

## **The Ethical Standards in Publishing Journalistic Photos on News Websites**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to investigate the extent of commitment of electronic news websites to the ethics of photojournalism. To accomplish this objective, a quantitative research was conducted. The measurement of the commitment extent was executed through a measuring tool prepared for this purpose. Through the population of the study, the sample included three electronic journals that represent electronic journals in Jordan. Descriptive statistics was used to measure the extent of commitment. The evaluated sample of production by websites was selected using a regular simple random sample. The results showed that the published photos' main source is the Internet or the sites' photographer. The sample of the selected products included different press styles. The results showed that the highest violation of photojournalism occurred in news. The study recommended the modification of photojournalism ethics that improve the use of photojournalism in electronic news websites.

**Keyword:** Photojournalism, Ethical, News Websites

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## المعايير الأخلاقية في نشر الصور في المواقع الإلكترونية

فرح أحمد عطيات

### ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث مدى التزام الواقع الإخباري الإلكتروني بأخلاقيات نشر الصور الصحفية. وقد استخدم البحث الكمي من أجل الوصول إلى أهداف الدراسة. وتم تحضير أداة قياس لهذا الغرض. وقد تم اختيار عينة من المواقع الإخبارية الإلكترونية لدراستها تمثلت في أربعة مواقع. وقد استخدم أسلوب العينة المنتظمة المعتمدة على الإنتاج الصناعي لاختبار المواد التي سيتم تقييمها من كل موقع. استخدم التحليل الوصفي من أجل الوصول إلى نتائج الدراسة. وقد بينت النتائج أن مصدر الصور الرئيسي التي تنشر هو الإنترنت، أو المصور في الموقع بالدرجة الثانية. وتضمنت عملية التقييم العديد من المنتجات الصحفية، حيث بينت النتائج أن حجم المخالفات الذي تم رصده كان أعلى في الأخبار. وقد أوصت الدراسة بضرورة مراجعة وتعديل ميثاق أخلاقيات مهنة الصحافة من أجل تحسين استخدام الصور ونشرها في الصحافة الإلكترونية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصور الصحفية، الأخلاقيات، المواقع الإخبارية الإلكترونية.

## **Introduction:**

Recently the wide distribution of electronic news websites has increased the competition to attract visitors to journalism websites. The competence among the news websites calls journalists to use all possible tools to keep in front. This has led some journalisms to break the ethical code of practice of journalism profession to accomplish the level of success required (Suntai and Vakkai, 2014). Within the traditional media, the income of journal was mainly depending on the sales of the printed copy of the journal and the promotions carried out by the journal. Nowadays, the new style of journalism depends mainly on different tools to generate profit depending mainly on web-journal visitors (Vujovic and Prelevic, 2014).

Photos are considered one of the important tools that promote news in traditional and electronic journalism (Vujovic and Prelevic, 2014). Some journalists tried to minimize the cost of producing journals through releasing journals without photos. The results of these trials was a loss of their business and jobs (Matic, 2012). Authenticity should be considered with regard to photos used in journalism. Four criteria should be available to stick to authenticity. Authentic photos should reflect the truthfulness and accurateness of reflection of the scene reported, authentic photos should describe the complete context, authentic photos should add value for the news, and authentic photos should not be manipulated (Shield, 2014). These criteria raise many questions regarding photos publishing. The important questions considered include what (where/why) photos to be used? Should the photos be edited to improve the ethics of photojournalism? How photos reflect the content (Perlmutter and Lester, 2015; Major, 2004).

Journalism code of ethics is considered the doctrine that the journalist rely on before publishing any material (Urbonaviciute, 2015). The code of ethics for the journalist is considered the tool that should be used to judge the possibility of publishing any photos through the media. The journalism code of ethics in general considered photos as part of the journalist work to judge himself (Urbonaviciute, 2015). Zguri (2015) reported some ethical photojournalism violations. The first major ethical violations are represented in changing the contents of a photo that makes the photo not representative of the event. Moreover, changing the facial expressions is considered a violation of photojournalism. In addition, age progression or regression of the photo is considered a violation. Any color changes or effects that would

lead to change the reality. Using digital editing that would lead to misleading of the event.

The published photos that violate privacy are considered a major ethical issue. In Albania, Zugri (2015) reported that photographing or filming private space that are owned by persons with different positions. The violation of copyright, which depends on publishing photos without mentioning the source or taking permission of the source to publish it. Moreover, she mentioned the hunt of photograph of internet that became a new shape of violations hold in Albania media, which created a new ethical problem.

Photojournalism ethical codes require revisions all the time to increase professionalism and to improve the performance of dealing (NAPA, 2012; Ginny Whitehouse, 2010). The comprehensiveness and revision of code of practices should include authenticity and sensitivity criteria of photojournalism to assure the commitment of journalist to ethics standards.

### **Problem statement:**

In the last years, the Jordanian journalism profession witnessed many violations due to the lack of commitment to journalism ethics. These events lead some editors of these news websites to go through legal punishment due to breaking ethics and law. Consequently, this research will investigate the occurrence of these violations.

### **Research Questions:**

This research aims at answering the following questions: What is the extent of photojournalism violations among the news websites? What is the extent of photojournalism violations among different journalism styles? What are the procedures that can be applied to minimize the phenomenon of photojournalism violations?

### **Objective of the Research:**

The objectives of this research is: (1) to investigate the extent of ethical photojournalism violations in news websites, (2) finding out the journalism style which has the highest photojournalism violations (3) revising and recommending procedures that alleviate photojournalism violations in Jordanian electronic websites.

