



The challenges and practices of investigative journalism in the Arab world through the ARIJ podcast are the focus of this descriptive and analytical study, which draws on a sample of episodes.

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Abstract:

The present study aims to illuminate the manner in which the Arab Institute for Research and Journalism (ARIJ) utilises the podcast medium to exhibit its investigative endeavours, thereby introducing its investigative work and the prevailing conditions that facilitate such research within various Arab countries. The present study adopted a descriptive and analytical approach. The research community was represented in all episodes of ARIJ's podcast for the first and second seasons by adopting a purposive sample. It was determined that content analysis was the most appropriate tool for this study, and this approach was successful in reaching a number of results, most notably: ARIJ podcasts concentrate on the most significant challenges confronting journalists in the course of conducting investigative research in various Arab countries, in addition to humanitarian and social issues of a human rights nature in these countries.

Keywords: podcast; digital platforms; ARIJ; digital content; investigation journalism.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In light of the rapid technological progress witnessed in recent years, there has been a notable shift in the methods employed by Arab media in order to meet the changing and increasing needs of the public. This qualitative shift can be seen in the transformation of communication methods and the production and distribution of content, leading to a reduction in the role of some traditional means and the emergence of new forms of media production within the digital environment.

This shift has given rise to a growing trend of interest in alternative digital platforms, including podcasts. These are audio files that can be broadcast over the Internet and listened to on smart devices. They also allow users to download episodes or content of interest.

As investigative journalism is one of the most popular forms of journalism, it is also one of the most exposed to pressures that may sometimes prevent its practice. This is because it fulfils the principle of "media censorship" and deals with sensitive issues and facts that are hidden from the public. These issues and facts are especially related to corruption, abuse of power and human rights violations. These challenges and pressures are analogous to those experienced by Arab investigative journalism, including difficult production conditions and a weak public culture of this type of journalism in terms of how investigative programmes are produced, as well as the ethical and professional challenges that journalists face while delving into sensitive topics.

In this regard, certain Arab models have come to the fore, seeking to leverage podcasting technology to surmount the identified impediments. A notable example is the ARIJ network, which has adopted podcasting technology to disseminate content across borders. This network has utilised podcasting technology to present a series of investigative studies addressing issues of a humanitarian and human rights nature. Furthermore, the network has explored investigative work and the prevailing conditions for its practice in the Arab world, highlighting the significant challenges confronting journalists in this field. From this standpoint, the objective of the present study was to analyse the episodes of the ARIJ podcast. The following question was used as a foundation for this analysis:

In what manner did the Arij podcast address the challenges and practices of investigative journalism in the episodes of the first and second seasons?

The content has been meticulously deconstructed into categories of how it was said and what was said, as follows:

Categories: How it was said?

The categories delineate the manner in which the ARIJ podcast is presented:

- What language is employed when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism through the ARIJ podcast?



- What are the most significant artistic and directorial elements that are employed when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism through the ARIJ podcast?
- What persuasive techniques are used to introduce the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism in the ARIJ podcast?
- When introducing challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism, how often is the ARIJ podcast broadcast?

Categories: What was said?

The categories of statements made are indicative of the content of the ARIJ podcast.

- What are the main issues addressed in the ARIJ podcast when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism?
- What values are encapsulated within the ARIJ podcast when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism?
- Who are the key protagonists within the ARIJ podcast who are responsible for introducing the challenges and practices inherent to Arab investigative journalism.

2. Objectives of the study:

The purpose of the current study is to identify:

- The language employed in the introduction to the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism is that of the ARIJ podcast.
- The most significant technical and creative elements that were adopted when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism through the ARIJ podcast.
- The most prominent persuasive methods employed in the context of the ARIJ podcast are instrumental in introducing and elucidating the multifaceted challenges and investigative practices intrinsic to the realm of Arab journalism.
- The frequency with which ARIJ episodes are broadcast, with the purpose of introducing challenges and practices associated with Arab investigative journalism, as facilitated by the ARIJ podcast, is a subject of interest to this study.
- Key issues addressed in the ARIJ podcast on challenges and practices in Arab investigative journalism.
- Values embedded in the ARIJ podcast when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journalism.
- Key constituents within the ARIJ podcast when introducing the challenges and practices of Arab investigative journal.

3. Defining Concepts:

3.1 Podcasts:

The neologism combines the words "iPod" and "broadcast" to form a new word that signifies the act of publishing or broadcasting (Abdel Fattah, 2014, p. 36).

Podcasts are defined as audio or video multimedia series, akin to any other file that can be found on the Internet. However, they contain a specific codec, which is responsible for generating a



compact XML file. This file is then stored on the Internet, where it is retrieved by the podcast software and subsequently broadcast via a designated audio-visual channel. This channel enables listeners to subscribe and automatically download the latest episodes once they have connected to the Internet via a web browser (Abdel Fattah, 2014, p. 35).

In the contemporary digital age, it has become a prominent form of audio content, enjoying widespread acclaim and a significant degree of popularity. The content is presented in the form of audio episodes, which are produced on a regular basis and cover a variety of topics, including news, education, entertainment, and personal narratives. Podcasts represent a potent medium for the dissemination of information and the cultivation of a faithful audience (Abdel-Haq & Abdel-Aal, 2015, p. 45).

Procedural definition of a podcast: it is a programme of audio content disseminated by AJR via two channels: the official website and a selection of other social media sites. The content encompasses subjects related to the realm of investigative journalism. The dissemination of such content entails the invitation of journalists hailing from diverse geographical regions within the Arabic-speaking world. These journalists are tasked with the presentation of their personal encounters as well as the obstacles they confronted during the investigative processes. This exposition extends from the initial phase of their investigative efforts to its ultimate fruition in the form of publication.

3.2 The notion of investigative journalism:

David Nabel, the President of the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), defines investigative journalism as "a purely systematic and institutional behaviour that relies on research, scrutiny and investigation in order to ensure objectivity and accuracy, to verify the validity of the news and what it may hide, based on the principle of transparency and the fight against corruption, and commitment to the role of the press as a monitoring institution on government behaviour and as a means of holding officials accountable for their actions in the public interest"(Majashah, 2016, p. 115) .

