

# The Role of Professional Journalism Associations in Improving the Profession in the UAE

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## Abstract

The field of journalism has experienced several professional developments at different levels. In particular, digital transformation has been playing a crucial role in transforming the media industry through reshaping media practices and business operations. Further, the integration of artificial intelligence technologies has given rise to new media approaches such as the extensive use of algorithms and metaverses. This has led to significant advancements in technologies supporting media content and storytelling, such as mobile, data, and citizen journalism. The continuous evolution of the media raises many questions about the extent to which journalistic work skills keep pace with technological changes. This places more responsibility on media institutions, whether organizational or professional. Press clubs and press associations play an essential role in implementing media development plans by transferring successful global practices, training media people, and providing executable recommendations through dialogue meetings that contribute to identifying the future needs of the profession and stimulating honest competition among journalists and media organizations. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of professional press associations in supporting the profession, monitoring the latest practices, and improving performance based on the perceptions of journalists and officials in these institutions. Specifically, it examines the impact of press clubs and journalist associations on the media environment in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). To do so, this study adopted qualitative methods. Specifically, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials in journalism and media associations. Further, a survey was conducted to explore journalists' opinions on the roles of these associations using open-ended questions to allow the respondents to express their opinions, needs, and expectations. The study makes the following contributions. It develops a model through which professional opportunities can be identified to enhance the progress of media work in the UAE, identifies the challenges facing news institutions and journalists, and presents different perspectives to form an integrated view of the reality and future of media in the country.

**Keywords:** Journalism associations, Press clubs, Journalism development, UAE Media.

The profession of journalism has witnessed several professional developments at various levels. Digital transformation has a crucial role

in converting the media industry, which has led to changing media practices and business operations. The employment of modern

technology related to artificial intelligence has introduced new media strategies such as algorithms, metaverse, and the massive development of new technologies that support media content and story production such as mobile journalism, data journalism, and citizen journalism. There is no doubt that the successive evolution in the media sector and its impact on the enormous technological revolution raise many questions about the extent to which the skills of journalistic work keep pace with the changes of the digital age. This places more responsibilities on media institutions of all kinds, whether organizational or professional, by emphasizing media and journalistic standards and ensuring the development of media workers and the development of their competencies and knowledge. Press clubs and press associations contribute an essential role in implementing media development plans by transferring successful global practices, training media people, executable recommendations through dialogue meetings that contribute to identifying the future needs of the profession and stimulating honest competition among journalists and media organizations. Kirat (2012) points out that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has one of the best infrastructures for journalism, radio, and new media in the region, which is supported by the great interest of officials and the increase in journalism education, training, and support for Emiratization in this sector. The majority of journalists are satisfied with their working conditions, indicating good journalistic practices and robust media institutions. However, they are unsatisfied with their communication with sources for investigations and the policies of their institutions related to training and education. Further, many aspects need to be addressed, such as the lack of depth in press reports (Kirat, 2012). Moreover, Kirat (2012) indicates the journalists' continuous need for training, particularly in modern technology skills, such as data journalism and multimedia, as well as the necessity of encouraging more Emirati citizens to enter the media sector.

## The Media in UAE

The UAE media market varies between digital and traditional media. Private and government media companies own TV channels, radio stations, prints, and online publications. The media organizations in the UAE government are the UAE Media Council, Dubai Media Council, Sharjah Media Council, and the National Media Office.

The media institutions under the government are Abu Dhabi Media Network, Dubai Media Incorporated, Sharjah Broadcasting Authority, the Emirates News Agency (WAM), and the Media Regulatory Office of the Ministry of Culture and Youth. The media offices include the UAE government media office, Abu Dhabi media office, the government of Dubai media office, Sharjah government media bureau, Ras Al Khaimah government media office, and Fujairah Government Media Office. The print newspapers in the UAE in Arabic and English are 11: seven in Arabic and four in English. The Arabic newspapers include Al Ittihad, Al Khaleej, Albayan, Al Emarat Alyoum, Al Watan, Al Wahda, and Al Fajir. Meanwhile, the English ones are Gulf News, Khaleej Times, The Gulf Today, and The National. The print magazines include Zahrat AlKhaleej, Majid, and National Geographic. (Types of media - The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.). Additionally, there are more than 25 TV channels and radio stations that broadcast different programs for all categories and ages from all seven emirates of the UAE. Moreover, there exist private news networks and news websites, such as UAE Barq, Ameen News, Sharjah News, Sharjah 24, UAE Network, Abu Dhabi Network, UAE Post, and Emirates 24/7 (Types of media - The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.).