### Significance of the study:

This research will draw the attention for the electronic website journalist commitment to the ethics of journalism. Moreover, the research will give image about the style of journalism that witness the highest photojournalism violations.

### Sample:

Two stages random sample was selected. The first stage included the selection of electronic journals, while the second stage selected the disseminated material for analysis. For the first stage, four random journals were selected including: Ammon, Khaberni, Saraynews and Alwakeel news electronic sites. In the second stage, random published material of each journal was selected for analysis using regular sampling applying the production cycle. The total number of sample selected per journal is shown in Table 1. The study of ethical photo dissemination was handled through qualitative and quantitative analysis of these sites. The qualitative analysis was handled using the content analysis procedures.

### Variables and measurements:

The quantitative analysis was handled through the preparation of evaluation form designed to measure the extent of violations. The disseminated photos were classified according to subject: political, economic, youth and sports, cultural, science and education, security and political, medical, health photos, tourism and other subjects. The major classification of photos was either a photo with content or without. The attitudes of photo compared to content is positive or negative. According to the purpose of photos, it was classified as the user attracting photo, exciting and competitiveness achievement photos. According to the profession classification, it was classified to precise and clear photos. According to the source, it was classified as the photographer of the journal, Jordan Press, Arabic Press agency, international press agency, internet or other. Concerning the type of writings, they were classified as press news, report, press investigation, essay, interviews or others. The ethical classification of photos included: the photos not related to topic, the photos edited before publishing, photos call for antipathy, out of morals, no reference, promotion photos, photos promote cheats, and other. The results took the choices "Yes" if the criteria existed and "No" if the criteria does not exist. The analysis of content took place within the period Jan 1 to Aug. 10, 2018.

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### The Reliability of Questionnaire:

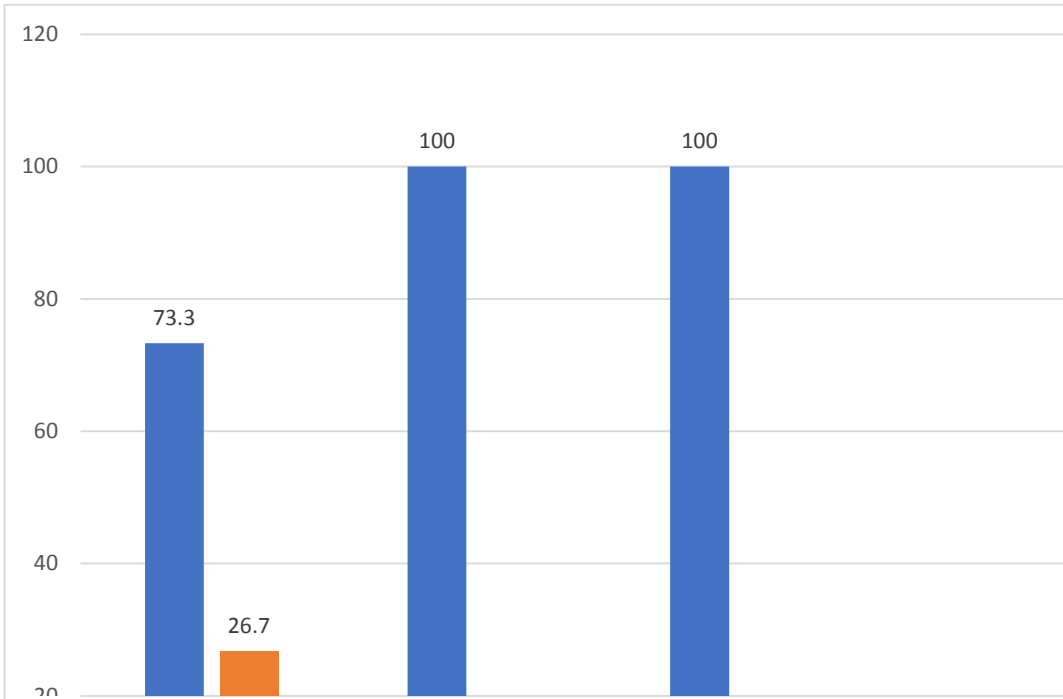
Reliability analysis using Holsti function was used to measure the extent of reliability of the procedure applied for analysis. The results showed that the reliability was 93.9% which acceptable in such research.

**Table (1) The greatness and distribution of analyzed disseminated material per journal**

Electronic Journal	F	%
Alwakeel	30	25.0
Sarayanews	30	25.0
Ammon	30	25.0
Khaberni	30	25.0
Total	120	100

### Results and Discussion:

The results showed that the number of published photos with content exceeded the number published photos without news with contents. The results indicated that the electronic news websites depend on photos in disseminating all news, despite the fact there is content or not. This assures that journalism without photos will not be attractive for readers, which is the fact reported by Shields (2014). The percentage of photos with content reached 93.3% of the total analyzed disseminated material. The rest (6.7%) showed photos without content, in which the journal used the photo to express the title of the disseminated material. According to the selected sample, only AlWakeel news website was using photos without content, while the other electronic journals used photos with contents (Figure 1).



