the press coverage of biodiversity was examined in local newspapers from 2004 to 2013 to determine its importance. It was found that biodiversity matters revealed a varying and changing; however, it is an increasing trend.

The study of (Adler, Mansi, & Pandey, 2018) explored biodiversity and threatened species coverage by the top 150 Fortune Global companies. It was revealed that the coverage was minimal.

Google and YouTube were analyzed in (M.Azevedo-Santos, et al., 2021) study to determine the effect of ghost nets on Brazilian marine biodiversity. As a result, digital media was able to detect the adverse negative impact. Also, Twitter and Facebook were examined in the study of (Wu, et al., 2020) to find their correlation with the audience’s knowledge and awareness of biodiversity issues. Findings showed that social media-based education on biodiversity preservation should have quick reactions, including more positive emotions to provoke a feeling of individual responsibility and popularize knowledge of wildlife biology and appropriate legislation to affect public opinion.

Examining the biodiversity reporting by corporate South African food producers and retailers in (Maroun, Usher, & Mansoor, 2018) study. Results revealed that the various companies in South Africa depend on this corporate reporting highlighting that the coverage included the actions and internal management strategies already producing favorable results.

Qualitative analysis was conducted on the content of the videos about the biodiversity conservation project established in partnership with the settlers of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers of Brazil in (Bacic & Silva, 2017) study. Findings showed that the videos illustrated public participation in biodiversity conservation.

Analyzing the correlation between negative media coverage, law environment, and tunneling of controlling shareholders was explored in (Ye, Huang, & Li, 2015) study, which revealed that negative media coverage could decrease control shareholders' tunneling and be linked with state-owned listed companies. It was also found that negative media coverage significantly affects tunneling in non-state-owned listed companies. In addition, negative media coverage significantly affects tunneling in zones with a better law environment.

Press Narratives and Sources Patterns in News Coverage:

Biodiversity narratives in the press were examined in (Montenegro-Hoyos, et al., 2022) study examining how biodiversity is highlighted and spotlighted. Consequently, that might evaluate how the audience views it, underlining that digital news manages to outline biodiversity narratives in the biodiversity-related news categories during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, findings revealed that each country's socioeconomic and public health features impacted the biodiversity characteristic shown in the media.

The significance of the press narratives about significant cultural events, such as the journeys of Glasgow and Liverpool in maintaining 'image change' processes, despite the consequences and facts presented, was examined in the (Garcia, 2016) study. Results indicated that press narratives about those cities were "successful event-led cultural regeneration, showing the clear potential for journalistic discourse to reinvent a city's national and international identity."

The news sources were investigated in numerous studies; one of them was the (Fitzgerald, 2017) study, where the researcher examined the news sources in the American and British press coverage of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Findings pointed out the anti-Mubarak opposition protestors' sources who dominated the selected newspaper's coverage.

Sources of gender differences were explored in three English regional newspapers at the British general election in 2005 in the (Ross, 2007) study. It was found that the frequency of male sources dominated the press coverage, indicating differential bias in the newsrooms themselves.

Research Questions:

1. What is the amount of coverage of biodiversity issues in selected newspapers?
2. What are the journalist techniques to cover biodiversity issues in selected newspapers?
3. What types of press narratives are present in covering biodiversity issues in selected newspapers?
4. Which source patterns are used in the coverage of biodiversity in selected newspapers?
5. Which sources did the journalist depend on when covering biodiversity-related issues?
6. What are the similarities and differences between the coverage of the selected newspapers regarding biodiversity issues?

Research Methodology:

Qualitative research will be conducted and will employ content analysis to examine the biodiversity in the news coverage of Egyptian newspapers.

Research Sample:

The research will examine the news coverage of biodiversity in three newspapers from their electronic versions: Al-Ahram newspaper, El Youm7 newspaper, and El Dostour newspaper. The sample was chosen to present a governmental, private, and partisan newspaper in Egypt.

Research Time Frame:

The research's time frame will be December 2022 since this month witnessed Egypt's participation in the UN conference biodiversity conference, COP15, which was held in Montreal, Canada, and this month followed Egypt's hosting of COP27 which has caused a shift in the Egyptian media's coverage of environmental issues in general.

Theoretical Framework:

This research will rely on Social Responsibility to evaluate the press coverage of biodiversity in Egyptian newspapers.

McQuail's Mass Communication Theory (Nerone, 2002) about social responsibility theory stated it was formulated in conjunction with the United States of America's reconciliation with "Late capitalism." The theory was developed immediately after Roosevelt's death, precisely as the popularity of influential publishers shrank among audiences who had no confidence in the press. Still, in 1923 the press drafted "Ethical rules" adopted by the American Association of Newspaper Editors with press laws, which increased the popularity of television in the country. The theory gives complete freedom to the media while granting external controls, the other hand. In 1947, the theory of social responsibility was taken seriously.