Media free zones in the UAE include Dubai Media City, Dubai Studio City, Dubai Production City, Sharjah Media City (Shams), Ajman Media City Free Zone, twofour54, and

Creative City Free Zone in Fujairah. These zones have robust infrastructure, offer comprehensive services, and contain entertainment facilities that attract thousands of corporate and individual investors, such as co-working spaces with easy registration, flexible operations, and professional guidance. Media zones comprise major companies, global institutions specialized in the fields of media and communications, entrepreneurs, and small- and medium-sized companies specialized in the media sector. It also includes production studios specialized in films and television, designed according to the highest international standards. (Ministry of Economy, n.d.). In addition, there are press clubs and associations that enhance professional knowledge in media and journalism and provide official coverage for journalists and media staff. These institutions include the Emirates Journalists Association, Sharjah Press Club, and Dubai Press Club. The Emirates Journalists Association, which was established in 2000 to advance the profession and its workers, defends journalists' interests and rights and promotes the concept of freedom of the press in accordance with the societal foundations of the UAE in its Arab system. It aims to achieve several goals, including the advancement of Emirati journalism as the expressive and truthful face of the Emirates in particular and the Arab world in general, improving the cultural and professional level of journalists by providing courses in journalistic work and continuous meetings with media leaders, sponsoring local journalistic cadres and encouraging them to engage in journalism, refining the journalists' abilities and providing all possible types of support to them, representing the members of the association and speaking on their behalf within the country, consolidating relations between Emirati journalists and those working in the Arab press, and raising professional awareness. (UAE Journalists Association, n.d.). The Sharjah Press Club is part of the Sharjah Government Media Bureau. It was established in 2015 with the aim of enhancing professional communication

between workers in the fields of journalism and media, refining their skills, providing an opportunity for exchanging experiences, and establishing active dialogue platforms through various services and initiatives throughout the year. The most prominent activities are Ramadan Majlis, which facilitates societal discussions on various issues; specialized dialogues on the field of journalism and media; Ithmar program, which offers media training for children and youth and media workshops for its members; and Tawasl, which promotes positive communication between various media and government agencies in Sharjah to exchange opinions that contribute to community service and to identify challenges faced by either party through a series of periodic meetings (Sharjah Press Club, n.d.).

Dubai Press Club, which was established in 1999, hosts events to support, promote, and develop regional media. It provides its members with opportunities and resources for networking, knowledge sharing, and professional development. Its major initiatives include the Arab Media Forum, the Arab Journalism Award, the Emirates Media Forum, the Arab Social Media Influencers Summit, and the annual Arab Media Outlook. The Dubai Press Club also organizes the National Youth Media Programme, an annual training program aimed at developing a new generation of Emirati journalists equipped with the tools and skills necessary to excel in the media industry. The program is held in partnership with leading media and academic institutions and includes specialized workshops aimed at improving the analytical and professional skills of participants (Dubai Press Club, n.d.).

The regulations of media in the UAE at the federal and local levels comprise a general framework media strategy monitored by the UAE government media office, which includes managing the country's reputation within media coverage, enhancing cooperation between national media bodies, establishing partnerships with global media outlets, increasing the role of government communication, creating a digital

media environment capable of keeping pace with technological developments, and promoting national culture and identity through all communication channels (Media regulation - The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.). Media regulations pertain to audio and print media, digital media, social media, films, and book fairs. The law imposes fines and penalties on the perpetrators of violations related to media activities (Media Regulation - The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.). Media organizations provide many electronic services in the media field for individuals and government agencies (Media Regulation - The Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.).

Ayish (2021) indicates that media in the UAE has various advantages, including a strong state economy that provides sustainability for media industries, demographic diversity and cultural pluralism, technological innovations that support competitive advantages and enhance partnerships with the masses, and quality media education outputs. Moreover, technological innovations support the benefits of media in the UAE in reaching audiences at the local and global levels and overcoming financial challenges by developing new distribution methods in line with consumption patterns (Ayish, 2021). In addition, Ayish (2021) refers to the availability of media talents that comply with the requirements and changes of the labor market. In this respect, the UAE media is also concerned with the most prominent issues, such as women's empowerment, tolerance, and cultural diversity. In recent years, journalists' work has undergone many changes. In response to these changes, media professionals have become keen on obtaining university degrees and developing their technical skills in using digital tools, such as search engines (Darwish, 2017). Nevertheless, journalists do not always find sufficient time to research the stories (Darwish, 2017). Additionally, job opportunities are available to graduate students specializing in journalism, media studies, public relations, and professional and public writing, which enhance