**Figure (1) The distribution of charts with and without content among the electronic journals selected**

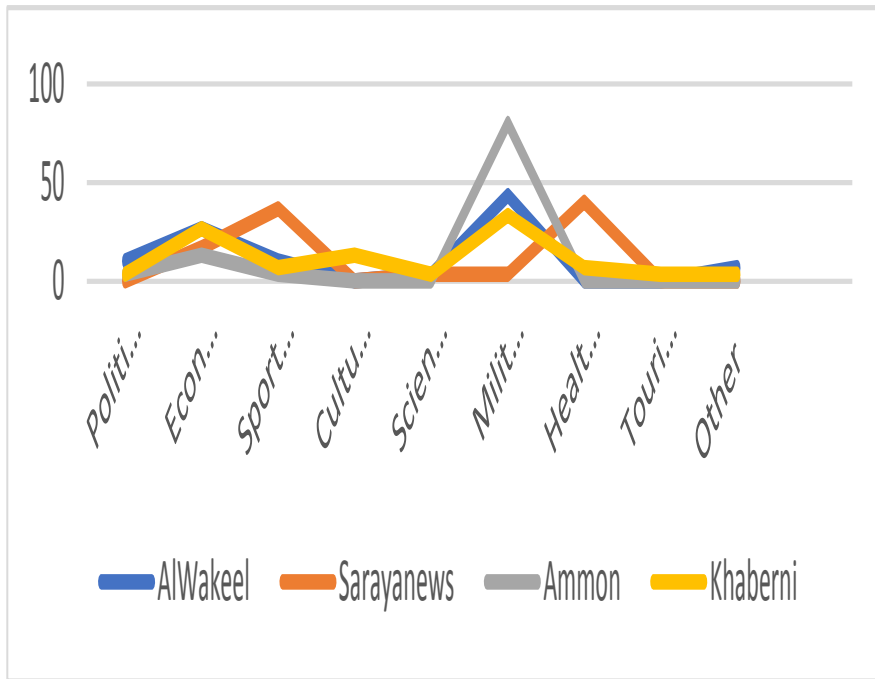
Most dominant photos' subjects was for the political and security topics (40%), while the least photos' subjects stands for the tourism subjects (0.8%). The economical topics were in the second place with percentage 20.8%, followed by the health and medical topics with percentage 11.7%, and the rest of analyzed sample distributed on other topics (Table 2). The domination of political photos because it attracts more followers and increase the number of new website readers.

**Table (2) The distribution of photos' topics among the studied sample**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
Politics	5	4.2
Economics	25	20.8
Youth and Sports	17	14.2
Cultural photos	4	3.3
Science and education	3	2.5
Military and security	48	40.0
Health and Medical	14	11.7
Tourism	1	0.8
Other	3	2.5
Total	120	100

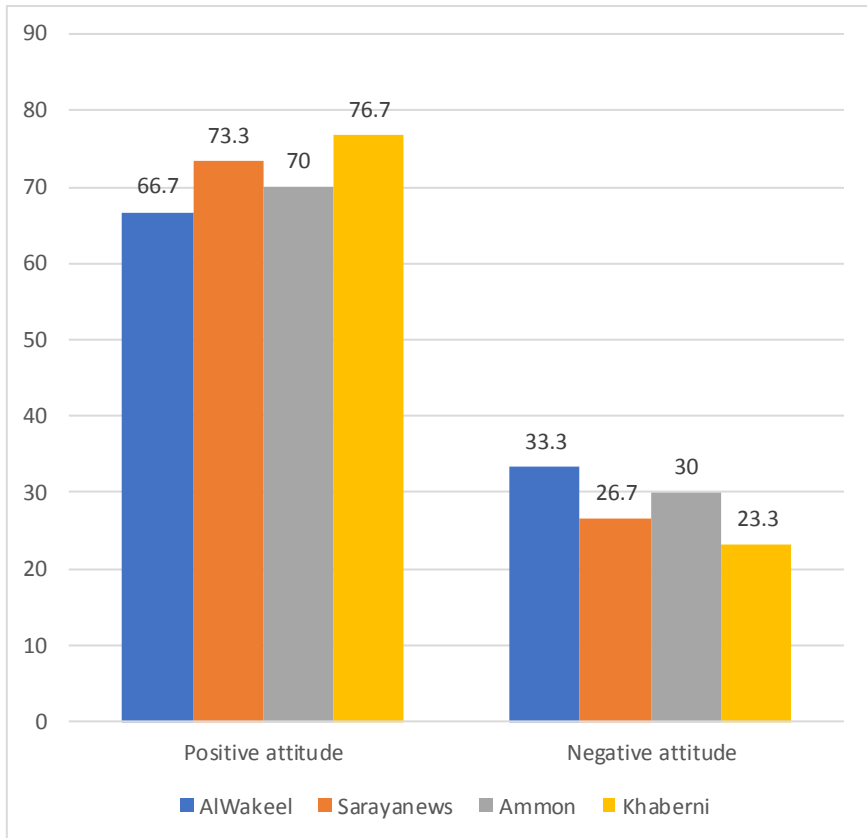
The priority of photos topics published through the electronic journals was different. In AlWakeel journal, the priority of photos published was for the politics and security issues, while the priority was for sports and youth and health and medical topics for Sarayanews. In Ammon electronic site, the priority was for the political and security photos, while for Khaberni the priority was for politics and security and economic photos (Figure 2). The results showed that the interest varied among the different site. The source of variation may be resulted of the journal strategy to attract more readers online.