He raised multiple questions about how to guarantee the media's independence so they can act responsibly as expected. In addition to defining the one responsible for accountability when the media misuse their power or even freedom. The problem is that responsibility must mean accountability, yet accountability involves state involvement; and state involvement, history shows, comes at the expense of liberty as defined by libertarians.

Results:

Firstly, the content analysis applied to the electronic version of Al-Ahram revealed that it dedicated a considerable amount of coverage to biodiversity within the time frame of the study where it published 36 stories the headlines of which mentioned the term "biodiversity". The reporting techniques of Al-Ahram newspaper were apparent in light of their coverage where they reported on biodiversity in the contexts of the results of COP27, the launch of the UN biodiversity conference in Canada, COP15, as well as the European Union deforestation agreement signage. Al-Ahram also reported on the potential threats to biodiversity in the Egyptian ecosystem, the Egyptian minister of the environment's participation in COP15, and the role of other countries in the UN biodiversity conference. Accordingly, Al-Ahram's reporting techniques were centered on the follow-up coverage of COP27, the live

news coverage of COP15, and reporting on the international effective forces in the biodiversity issues.

Regarding the sourcing patterns, some news stories published by Al-Ahram did not include any sources at all, such as the stories titled “UN biodiversity to launch tomorrow in Canada” and “The United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Canada is coming to an end”. Such stories lacked importance or informativeness, yet they were only intended to prove the existence of ongoing coverage of the international event, COP15, and mainly relied on background information with an absence of reliance on either primary or secondary sources.

There was considerable reliance on official sources in Al-Ahram’s reporting on Biodiversity. However, many of the stories based on the use of official sources were reported from the news agencies. For example, a story titled “European agreement to ban imports contributing to deforestation” included quotations from the Chairman of the Environment Committee of the European Parliament. Another example of this was the headline “Macron calls on the participants in COP15 to reach an ambitious agreement on biodiversity”, the story of which quoted the president of France. The first example was retrieved from AFP while the second was from MENA.

In the news stories where Al-Ahram used quoted primary sources, sources were characterized by relevance to the topic where in a feature titled “Does climate change endanger the living organisms ... What will happen in Egypt?”, Al-Ahram relied on specialized official sources. They quoted Dr. Ayman Hamada, the secretary of the Ministry of Environment, and the head of the Central Department for Biodiversity, who per his title is authorized to provide accurate information about the biodiversity status in Egypt. However, the dependency on primary sources has shown a lack of variety where, for instance, Dr. Ayman Hamada was quoted more than once in different stories as the case in the story titled “The head of the Central Department of Biodiversity reveals the role of the Festival of Observing and Photographing Migratory Birds in supporting tourism”.

The prevailing sourcing pattern in biodiversity reporting by Al-Ahram within the time frame of the study was focused on the Egyptian ministry of health, Dr. Yasmine Fouad, whose quotes dominated the headlines,

as follows: “Environment: We seek to benefit from the positive results of the COP27 climate conference in advancing the biodiversity agenda”, “Environment Minister at COP15: We seek to facilitate negotiation of the global biodiversity target” and “Environment Minister: Egypt is always keen to link climate change and biodiversity”. The press narratives that Al-Ahram adopted revealed a considerably positive portrayal of the Egyptian role in the biodiversity negotiations internationally. This was crystal clear in the news story with the headline “British Environment Minister praises the Egyptian role in biodiversity consultations”. Meanwhile the body of the news story normally reported on a meeting between Thérèse Coffey, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs of the United Kingdom, and the Egyptian minister of environment in COP15 that was held in Canada, the headline highlighted only the praise received by the Egyptian minister from her British counterpart. The narratives of Al-Ahram were characterized by a general positive representation of the international effective forces in biodiversity representation. This was highlighted through the following headlines “Japan pledges aid to protect the planet's biodiversity” and “Yemen stresses the importance of adopting a global biodiversity framework to address climate change”. However, a specific interest in covering the positive sides of the Egyptian role in the biodiversity conference COP15 was highlighted through the following headlines “Coinciding with the last hours of the Biodiversity Conference, The environment signs agreement to face climate change”.

To conclude, Al-Ahram dedicated a considerably large coverage on a daily basis to biodiversity. The reporting techniques included live and follow-up coverage on national and international levels. The analysis of the sourcing patterns used in Al-Ahram revealed the absence of sourcing in some stories and the prevailing use of official sources in stories reported by news agencies. Furthermore, the sourcing patterns were found to be characterized by relevance in many cases, yet the variety was missing to an extent. Regarding the press narratives, Al-Ahram portrayed a positive direction of coverage of the Egyptian efforts in biodiversity negotiations and intended to focus on Egyptian recognition internationally in light of COP15.