the growth of media education and training programs in the UAE (Kadragic, 2010). Nonetheless, many media graduates occupy higher-level positions that do not match their experience and educational level. Meanwhile, institutions need employees who are knowledgeable about the ethical and legal issues related to media work as part of the most critical professional skills (Kadragic, 2010). Hence, the current study examines the effects of press clubs and journalist associations on the media environment in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Specifically, it aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the role of the UAE press clubs and journalism associations in developing the profession?
2. What professional activities and initiatives are provided by professional journalism associations to develop the profession in the UAE?
3. How do journalists evaluate the role of professional journalism associations?

## Methodology

To explore the role of journalism institutions in developing the journalism profession in the UAE, A survey was conducted to investigate journalists' opinions on the role of these associations. Using a questionnaire, 30 journalists were surveyed from five institutions in the UAE, including Al Khaleej Newspaper, Al Bayan Newspaper, Al Ittihad Newspaper, Al Emarat Alyoum Newspaper, and WAM. The researcher sent the link to the form via email.

Further, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials in the journalism associations (i.e., the Sharjah Press Club, the Dubai Press Club, and the UAE Journalists' Association) and journalists in media institutions. The researcher used open-ended questions to allow the respondents to fully express their opinions, needs, and expectations.

## Results

### Survey results

Journalists opinions about the quality of activities and training programs that are provided by press associations

The researcher was interested in identifying the feasibility and benefits of the programs and activities provided by these institutions for journalists and measuring their levels. Most respondents (46.67% or 14 respondents) agreed that the training programs and activities provided

by the clubs and the Journalists' Association are advanced and innovative, and 26.67% (8 respondents) also highlighted that they provide an important professional benefit. However, more than 15% (5 participants) believed that these programs do not offer anything new and do not keep pace with developments. This result indicates that, in general, journalism institutions in the UAE make efforts to keep pace with technological innovation in training and providing programs.

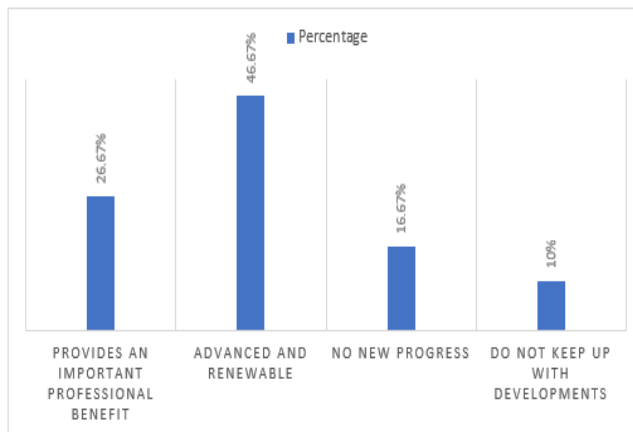


Figure 1 Journalists intentions to attend activities and events held by these institutions

This question aimed to identify the importance of the programs and activities offered by these entities to affiliated members and non-affiliated professionals. As shown in Figure 2, most respondents were either very interested or interested in the activities and events held by these institutions (more than 80%), whereas only one respondent was not interested. This indicates the significant interest among participants in the

activities organized by the press clubs and the Journalists' Association, which could offer valuable opportunities for exchanging experiences and knowledge and strengthening professional ties. Hence, media institutions must consider these results by providing professional programs that are tailored to the aspirations and professional interests of journalists.

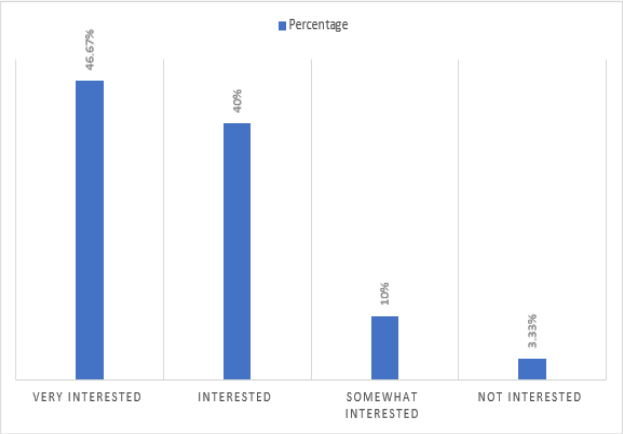


Figure 2 The benefits of activities and programs on the journalists 'career

Through the above research question, the researcher aimed to determine the extent to which journalistic institutions contribute to supporting the profession in the UAE and to identify the effects of professional programs and activities on their members. As shown in Figure 3, more than half of the sample confirmed that the programs offered by press clubs and the Emirates Journalists Association strengthen the professional relationships of individuals.