The American Organisation for Investigative Journalism defines it as "in-depth news coverage that reveals information that is considered to be sensitive or concealed, or that highlights systemic failures and misguided policies, as a result of the personal effort of a journalist or newspaper." (Al-Dilemi, 2015, p. 41)

De Burgh defined it as the pursuit of that which is concealed by others. The process of legislation is initiated by the first draft, which is produced by investigative journalism. This initial draft draws attention to the failures of a society's control system and the manner in which such systems have been penetrated by individuals of significant wealth, authority and moral corruption (Abd El-Baqi, 2013, p. 118).

Procedural definition of investigative journalism:

This form of journalism, as practised by the Arab Research Centre for Information on the Arab



World (ARIJ), is distinguished by its capacity to unveil perilous facts, gain access to information otherwise unavailable, and provide insights into subjects pertaining to corruption, abuse of power, and violations of human rights in various Arab countries.

4. Previous studies:

A set of previous studies were adopted, arranged chronologically from the most recent to the oldest: **Mohamed, S, A, R. H, "An Evaluation of the Credibility of Podcasts as a Source of Information and News among the Egyptian Public"**

The issue that the study sought to address was to ascertain the credibility of podcasts as a source of information and news among the Egyptian public. This analytical field study sets out to analyse the elements of credibility and the factors affecting it in the podcasts of the study sample. In addition, it will monitor the attitudes of the Egyptian public towards the credibility of podcasts as a source of information and news. The analysis of the elements of credibility in the news podcasts of the study sample and the attitudes of the public towards them will be based on two research tools, namely: The research community was represented in the analytical section by Egyptian, Arab and international news podcasts. The analytical sample included Al-Masry Al-Youm Podcast as a representative of Egyptian news podcasts, Al-Arabiya Podcast as a representative of Arab news podcasts, and Sky News Podcast in Arabic as a representative of international news podcasts. The field study community was represented in the Egyptian community through the utilisation of podcasts, employing a purposive sample to attain a set of results that would substantiate the credibility of podcasts.

The findings of the analytical study demonstrated that the sample podcasts exhibited compliance with the majority of the factors necessary to attain the components of credibility. The results of the field study revealed that the majority of respondents expressed trust in news podcasts. YouTube emerged as the leading application utilised by the public for podcast consumption, followed by Google Podcasts, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and SoundCloud. The list was then topped by Al Arabiya Podcast, Al Masry Al Youm Podcast, and Sky News Arabic Podcast, in addition to the study sample.

Haroon, A, M, A. W, "The Importance of Utilizing Podcast Technology in Enriching the Content of Media Organizations' Websites".

The present study focuses on analysing the role of podcasts in enhancing the digital content of media organisations. The investigator elected to adopt a descriptive approach, utilising a content analysis tool. The study was applied to a sample of 52 podcasts derived from four Arabic media podcasts. The findings indicated that the dissemination of podcasts on these platforms remains predominantly sporadic, with a mere 25% of content being published with regularity. A notable presence was found in the domain of cultural topics, with literary and artistic subjects also being well represented. The most common format observed was media dialogues. The results indicated that media, social and cultural podcasts constituted the largest proportion of content, with a clear focus on local topics by more than half of the sample. With regard to interactivity, a considerable proportion of podcasts facilitate audience participation via social media platforms, with specific timeframes allocated for



posting. The integration of multimedia elements, encompassing audio, music, and text, contributed to the creation of a comprehensive visual and auditory experience. In summary, the study demonstrates that podcasts represent a valuable addition to media websites; however, greater investment and strategic planning are required to maximise their benefits.

Thabit. M, "Investigative Journalism and Its Challenges in the Arab World"

The present study explores "the issue of investigative journalism's capacity to fulfil its professional role within an Arab environment that is characterised by political and legislative restrictions". A descriptive analytical approach was adopted, analysing investigative journalism literature and comparing it to the Arab context, with a focus on practical examples and actual practices. The study delineated a series of methodological steps that investigative journalism should follow. These steps included defining the hypothesis, verifying sources, using documents and testimonies, and constructing the story based on a narrative supported by evidence. The study revealed that the most significant challenges confronting investigative journalism in the Arab world are as follows: inadequate legal safeguards for journalists, the absence of explicit legislation on freedom of information, insufficient funding and professional development, and political pressures that constrain editorial autonomy. The development of this particular form of journalism is contingent upon a number of factors, including the establishment of a supportive legal environment, the presence of specialised training institutions, and the cultivation of international partnerships that are conducive to the advancement of investigative journalism. It is imperative to emphasise the necessity of enhancing public awareness regarding the significance of investigative journalism in ensuring accountability among authorities and in the exposure of corruption.

Martínez-Costa, M.-P., Amoedo-Casais, A., & Moreno-Moreno, E. "The Value of Podcasts to Journalism: Analysis of Digital Native Media Brands' Offerings"

This investigation examined the manner in which digital media outlets in Spain utilise podcasts as a component of their journalistic strategies. A total of twenty-nine (29) podcast series, produced by seven prominent digital media organisations, were subjected to analysis by researchers. The objective of this investigation was to evaluate the various approaches adopted by these organisations with regard to podcast formats, production methods and dissemination strategies. The findings indicated that a limited number of these outlets produce podcasts and regard them as a vital component of their editorial strategy, particularly on specialised platforms. Podcasts should not be regarded as a secondary technology; rather, they can be considered an effective means of enhancing audience engagement, expanding narrative styles, and strengthening media identity. The most prevalent formats are talk shows and series, which are frequently published on the websites of their producers and distributed via prominent audio platforms. In summary, the study emphasises the expanding significance of podcasts within the realm of digital journalism. It underscores the prospective benefits of this medium, concurrently highlighting the prevailing challenges, such as



sustainability and evaluating audience reach.

Mansour, H. “The ethics of investigative journalism in Arab codes of honor: An analytical study.”