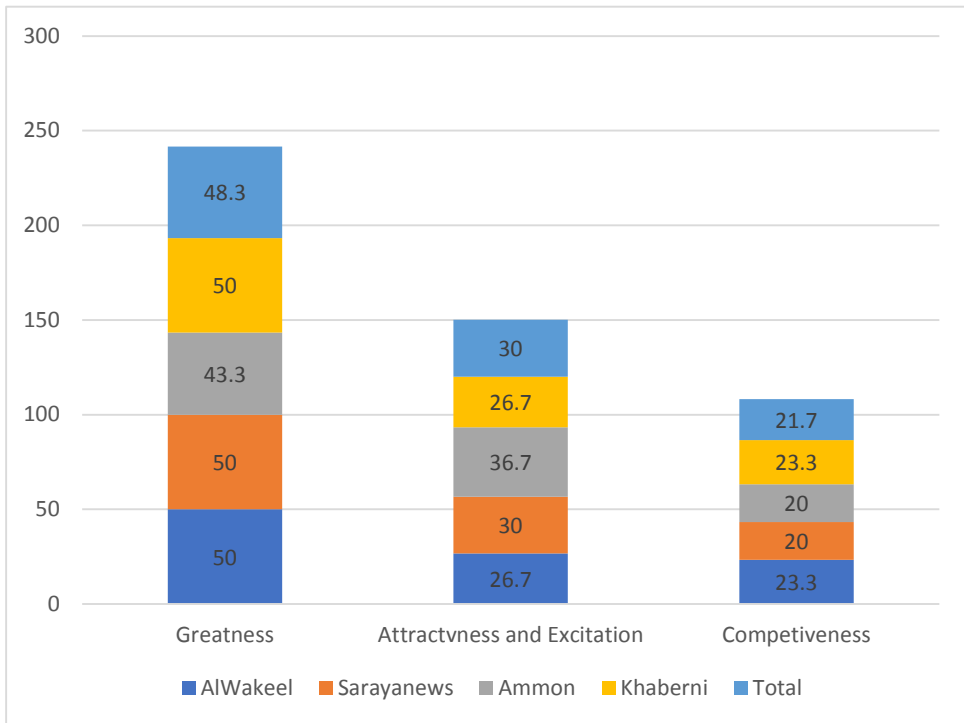
**Figure (2) The disseminated photos' subjects according to electronic journal**

According to attitudes of the content for the disseminated photos in the electronic journals, the results showed that the negative attitude formed 28.3% of the total number of photos, while the majority (71.7%) had positive attitude. Figure 3 showed that the highest positive and lowest negative attitude was recorded for Khaberni news website (76.7%), while the least positive and highest negative recorded for AlWakeel news website (66.7%).



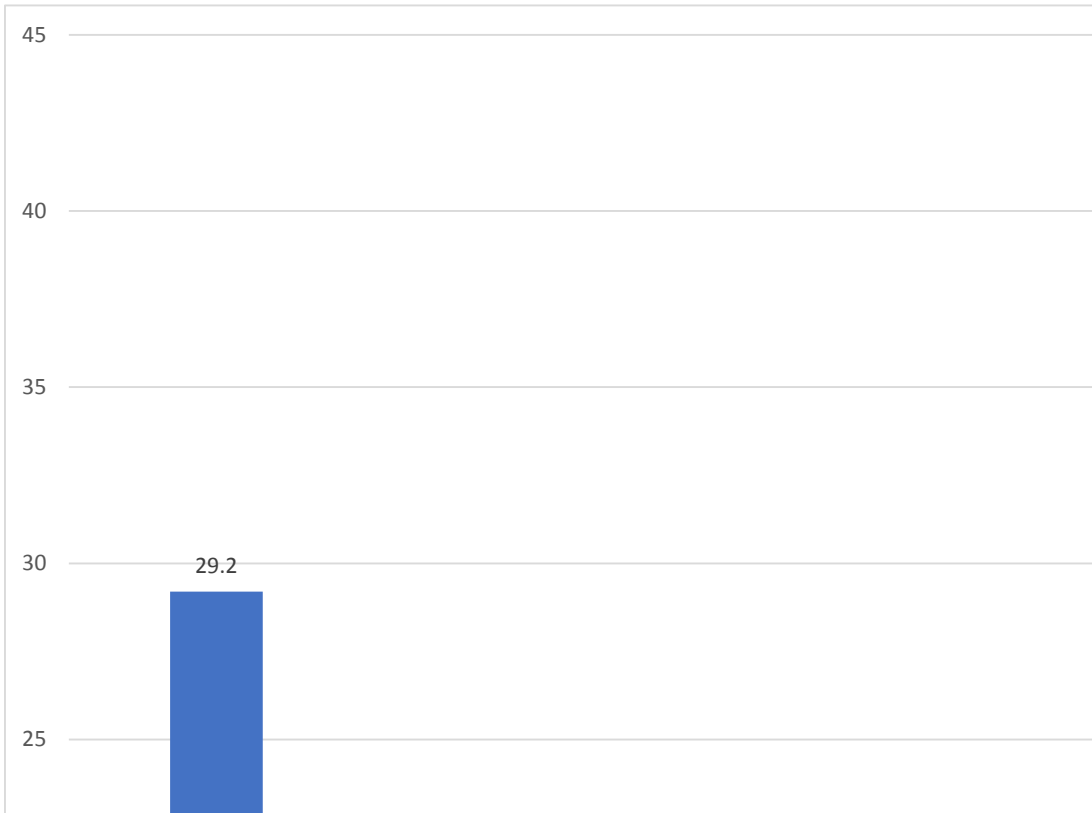
**Figure (3) The content attitude for the dissemination of photos according to electronic news sites**

The results showed that the reflection of the photo's purpose compared to the disseminated news was for greatness in first position for all news website followed by attractiveness and excitation and in the third position was the competitiveness (Figure 4).