Further, more than one-quarter of the sample believed that they improved their cognitive rehabilitation. Meanwhile, less than one-fifth of the sample stated that it did not make any difference, and only one respondent said that it helped them in their professional development. This result is in line with the previous result that confirmed the importance of professional programs and events for participating journalists.

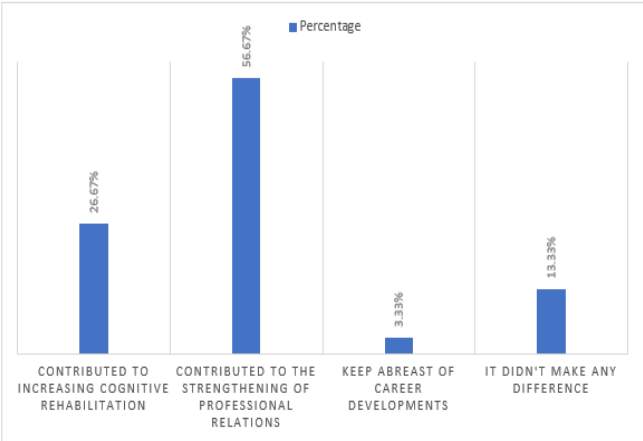


Figure 3The most important activities form the view of journalists:

This question revealed the activities and events that received the most attention from journalists. As shown in Figure 4, 56.67% of the respondents (17 journalists) were most interested in workshops and training programs aimed at developing skills and capabilities, followed by their media forums and gatherings (33.33% or 10 journalists), while only two and one journalists were interested in social activities (6.67%) and dialogue sessions (3.33%), respectively. This result indicates that journalists pay the greatest attention to attending workshops and training courses, which aligns with journalists' satisfaction with the training programs shown in Figure 1. Forums were also among journalists' most professional interests. Although this result is indicative, journalists have specific preferences. There is a connection between forums and dialogue sessions since dialogue sessions are an essential part of forums, meaning that journalists prefer forums more than dialogue sessions alone. The modest popularity of dialogue sessions among journalists can be explained by their dissatisfaction with organized dialogue sessions. This may be related to the

topics, durations, times, or the speakers. Therefore, media institutions must thoroughly examine this aspect to identify the necessary development policies and apply them when possible. Administering questionnaires after events and forums can help determine the most critical topics that attract journalists as a target group.

The questionnaire results reflect the professional importance and positive impacts of training activities, events, and programs carried out by press clubs and the Emirates Journalists Association. Further, the participants highlighted the importance of exchanging knowledge between specialized institutions and its impact on supporting the development of media work.

Evidently, the journalists were interested in keeping pace with professional changes related to modern media trends and the needs of the labor market, such as the use of artificial intelligence technologies in journalism and podcasting. This confirms that media institutions have to keep pace with the continuous evolution of the media sector.

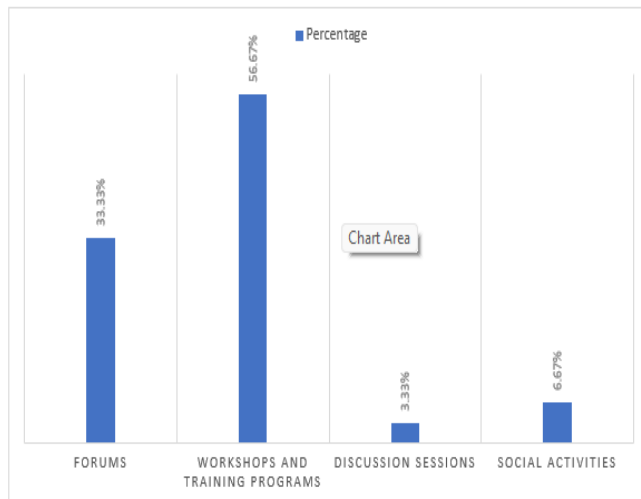


Figure 4

### Interview Results

1. To what extent do you see the importance of the roles played by press clubs and associations?

Representatives of the authorities agreed that press associations and clubs play essential roles in serving the profession of journalism and media. For example, the president of the Emirates Journalists Association (during the interview) stated, "Just as the role of the journalist is integrated with his sources, and with official and civil institutions, it is indispensable for the integration of roles with media institutions, and this is achieved through clubs and associations' professionalism." He added that this supports developing the profession, improving its media products, rebuilding the human cadre in line with the requirements of the times, and advancing the media profession in general and journalism in particular in a way that suits the needs of the nation, society, and the public at present.