The researcher's study offers a critical analysis of the extent to which the ethical principles of investigative journalism are included in the media codes of honour of a number of Arab countries. The study adopted a comparative analytical approach, whereby the content of ten (10) press charters from various Arab countries was analysed, with a particular focus on ethical standards such as: The fundamental principles that govern the practice of journalism are Honesty, Accuracy, Impartiality, Protection of Sources, and Commitment to the Public Interest. The results indicated that the majority of Arab charters address general ethical principles in journalism, yet they are deficient in providing specific provisions that address the intricacies of investigative work. This deficiency has the potential to compromise the professional and legal safeguards that are crucial for the protection of investigative journalists. The researcher recommended the development of journalistic codes of honour, incorporating behavioural guidelines tailored to investigative journalism, with a view to safeguarding both journalists and the rights of the public.

Table 1. The connection between the present study and earlier studies

Similarities	The present study is analogous to previous studies in terms of addressing the same two study variables, i.e. investigative journalism and podcasts, thus facilitating a more profound comprehension of the subject matter. Additionally, a notable overlap exists in the methodological procedures employed, with the descriptive approach being adopted in all studies and content analysis serving as a fundamental research tool. Previous studies have demonstrated congruence with the current study in terms of temporal alignment, facilitating a more nuanced comprehension of the topic in the present context.
Differences	The present study is distinguished from previous research in two key respects. Firstly, its scope is confined to the ARIJ network and the podcasts it produces. In contrast, previous studies have encompassed a wider range of subjects, including podcasts, investigative culture, literature, and media codes of honor. Secondly, the present study will not extend beyond the Arab world, whereas previous studies have included both Arab countries and foreign countries. The present studies concentrated exclusively on podcasts as a technological medium and its applications in the sphere of media in general and investigative journalism in particular.
The benefits	Following a comprehensive review of extant literature, the findings of preceding studies were drawn upon in order to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the subject matter, to define the research methodology and to inform the interpretation of the results obtained by comparing them with those of other researchers.

Source: Prepared by the Researcher.



5. Methodology:

The descriptive-analytical approach was adopted in this study, as it is the most appropriate means by which to describe the phenomenon of investigative journalism challenges and practices in the Arab world. This is achieved by collecting information and facts and analysing them quantitatively and qualitatively, in order to finally reach results that help us understand this phenomenon and achieve the set objectives, and reach results that answer the questions posed.

6. Research population and sample:

The population from which data was obtained for this study consisted of all episodes of the ARIJ podcast in its inaugural and secondary seasons, while the sample was purposive, with a focus on the episodes from the inaugural and secondary seasons. The sample included a total of 19 episodes from the inaugural season and 9 from the secondary season. It should be noted that episodes from the tertiary season were omitted from the study as they were still being recorded during the period in which the current research was conducted.

Table N°02: Sample Episodes from ARIJ Podcast.

Episode	Episode Title	Episode Length	Podcast Episode Date	ARIJ Podcast's QR
01	"Breaking Free from Punitive Slavery in Mauritania: An Investigative Report" by Abu-Buker Salem,	23.31	30/09/2022	
02	"A Daughter of Sana'a: The Need for Awareness to Halt Urban Sprawl"	23.44	30/10/2022	
03	"Educational Guardianship Law Bars Prevent Children of Divorced Women from Enrolling in Private Schools".	27.25	08/02/2023	
04	"Banned Pesticides in Lebanese Food Consumption": A Study by Zaineb Mohsen	30.00	13/03/2023	
05	"How ARIJ Supports Journalists Against Life-Threatening Challenges" Rawan Al-Damen	31.50	30/03/2023	
06	"Victims of Sawmills" Sohad Al-Khodri,	32.25	27/04/2023	
07	"The Unseen Agony" Eid Rabee & Sami Elam	27.00	24/05/2023	



08	“Small Wonders” – Talla Ayoun .	32.52	03/07/2023	
09	“Immunization Talk”- Mohammed Al-Sawi	34.50	14/08/2023	
10	“Nadim Hospital: A healthcare Hub in Jordan” -Chorouk Al-Sanour & Ola Al-Amlah	36.17	29/09/2023	
01	“Stateless Children : The Unseen Victims of Refugee Rape in Egypt-Reham Gharib”	38.09	15/01/2024	
02	“A Conversation with Investigative Journalist and Data Editor-Mohammed Al-Komani: Data Doesn’t Lie, it Puts You on The Right Track and Gives You Confirmed Information”	34.46	26/02/2024	
03	“Journalism with Conscience: An Interview with Jihane Nasri “	01.09	26/03/2024	
04	“The Bloody Routes: A Journalistic Investigation with Mahoud Al-Sabki”	34.20	30/04/2024	
05	“In Memory of Chirine Abu-Aqla:The Story of Asmaa Al-Masalma, A Palistinian Journalist”	29.00	30/05/2024	
06	“Media Restrictions in Sudan: Acritical Analysis “	28.26	30/06/2024	
07f	“Supervision of Reporting on Palastinian Journalists’ Challenges”- Firas Al-Taweel	35.46	29/07/2024	
08	“The Plight of Palastinian -Syrian Refugges in Egypt: An Academic Perspective”	42.17	22/08/2024	
09	The Water Crisis in Iraq: An Analysis by Kamal Al-Ayari	30.00	01/10/2024	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

7. Data collection tools:

The utilisation of content analysis is regarded as the optimal methodology for the present study. Content analysis is defined as 'the systematic method used to describe the content of

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communication, whether verbal, written, or broadcast via radio or television, in an organised and systematic manner, with the aim of testing scientific hypotheses or answering questions (Hafez, 2015, p. 34) ' The selection of this particular tool was made on the basis of its versatility, which allows for its application across a diverse range of media formats, including audio content such as podcasts. Furthermore, the combination of quantity and quality facilitates the calculation of category frequencies and the interpretation of results through analysis and attribution of meanings, thereby producing objective results that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the utilisation of podcasts to introduce investigative journalism and the conditions of its practice in the Arab world.