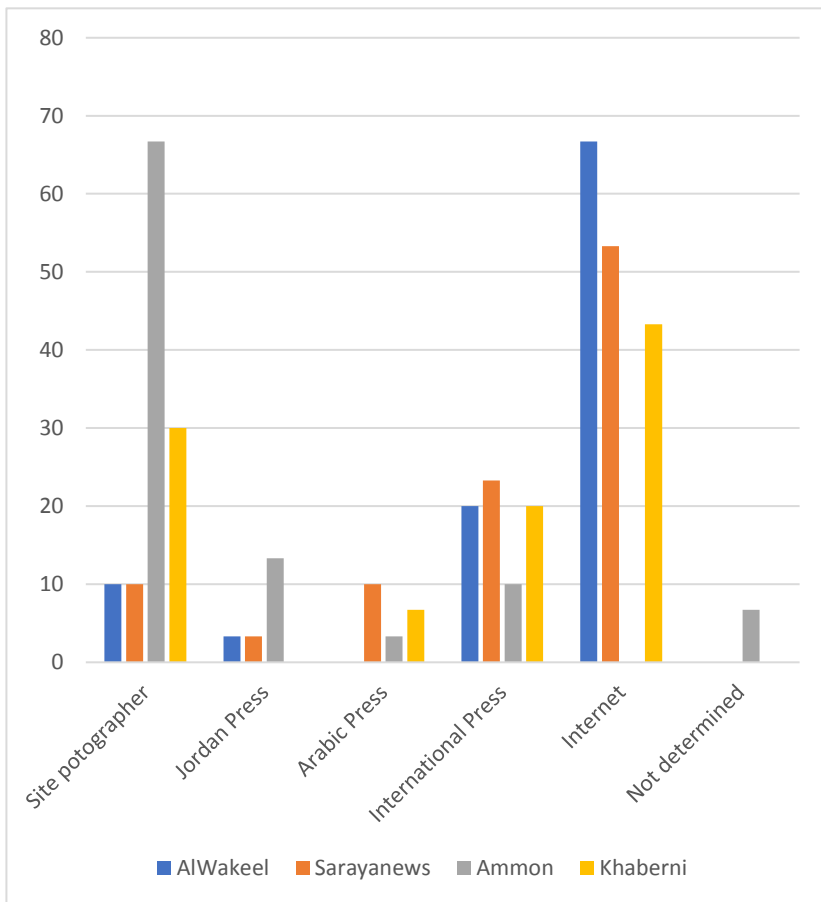
**Figure (4) The photos' news value according to the news website**

The results showed that the source of photos varied for different sources. The highest dominated sources are for the internet in first position and site photographer in second position. The use of international photos took the first position, while the use of Jordan Press and Arabic Press photos were in the last position (Figure 5).



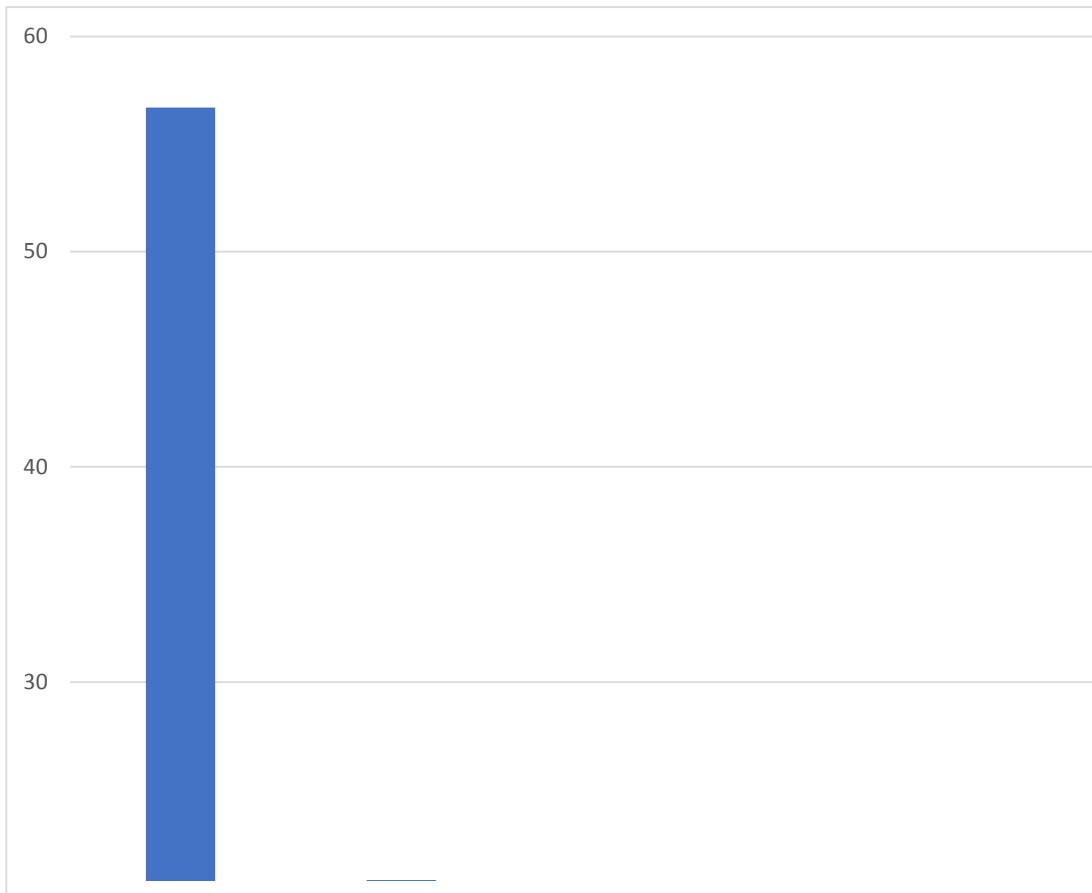
**Figure (5) The source of published photos in news websites**