Secondly, Youm7 reported biodiversity within December 2022 through 24 stories published in the electronic version of the newspaper. The reporting techniques were characterized by a variety of formats that included news stories and features that did not only play a live coverage role but also employed secondary archive data in the production of features interpreting the phenomenon as the case in the feature headlined “What does the Earth’s facing to mass extinction during this century mean, and how will it be?”; the feature story employed science journalism in its reporting through stating the findings of scientific research. However, such type of informative stories lacked attribution to any source sometimes as in the case of the story titled “9 questions with answers on the importance of the biodiversity file and its relationship to climate change” where the reporter provided information that was not attributed to any primary or secondary source.

Regarding the sourcing patterns, Youm7 also published many stories without any source, especially the stories reported by news agencies, an example of which is the news story titled “Canadian Police begins its largest operation in two decades to secure the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity” and “The Secretary-General of the United Nations calls for a peace agreement with nature with 3 measures” that were reported from MENA. Some stories with experts used as sources, such as Danial Moran, a researcher in Researcher in the Department of Energy and Process Engineering at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, were also reported again from other websites as in the case of the story titled “Developing maps of the impact of world food production on climate and the environment”. The majority of the news stories were attributed to the minister of health through the statements released by the ministry. Nevertheless, none of the stories that reported on Biodiversity in Youm7 coverage included exclusive statements to the newspaper from the source as is the case in the news stories titled “Environment: Biodiversity and the protection of vital ecosystems are a source of economic security” and “Environment: 75% of the most widely used medicines come from biodiversity”.

The press narratives mainly focused on the coverage of the Egyptian side in COP15 and the governmental participation in biodiversity negotiations in particular with more than half stories that Yuom7

published about biodiversity being attributed to governmental press releases; inversely, there was clear negligence of covering the international representation in the narratives of Youm7 concerning biodiversity.

It is concluded that Youm7 dedicated a moderate amount of coverage to reporting biodiversity news. The reporting techniques included a variety of news writing formats and informativeness that, in some cases, was subject to the absence of credibility. Considering the used sources, there was a prevailing absence of primary sources and a limitedly complete absence of sources. Furthermore, press narratives primarily focused on the coverage of the Egyptian side in COP15.

Thirdly, El Dostour's electronic version of the newspaper reported on biodiversity through the 22 stories within the time frame of the study. The reporting techniques confirmed an absence of employment of any journalistic format other than the news stories which was almost the only format used within the coverage.

In terms of the used sources, El Dostour relied on official sources and experts in many stories. However, primary sources were absent and most of the stories were attributed to sources used by other news agencies or TV programs as the case in the story titled "Professor of Environment: Reserves have contributed to preserving many species of creatures from extinction" which was reported from a talk show program on Extra News. Also, the prevailing source in the coverage was the ministry of environment as the case is in the stories titled "Environment Minister: The United Nations supports developing countries to enhance the environmental dimension in their development plans" and "Fouad: We seek to benefit from the advantages of "COP 27" in advancing the biodiversity agenda". Additionally, there was an employment of relevant sources in the coverage, such as the World Bank as the case is in the story titled "The World Bank: a new grant to reduce harmful emissions in Lebanon, amounting to 8.86 million dollars".

The press narratives that El Dostour employed in the coverage of biodiversity were characterized by the positive portrayal of Egypt in light of the national participation in the international event of COP15; this was apparent in describing Egypt's role as pioneering in the news

story titled “Egypt continues its pioneering role in protecting ecosystems at the COP15 Biodiversity Conference in Montreal”.

To sum up, Al-Ahram dedicated the highest amount of coverage to climate change news in comparison to the other newspapers. However, the ownership scheme of the three newspapers did not have an impact on the nature of content in terms of sourcing patterns and press narratives. Al-Ahram dominated in achieving a considerable balance between the coverage of the international and national participation in COP15 in comparison to the other two newspapers; this correlates with the nature of Al-Ahram newspaper as the national representative of the Egyptian press internationally. The press narratives in the three newspapers were similar in the absence of primary sources and the positive tone in covering the Egyptian contribution.

In comparison to the literature review, the study results agree with the increased coverage of biodiversity. However, it disagrees with the correlation between negative coverage and non-state-owned media where all the newspapers’ ownership patterns in Egypt resulted in positive coverage of climate change.

Considering the theoretical framework, the three newspapers under study failed to commit to their obligations towards society in terms of information provision from all the possible sources and monotone narratives that failed to provide balanced coverage. However, there was slight progress made by Al-Ahram in covering the national and international aspects of biodiversity that proved a slight commitment to social duties.

As per the research questions, it was apparent that the amount of coverage was slightly moderate among the study sample with the lead of Al-Ahram in the amount of coverage as compared to the other newspapers. The journalistic techniques used to report on biodiversity in the selected newspapers varied between live coverage and follow-up news while the journalistic formats used were limited to news stories and feature stories only. Furthermore, the prevailing press narrative was the positive tone in covering the role of the ministry of environment in COP15. In terms of sources, the newspapers mainly relied on attributing news to the ministry of environment and portrayed a lack of reliance on primary sources. The newspapers under study were relatively similar in all aspects except for the amount of coverage.

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