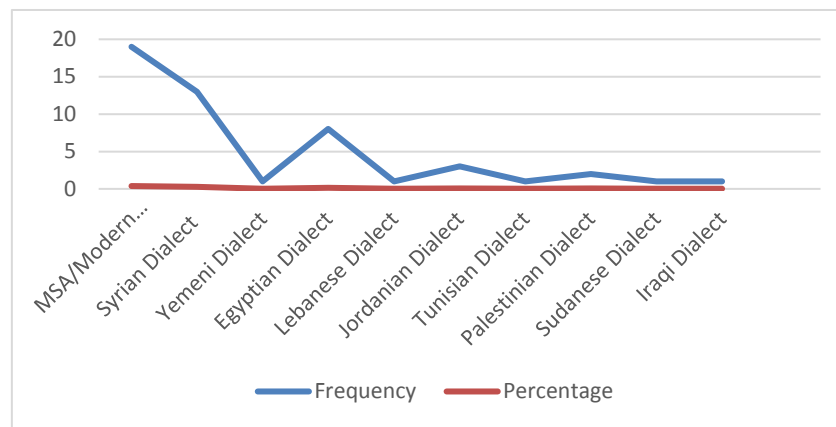
8. Presentation of Analytical Study Data:

Table 3. The Language Used in Introducing Challenges and Practices

Language/ Dialect	Frequency	Percentage
MSA/Modern Standard Arabic	19	%38
Syrian Dialect	13	%26
Yemeni Dialect	1	%2
Egyptian Dialect	8	%16
Lebanese Dialect	1	%2
Jordanian Dialect	3	%6
Tunisian Dialect	1	%2
Palestinian Dialect	2	%4
Sudanese Dialect	1	%2
Iraqi Dialect	1	%2
Total	50	%100

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Fig.1. The Language Used in Introducing Challenges and Practices



Source: Prepared by the Researcher

As demonstrated in the data presented in the above table, the percentage of Standard Arabic employed in Areej podcasts is estimated at 38%, while the Syrian dialect is utilised at a rate of 2%. 26%. The Yemeni, Lebanese, Tunisian, Sudanese and Iraqi dialects were all found to be equivalent, with a percentage of 2%. The Egyptian dialect was used at a rate of 16%, the Jordanian dialect at 6%, and the Palestinian dialect at 4%.

It has been observed that, in contrast to other Arabic dialects, Classical Arabic was employed in all episodes of the Areej podcast. This is due to the fact that it is the most suitable language for such programmes, particularly given that they are primarily directed towards an Arab audience which is characterised by its diversity of dialects. Nevertheless, classical Arabic remains the mother tongue and is the most widely understood by this audience. This promotes mutual understanding, avoids confusion and ensures that the message is conveyed with clarity. The employment of Arabic in this context signifies a commitment to professionalism and seriousness, which are integral aspects of investigative journalism. Arabic has historically played a pivotal role in the realm of communication, wielding significant influence on the success or failure of media discourse, contingent on the potency of the language employed (Miloud, 2016, p. 14). The utilisation of Arabic in journalism offers numerous advantages that can be leveraged to ensure the widest possible dissemination of journalists' voices. "Research has demonstrated that the potential of classical Arabic far exceeds that of colloquial Arabic. This helps the communicator to articulate themselves accurately in a variety of media, in addition to the prominence and widespread reach of the media and its role in preserving identity (Al-Badrani, 2023). This is evidently demonstrated in the Arij podcast, in which Arabic was used consistently throughout all episodes, thereby affording the programme a formal register. Nevertheless, this did not impede the integration of colloquial dialects, most notably the Syrian dialect, which was second only to Arabic. Episodes invariably commenced in Arabic, subsequently incorporating colloquial dialects between segments and during guest introductions. This phenomenon can be attributed to the capacity of colloquial dialects to 'enhance audience interaction and acceptance of the content (Al-Shahrani & Al-Asiri, 2018)', compounded

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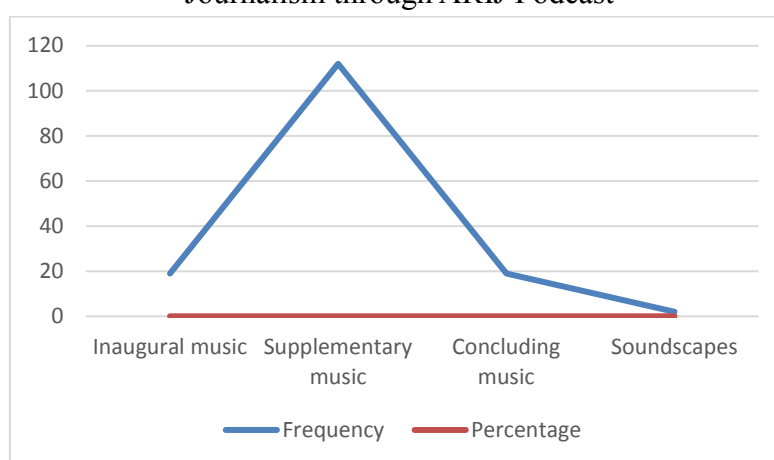
by the fact that the programme's presenter, Samia Ayesh, is a Palestinian and therefore the native speaker of the dialect.

Table 4.: Technical Components Utilized in Arabization and Their Challenges in Arab Investigation Journalism through ARIJ Podcast.

Aesthetic Elements	Frequency	Percentage
Inaugural music	19	12.5%
Supplementary music	112	73.68%
Concluding music	19	12.5%
Soundscapes	2	1.31%
Total	152	100%

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Fig.2. Technical Components Utilized in Arabization and Their Challenges in Arab Investigation Journalism through ARIJ Podcast



Source: Prepared by the Researcher

The data presented in the table indicates that the utilisation of opening music was recorded at 12.5% in the initial and subsequent seasons. Conversely, the employment of background music was



observed to be 73.68% and 12.5%, respectively. Additionally, the analysis revealed the use of closing music at 12.5% and environmental sounds at 1.31% in the given context.