The highest user of internet photos recorded for AlWakeel and Sarayanews news website, while the lowest recorded for Ammon news website, on the contrary for the use of photos for site photographer, which recorded the highest for Ammon news website, and the least photos recorded in AlWakeel and Saraya news website. The International press was the third source of photos used by new websites. The position for the use of photos recorded for Arabic Press and the least recorded for Jordan Press (Figure 6).



**Figure (6) The source of published photos according to news website**

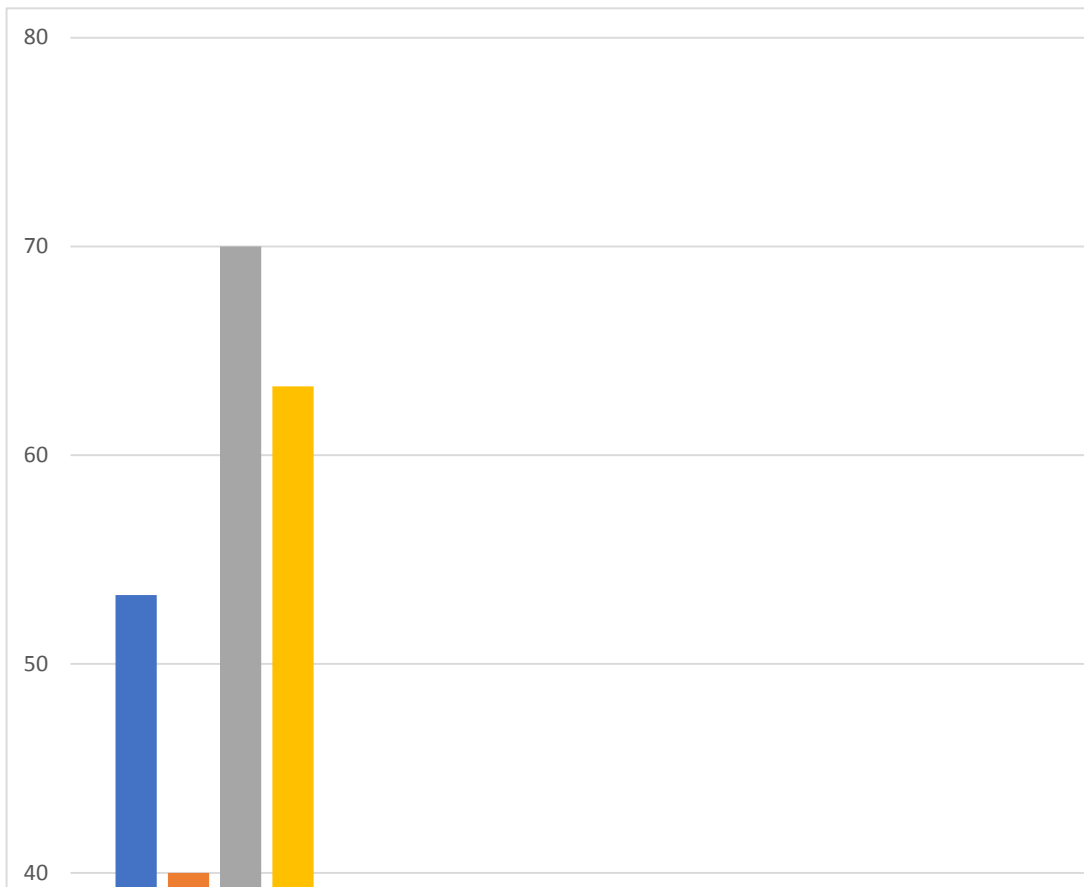
Most of the random sample selected of the news websites formed news releases followed by reports, essays and the least was for press investigations and interviews (Figure 7).



**Figure (7) The classification of disseminated material in websites**

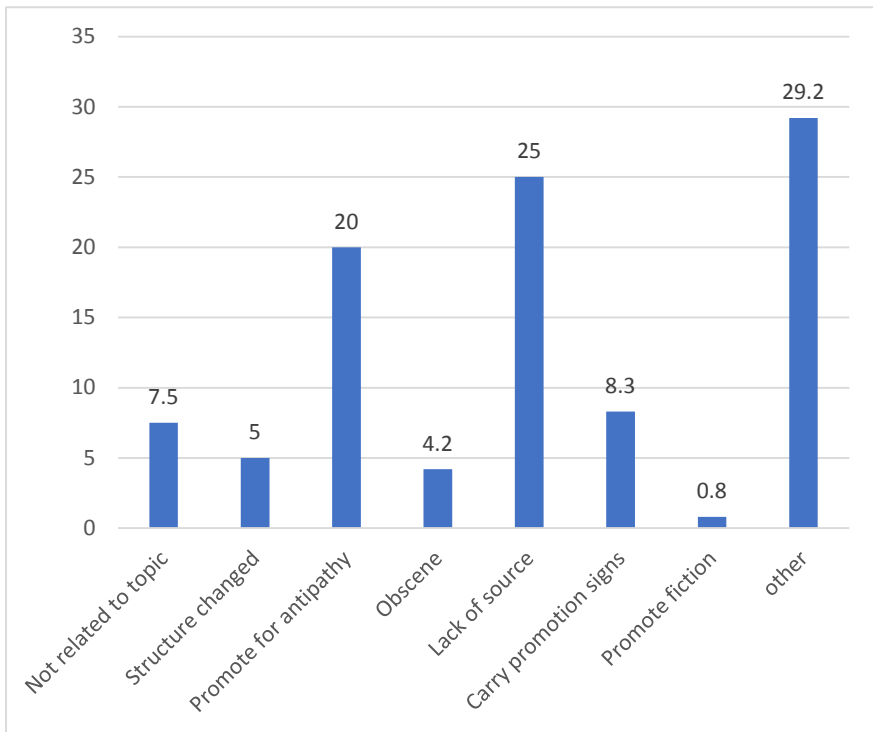
According to news websites, the highest press news reported for Ammon news website, while the least reported for Sarayanews. Among the selected material randomly, none of AlWakeel or Amman had press investigations, also Ammons lacks any essays in the selected sample. Only

Khaberni news websites had interviews among the selected sample (Figure8).



**Figure (8) The classification of disseminated material by news website**

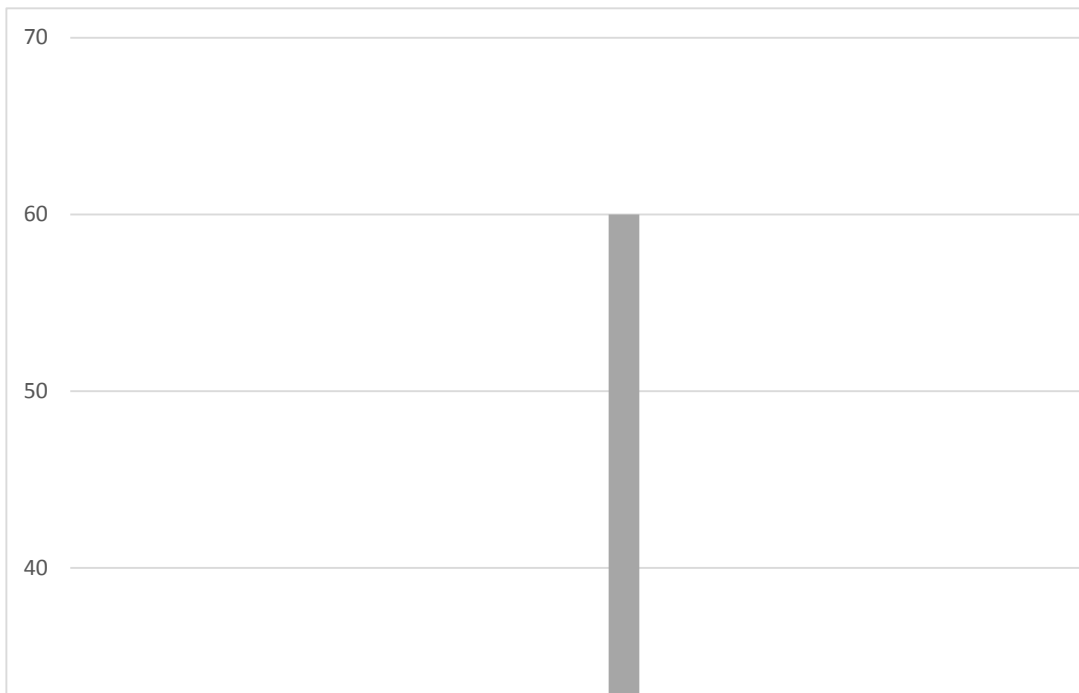
Figure 9 showed the ethical violations for the disseminated photos. The highest ethical violation recorded for the lack of source, followed by the photos that call for antipathy and then the photos that carry promotion sign. The least violations recorded for the photos that promote for fiction, while little higher percentage recorded for photos that lack the source or its structure has been changed before dissemination (Figure 9).



**Figure (9) The ethical violations of disseminated photos**

The highest ethical violation was found in photos disseminated by Ammon, which called for antipathy, the lack of photos' source was highly recorded for Sarayanews and Khaberni, photos with promotion signs were recorded for Khaberni and AlWakeel news websites. The least ethical violations recorded for the change of photo structure and if the photo is not belong to the topic (Figure 10).





**Figure (10) The ethical violations of disseminated photos by news website**

The highest ethical violations were recorded in photos included in military and political news with percentage 40%. The higher type of ethical violation was recorded for photos that call for antipathy with a percentage 39.6% of total violated photos for this topic. The second ethical violation of photos was recorded in economic topics with percentage 20.8%. The third highest photos ethical violation was recorded in sports and youth topics with percentage 14.17 of total violated photos. The highest violation criteria was recorded for the lack of photos' source (58.8%). The fourth ethical photo violation was recorded in medical and health, which formed 11.67% of total violated photos. Photos' violations was minor in other topics. Lack of source and antipathy noticed to be repeated among the violations for different topics (Table 3).