The results presented in Table 1 demonstrate that the presence of background music is particularly pronounced in Areej podcast episodes. This finding is intuitive, given the repeated utilisation of this musical genre within a single episode. The utilisation of this music exhibited variability in terms of genre, encompassing a range from sad, exciting and dramatic to occasionally neutral, serving as an accompaniment to the voices of guests who narrated events and the voice of the journalist in specific instances. The effect is subtle, and does not dominate the speaker's voice. Its purpose is to maintain audience focus and encourage continued engagement, particularly in the absence of visual elements, where auditory enhancements play a pivotal role in enhancing the realism of audio programmes. The music that is played at the commencement of each episode has been composed with the specific intention of creating an atmosphere of suspense. This musical accompaniment is accompanied by the phrase "Areej Podcast", and was designed expressly for this programme. The purpose of this introduction was to prepare the listener psychologically for the content of the episode. The musical accompaniment at the conclusion of the episode fulfills a similar function, serving as a cue to the listener that the episode has reached its denouement. It effectively disrupts the state of concentration that the listener might have been experiencing while immersing themselves in the narrative. The phrase 'This was ARIJ Podcast' was also used, with the intention of mitigating the impact of the moving stories presented in the programme on the audience and calming them psychologically. The opening and closing musical pieces serve to express the identity of the programme, and their repetition serves to reinforce this in the minds of the audience, facilitating recognition even in the absence of a verbal introduction. This finding demonstrates that the use of text alone is insufficient for podcasts; the incorporation of sound effects is imperative to enhance the content and achieve the desired effect on the audience. It is asserted that "this tendency is characterised by the media's inclination to employ a multifaceted integration of sound, music and text, thereby facilitating the delivery of substantial visual and audio content. Podcasts represent a valuable addition to media websites, yet they still require greater investment and strategic planning in order to achieve their full potential" (Arbab, 2023).

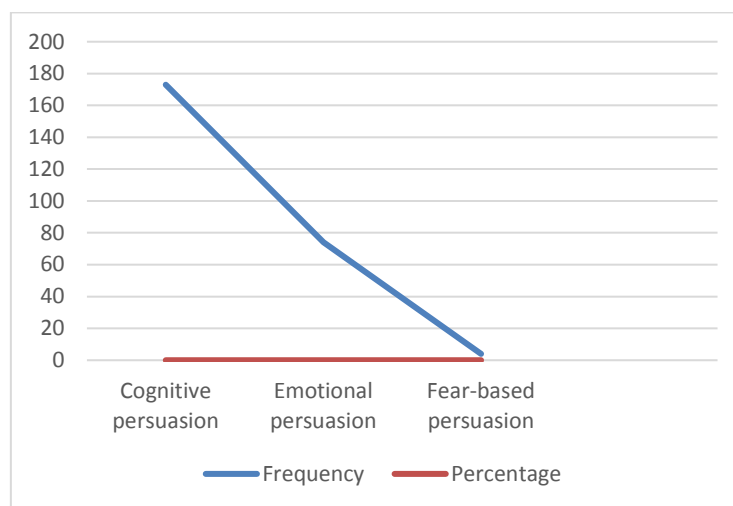
Table 5.: Persuasive Strategies Used in ARIJ Podcast.

Persuasive strategy type	Frequency	Percentage
Cognitive persuasion	173	% 68.92
Emotional persuasion	74	% 29.48
Fear-based persuasion	4	% 1.59
Total	251	% 100

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Fig.3. Persuasive Strategies Used in ARIJ Podcast

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Source: Prepared by the Researcher

The data presented in the table indicates that mental persuasion techniques were employed in the Areej podcast with a frequency of 68.92%, followed by emotional persuasion techniques with a frequency of 29.48%, and fear persuasion techniques with a frequency of 1.59%.

It can thus be posited that rational persuasion constitutes the most prevalent form of appeal in the Areej podcast. In this medium, journalists employ data, evidence, statistics, and other information to substantiate their investigative journalism and the subjects thereof, thereby ensuring that their audience is assured of the veracity of their work. The objective of these investigations is not merely to garner sympathy from the audience, but rather to elucidate the facts as they are, unadulterated. This is indicative of the high level of professionalism exhibited by the journalists, as well as their expertise in investigative work. Throughout all the episodes and on all the topics discussed, the journalists sought to utilise the compelling evidence they had obtained during their investigations. The hallmark of investigative journalism is its seriousness and realism, qualities th The persuasive appeals are considered the most appropriate in light of the issues addressed by ARIJ Network, which are characterised by seriousness and sensitivity. To convince the audience of their importance, it was necessary to provide them with figures, statistics, eyewitness accounts and other evidence that help them understand these topics in depth and analyse them rationally. This, in turn, drives them to adopt a position or orientation towards these issues and to recognise their gravity, potentially transforming them into active participants in holding authorities accountable. Through its investigative reports, ARIJ does not merely convey information but rather seeks to engage audiences with it in ways that strengthen their trust and credibility. Such outcomes can only be achieved through rational persuasive techniques.

From another perspective, the audience of ARIJ is diverse in terms of background and degree of need for rational evidence and proof. It may include the general public, journalists, students and researchers in the field of investigative journalism, human rights activists and civil society actors, or decision-makers. For this variety of audiences, rational appeals are of significant importance:



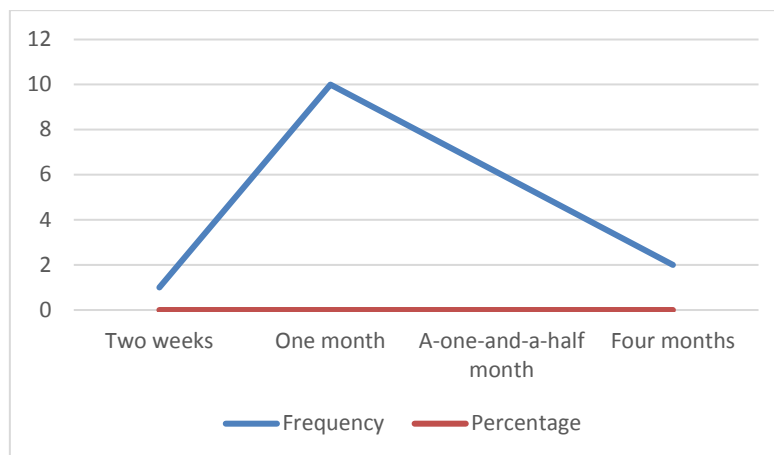
some need them to form an informed opinion, others consider them essential for defending specific societal causes, and yet others may rely on them to make particular decisions.

Table 6. Frequency of ARIJ Podcast Episodes in Highlighting Arab Investigative Journalism Challenges and Practices.

Transmission schedule	Frequency	Percentage
Two weeks	1	% 5.26
One month	10	% 52.63
A-one-and-a-half month	6	% 31.57
Four months	2	% 15.78
Total	19	% 100

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Fig.4. Frequency of RIJ Podcast Episodes in Highlighting Arab Investigative Journalism Challenges and Practices.



Source: Prepared by the Researcher

As illustrated in the tabular presentation, 5.26% of programmes were broadcast on a biweekly basis, while 52.63% were broadcast on a monthly basis. The frequency of broadcasts was estimated at 31.57% on a one-and-a-half-month basis, while 15.78% of episodes were broadcast on a four-month basis.

The data presented in the table indicates that there is some variation in the timing of the broadcast of Areej podcast episodes. However, this variation did not impede the endeavour to adhere to a monthly interval between episodes, which constituted the highest percentage. This is attributable to the sensitivity of the podcast's subject matter and the difficulty of accessing sources, in addition to the need to verify them and gather sufficient evidence on the topics presented. These factors represent some of the most prominent challenges to investigative journalism in the Arab world. This assertion is further substantiated by the conclusions of a preceding study, which asserted that "the most significant challenges confronting investigative journalism in the Arab world are: inadequate

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legal safeguards for journalists, the absence of explicit legislation on freedom of information, insufficient funding and professional development, and political pressures that constrain editorial autonomy" (Thabit, 2022) The ARIJ network is dedicated to the legal review of all published investigations with a view to averting legal action. This process is time-consuming, particularly given the meticulous nature of this form of journalism, which involves detailed analysis of events and a protracted timeframe for completion. Moreover, the ARIJ podcast is not a conventional talk show; rather, it evokes the structure of a documentary narrative through the use of meticulous sound effects, first-hand accounts, field recordings and meticulous editing. Consequently, the editing and production of episodes is a protracted process, with episodes being released in their final form only after a considerable time. Another factor that contributes to the irregularity in the publication of episodes is that ARIJ collaborates with journalists from various Arab countries, which poses challenges due to the potential obstacles arising from the security or political situation in certain regions. In addition, challenges arise from the communication gap between the production team and journalists, further compounded by the geographical dispersion of journalists.

On the other hand, ARIJ Network can be regarded as a training ground for Arab journalists, equipping them with investigative reporting skills. Most of the journalists who produced the investigative reports were in fact trainees in investigative journalism, and their work often represented their first experience in this field. Consequently, they may lack the professional expertise required, which can lead to longer production times, particularly in the data-gathering phase. Furthermore, many Arab journalists join ARIJ within the framework of training in investigative work, which results in an accumulation of investigations produced by them. As a result, the network is often compelled to deal with multiple cases simultaneously, a process that inevitably consumes additional time and prolongs the interval between one episode and the next.

In contrast to prevailing practices in the media landscape, where some channels seek to intensify the frequency of episodes in order to maintain audience attention, ARIJ focuses on producing well-crafted work capable of achieving impact and wide reach—even if this requires waiting for a month or longer between episodes. The network prioritises quality over quantity, thereby keeping the audience in constant anticipation of forthcoming investigations while also allowing sufficient space for engagement with the previous episode before introducing a new issue.

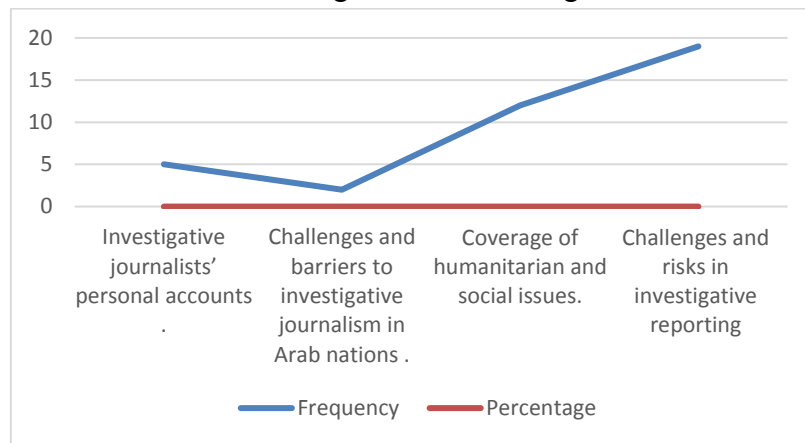
Table7. ARIJ Podcast's Coverage of Arab Investigative Journalism Issues .

Issues	Frequency	Percentage
Investigative journalists' personal accounts .	5	%13.88
Challenges and barriers to investigative journalism in Arab nations .	2	%5.55
Coverage of humanitarian and social issues.	12	%33.33
Challenges and risks in investigative reporting .	19	% 52.77
Total	36	%100

Source: Prepared by the Researcher



Fig.5. ARIJ Podcast's Coverage of Arab Investigative Journalism Issues



Source: Prepared by the Researcher

The data in the table indicates that topics dealing with journalists' personal experiences in investigative journalism accounted for 13.88%, while challenges to investigative journalism in some Arab countries accounted for 5.55% and humanitarian and social issues accounted for 33.33%. The challenges faced by journalists while conducting their investigative reports accounted for 52.77% of the total.

Consequently, the highest percentage of responses pertained to the challenges encountered by journalists whilst conducting their investigative reporting. This is attributable to the inherent challenges of investigative work. Thus, the discussion of these challenges with journalists is one of the steps undertaken during the course of their investigations. Conversely, journalist Samia Ayesh sought to align her reporting with the editorial principles of the ARIJ network, which emphasise the challenges and impediments encountered by Arab journalists in their investigative journalism. Moreover, the network is recognised for its role as a catalyst for professional development, offering training and safeguarding its journalists. The discussion of these obstacles is also important for the education of the Arab audience listening to the ARIJ podcast in regard to investigative journalism and its importance in exposing the truth, uncovering corruption and protecting citizens' rights. This finding aligns with the conclusions of prior research that identified the requisite elements for fostering this particular form of journalism as "a protective legal environment, specialised training institutions, and supportive international collaborations, with a concomitant emphasis on enhancing community cognisance of the pivotal role of investigative journalism in ensuring governmental accountability and unveiling corrupt practices" (Thabit, 2022).