Table (3) The percentage of ethical violations by the news topics of news websites

News topics	Not related to subject	Changed photo structure	Antipathy	Obscene	Lack of photo's source	Promoting photo	Charlatany and juggling	Other	Total
Politics	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	5
	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	100.0%
Economics	1	2	4	0	7	1	0	10	25
	4.0%	8.0%	16.0%	0.0%	28.0%	4.0%	0.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Sports & Youth	1	0	0	0	10	1	0	5	17
	5.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	58.8%	5.9%	0.0%	29.4%	100.0%
Culture	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	4
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Science & education	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
Military & security	5	4	19	3	6	1	1	9	48
	10.4%	8.3%	39.6%	6.3%	12.5%	2.1%	2.1%	18.8%	100.0%
Medical & health	1	0	0	0	4	5	0	4	14
	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	35.7%	0.0%	28.6%	100.0%
Tourism	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Other	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	100.0%

Table 4 shows the photos with ethical violations according to classification of photos content positive or negative. The highest ethical violation was reported for antipathy for positive content photos (20.0%), while the least was recorded for charlatanry and juggling. The highest ethical violations for negative photos were recorded for the photos' not related to topic (33.0%) and the lack of source (26.7%).

**Table (4) The percentage of ethical violations by photos' news value of news websites**

	<b>Positive attitude</b>	<b>Negative attitude</b>	<b>Total</b>
Not related to subject	4	5	9
	3.8%	33.3%	7.5%
Changed structure	5	1	6
	4.8%	6.7%	5.0%
Antipathy	21	3	24
	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
obscene	4	1	5
	3.8%	6.7%	4.2%
Lack source	26	4	30
	24.8%	26.7%	25.0%
Promotion photo	10	0	10
	9.5%	0.0%	8.3%
Charlatanry & juggling	1	0	1
	1.0%	0.0%	.8%
Other	34	1	35
	32.4%	6.7%	29.2%
Total	105	15	120
	100	100	100

The results showed that the source of photos is related to the ethical violations of disseminated photos. The highest number of photos that have ethical violation were taken from the Internet (40.8%) of the total number of photos studied. The highest non-ethical practice was represented in the lack of photo source (38.8%). The photos disseminated using site photographer had the call for antipathy (40.0%) compared to other non-ethical criteria. Also, the photos collected from International Press called for antipathy (22.7%).

**Table (5) The percentage of ethical violations by photos' source of news websites**

	Site photographer	Jordan Press	Arabic Press	International Press	Internet	Not determined	Total
Not\ related to subject	4	0	1	1	3	0	9
	11.4%	0.0%	16.7%	4.5%	6.1%	0.0%	7.5%
Changed structure	0	1	0	3	2	0	6
	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	13.6%	4.1%	0.0%	5.0%
Antipathy	14	2	1	5	1	1	24
	40.0%	33.3%	16.7%	22.7%	2.0%	50.0%	20.0%
obscene	2	1	1	0	1	0	5
	5.7%	16.7%	16.7%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	4.2%
Lack source	7	0	1	3	19	0	30
	20.0%	0.0%	16.7%	13.6%	38.8%	0.0%	25.0%
Promotion photo	2	1	1	2	4	0	10
	5.7%	16.7%	16.7%	9.1%	8.2%	0.0%	8.3%
Charlatanry & juggling	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	0.0%	.8%
Other	6	1	1	8	18	1	35
	17.1%	16.7%	16.7%	36.4%	36.7%	50.0%	29.2%
Total	35	6	6	22	49	2	120
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The highest non-ethical violations were recorded among the journalism news, while the least were recorded among interviews and investigations. The highest repeated non-ethical criteria was for antipathy (26.5%) and lack of source (25.0%) for journalism news of websites. Similar non-ethical practices were reported in press reports. In essays, the promotion photos repeated widely and the lack of source (Table 6).

**Table (6) The percentage of ethical violations by press style of news websites**

	Journalism News	Report	Journalist investigation	Essay	Interview	Other	Total
Not related to subject	5	3	0	0	0	1	9
	7.4%	12.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	7.5%
Changed structure	3	1	0	1	0	1	6
	4.4%	4.0%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	14.3%	5.0%
Antipathy	18	6	0	0	0	0	24
	26.5%	24.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%
obscene	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
	4.4%	8.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%
Lack source	17	3	2	5	0	3	30
	25.0%	12.0%	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%	42.9%	25.0%
Promotion photo	0	3	0	5	0	2	10
	0.0%	12.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	28.6%	8.3%
Charlatanry & juggling	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	.8%
Other	21	7	2	4	1	0	35
	30.9%	28.0%	50.0%	26.7%	100.0%	0.0%	29.2%
Total	68	25	4	15	1	7	120
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusions

The objective of this research is to study the extent of commitment to the ethics of photojournalism in Jordanian news websites. Four news websites were selected for this purpose. The results showed that many ethical violations were reported through the study period. The higher recorded violation was for the lack of source of photos due to the use of internet photos. The other violation was recorded for photos' call of antipathy. The violation were more distributed in the news photos and reports. One of the violations noticed was the promotion photos used by electronic new websites. The major cause of this violations was the attractiveness of readers to these news websites to improve the profits.

**Recommendations:**

Variations of photos' sources was very crucial with the concentration of use of reliable sources. Moreover, journalists should avoid publishing photos of unknown sources to avoid the violation intellectual properties of others and to be more professional in photos publishing. On the other hand, the journalists should care for the subjective photo as it matters for readers. The study recommended the modification and rephrasing of journalism ethics of practice to improve its comprehensiveness and to improve the commitment of journalists with ethics in photojournalism.

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