The purpose of presenting these challenges is to convey the message that investigative journalism is a collective endeavour that exceeds the capacity of an individual and requires broad-based support. Such support should come, on the one hand, from media institutions, which ought to provide journalists with the necessary resources to carry out this specialised form of reporting, and, on the other hand, from legislative frameworks that ensure a legal environment which facilitates rather than deters investigative work. The audience also constitutes an active element when it becomes aware of the importance of investigative journalism and its role in driving change. As for the security threats faced by journalists while conducting investigative reporting, they necessitate a

The challenges and practices of investigative journalism in the Arab world through the ARIJ podcast are the focus of this descriptive and analytical study, which draws on a sample of episodes



protective front represented by human rights organisations, journalist advocacy groups, and other civil society bodies."

Themes pertaining to sensitive humanitarian and social subjects throughout the Arab world have similarly achieved considerable success in both the initial and subsequent seasons. This is due to the pivotal role played by both "the media and investigative journalism in exposing corruption and contributing to the fight against impunity. International associations of investigative journalists serve as a prime example of international cooperation, achieving tangible results through the effective mobilisation of public and law enforcement agencies to address financial and economic crimes. Media coverage is an important, albeit still underutilised, source for exposing cases of corruption"(OECD, 2018). The promotion of the rights of marginalised citizens and the combatting of abuses suffered by certain groups in society, such as the economically disadvantaged, refugees, or the vulnerable, constitutes an additional facet of ARIJ's editorial mandate. The primary objective of this mandate is to provide a platform for the articulation of the voices of those who have been marginalised or silenced. While this falls within the remit of investigative journalism, merely recounting tragedies may not suffice. The purpose of presenting these issues is not limited to eliciting public sympathy for the victims, but rather to analyse the causes and identify those responsible for this injustice, who should be held legally accountable. It is imperative to acknowledge that this objective can only be accomplished through the examination of issues from a multifaceted perspective.

On the other hand, ARIJ's focus on human and social issues can be regarded as an ethical shield that is difficult to challenge, rendering its work more acceptable to both authorities and the public, particularly within Arab contexts where investigative journalism is often perceived as a political threat. Addressing such issues achieves two objectives simultaneously: on the one hand, it highlights the ethical dimension of journalism and its solidarity with marginalised groups; on the other hand, it ensures the continuity of investigative reporting in a constrained environment by employing a discourse that is difficult to discredit. This strategy avoids direct confrontation with authorities: instead of explicitly exposing corruption and directly challenging power, attention is directed towards issues that ostensibly concern humanitarian and social matters but which, at their core, carry political implications—thereby producing indirect accountability of decision-makers.

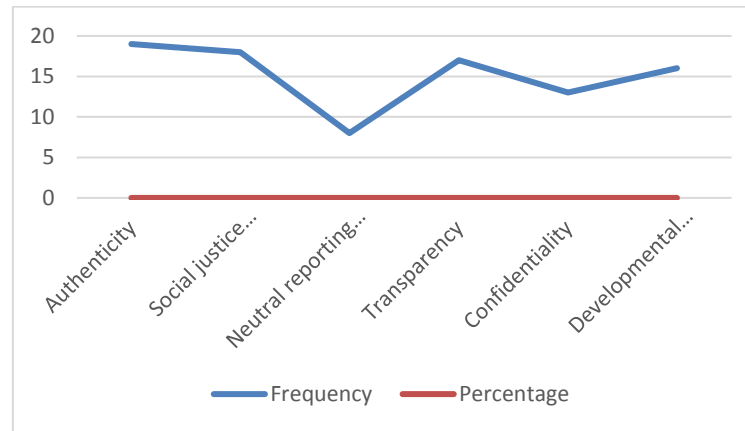
Table 8. Core Values in Arab Investigative Journalism : ARIJ Podcast Perspectives.

Core values	Frequency	Percentage
Authenticity	19	%17.27
Social justice advocacy	18	%16.36
Neutral reporting /Impartiality	8	% 7.27
Transparency	17	%15.45
Confidentiality	13	%11.81
Developmental continuity	16	% 14.54
Total	110	%100

Source: Prepared by the Researcher



Fig.6. Core Values in Arab Investigative Journalism: ARIJ Podcast Perspectives.



Source: Prepared by the Researcher

As illustrated in the table, the percentage of authenticity as a value in the ARIJ podcast is estimated at 17.27%, while the percentage of social justice is estimated at 16.36%. With regard to the notion of impartiality, the estimated figure is 7.27%. Transparency is estimated at 15.45%, confidentiality at 11.81%, and finally, developmental continuity is estimated at 14.54%.

The findings indicate a convergence in the values espoused by the Areej podcast, attributable to the nature of investigative work, which necessitates that journalists adhere to ethical principles while conducting their investigations. The presentation of evidence, logical arguments, and testimonies from reality, devoid of distortion or falsification, by hosting journalists who had experienced sensitive issues that required them to search for conclusive evidence to prove the legitimacy of their investigations to the public and legal authorities, was indicative of honesty. "Media codes of ethics stipulate that investigative journalists have a dual obligation to be objective, to exercise caution before reaching conclusions, and to refrain from bias, regardless of their own convictions on the issue in question" (Mansour, 2019). Podcast technology has also been shown to enjoy credibility among the public, as demonstrated by a previous study. "The results of the analytical study demonstrate that the podcast programmes in the study sample adhere to most of the factors that contribute to credibility, and the results of the field study found that the majority of respondents trust news podcasts" (Abd El-Razzaq, 2024). With regard to the endeavour to attain social justice in ARIJ podcasts, given that the subjects addressed encompassed social and humanitarian concerns, as evidenced in Table 04, the primary objective was to advocate for the rights of marginalised communities and to facilitate their articulation, with the aim of attaining social justice and reinstating the rights of several of these groups. The impact in question was achieved subsequent to the presentation of several Arij investigations, which are considered to be one of ARIJ's priorities and integral to its editorial line. The value of impartiality was comparatively low in relation to other values, due to the nature of the topics discussed, which generally entailed a bias towards the victims,

The challenges and practices of investigative journalism in the Arab world through the ARIJ podcast are the focus of this descriptive and analytical study, which draws on a sample of episodes



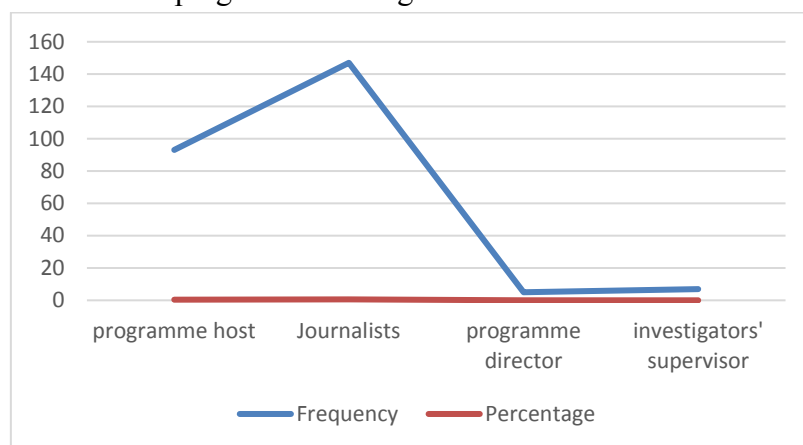
thus focusing on one side of the argument. The traditional sense of impartiality, defined as 'presenting both sides of the argument without interference or distortion', is often compromised in investigative journalism. This is due to journalists' ethical inclinations, which often lead them to take sides with the oppressed rather than the oppressor, particularly when there is evidence to support this position. This is done to achieve justice that is in the public interest. The taking of sides without the consideration of opposing perspectives can be considered unethical when facts are exploited for the purpose of distorting or substantiating certain ideologies. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the existence of topics in investigative journalism that require testimony from both sides in order to achieve the principle of impartiality.

Table 9. Contributors Shaping Arab Investigative Journalism Practices and Challenges.

Contributors	Frequency	Percentage
programme host	93	% 36.90
Journalists	147	% 58.33
programme director	5	% 1.98
investigators' supervisor	7	% 2.77
Total	252	%100

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Fig.7. Contributors Shaping Arab Investigative Journalism Practices and Challenges



Source: Prepared by the Researcher

The results presented in the above table demonstrate that the programme host accounted for 36.90% of the participants in the ARIJ podcast, while journalists accounted for 58.33%. The percentage of the ARIJ programme director and the investigators' supervisor was equal at 1.98% and 2.77% respectively.

There was an increase in the number of journalists, who are the proprietors of the stories presented and are consequently motivated to recount the events that transpired. The subjects were granted sufficient time to articulate their experiences in detail, thereby enhancing the programme's



credibility. As eyewitnesses to the events they investigated, they were able to convey their impact directly to the audience, facilitating an empathic response and fostering a sense of identification with the victims. Conversely, it is widely acknowledged that the Areej podcast is chiefly concerned with the promotion of investigative journalism and the particulars of its execution by journalists within the Arab world. Consequently, direct narration is considered to be more efficacious than the narrator's commentary on these subjects.

Conversely, the programme's host, Samia Ayesh, exhibited restraint in her interventions, except to pose questions and transition between segments. She demonstrated a greater propensity to listen than to speak, and it was asserted that "the primary prerequisite for effective listening skills is for the interviewer to prioritise the content of the guest's discourse. The ability to maintain mental focus enables the host to identify ideas that are pertinent to the subject under discussion and that will prove to be of interest to the audience"(Hadeethi, 2015). Furthermore, she repeatedly expressed her admiration and enthusiasm for the contributions of the guests, encouraging them to elaborate on their remarks.

9. Conclusion:

The 'Podcast ARIJ' experience is regarded as a pioneering Arab model in the field of investigative journalism in the digital environment. It has been able to adopt multimedia, which is a new form of media, to convey its message to the Arab audience by presenting issues that give voice to marginalised and oppressed groups in society and educate the Arab audience about this type of journalism.

The study found that ARIJ has taken advantage of the characteristics of podcasts as audio content by employing sound effects that help support the text, achieve high audience focus, and establish its digital identity. This is conducted on a monthly basis, a timeframe which the system attempts to adhere to, albeit with some instability. ARIJ podcast episodes concentrate on the most significant challenges confronting journalists whilst conducting investigative reporting in various Arab countries, in addition to humanitarian and social issues of a human rights nature in these countries. The primary objective of this concentration is twofold: firstly, to raise public awareness, and secondly, to provide a platform for the voiceless within society. This approach is in accordance with the ARIJ network's editorial policy. The podcasts feature journalists from various Arab countries where the ARIJ network is active, and they are given sufficient airtime to elaborate on their investigative journalism, with their statements supported by compelling evidence, with the aim of achieving widespread public conviction. The fundamental principles upon which these investigations are based are those of truthfulness and social justice.

Following an analytical study of the ARIJ podcast, it is recommended that the programme diversify its topics and move away from the human rights focus that has dominated most of the episodes. It is further advised that the podcast address technological and economic topics, among others. The Arabic language ought to be adopted as the official language in order to enhance the



comprehensibility and understanding of the content by the multifaceted Arabic-speaking audience. Moreover, this measure would serve to mitigate reliance on the perspective of a single party. It is especially pertinent to recognise that some subjects necessitate diverse viewpoints in order to enhance their credibility with the audience. The target demographic of this podcast comprises novice journalists, and as such, it is imperative that the content is tailored to address their needs and facilitate their learning process. Rather than a mere recitation of challenges encountered, the focus should be on the strategies employed by seasoned journalists to overcome these obstacles and successfully obtain information.

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