The representative of the Emirates News Agency agreed with this vision, stressing that these bodies represent media and cultural platforms that bring together specialists from various media institutions, including an elite group of media leaders in various specializations. Moreover, their roles enrich the media scene, which contributes positively to increasing awareness and supporting media trends in the region and its positions on issues and topics.

The editor-in-chief of Sharjah 24 also indicated that press clubs and associations have an essential role in developing media work with high professionalism and efficiency and supporting communication with media outlets in all their specializations and activities, especially in terms of focusing on the qualification and training aspects of journalists to keep pace with global changes media and technology. Further, these associations can contribute to rapprochement between various parties and journalists in a way that serves public interests.

A representative from the Sharjah Press Club expressed that the importance of these institutions lies in establishing regulatory frameworks for the practice of the profession and the exchange of professional opinions under a specialized umbrella to serve the work interests. In addition, the training efforts carried out by press clubs, in particular through discussions and dialogue sessions, may bring innovative recommendations that serve the profession. This critical role addresses the accelerating changes in journalistic and media work and its tools and the enormous information developments witnessed in the current era. This is because these institutions can ensure the transfer of the best expertise through various events, activities, initiatives, and services—a professional benefit for its members in particular and those working in the media sector in general.

The manager of the Dubai Press Club explained that the clubs and academies have proven their critical role. For example, the Dubai Press Club has worked throughout the previous years to launch numerous initiatives, activities, and training programs for content makers in the UAE and the Arab region, in line with international best practices, to provide a distinguished model in developing social media platforms and the field of technology and communication and to ensure that it is optimally employed to serve Arab communities.

2. What are your efforts in developing the profession in terms of the nature of the events and initiatives (other than training programs) that you organize?

The efforts of media institutions to serve the Emirati media scene are diverse and integrated through activities that present various ideas and visions. The interviews emphasized the diversity of the activities and initiatives organized by press agencies to develop the media sector.

The Emirates Journalists Association held and organized numerous events to develop the skills of journalists in various fields, including courses in modern journalistic writing in digital



media and photography, the use of artificial intelligence in the media, economic journalism, and other specialized workshops.

The Emirates News Agency reported that the agency's work is based on news journalistic work and the production of news content in various specialties. In addition to covering various activities and events, the agency was distinguished by establishing a strategic partnership with the ADNEC Group in organizing two international editions of the World Media Congress, which is considered a pioneering platform in creating the future of media with the participation of an elite group of officials and experts in various fields of media.

Regarding the available capabilities, Sharjah 24, a news site, provides the necessary professional support for journalists to acquire knowledge and helps them access materials and resources according to their needs. In addition, it organized a forum that brings together media professionals and specialists with the owners of news networks and social media influencers to discuss their work, capabilities, and the obstacles they face to come up with ideas that contribute to supporting their work.

At the Sharjah Press Club, various activities and initiatives are organized to develop the profession by offering specialized professional support for journalists and media students. At the forefront of these events and activities are the dialogue sessions, which are the cornerstone of transferring knowledge and exchanging visions and ideas about the present and future of media. These sessions are considered an important meeting point for experts and specialists from various parts of the Arab world to come up with visions that can serve the media sector and support its development, transfer experiences from veterans in journalism and media to young journalists, and listen to young journalists and students to learn about their professional needs and their interests.

The club is also keen on supporting the work of journalists through initiatives that allow them to meet directly with decision-makers in

various fields, through the "Tawasul" initiative, which was launched to bring together representatives of local media and officials in government institutions in Sharjah to exchange viewpoints and identify any obstacles facing either party through a series of periodic meetings.

As for the Dubai Press Club, professional events and initiatives are also organized to reflect on the reality of the profession and its future, such as the Arab Media Award, which encourages professional creativity in various branches of journalism, the Arab Media Forum, the Emirati Media Forum, which brings together the best specialists in the sector, and the Arab Media Summit, which honors Arab creators on social media.

3. According to your experience, what are the most important training programs that workers in the journalism sector need to keep pace with professional developments?

The Dubai Press Club believes that specialized programs that serve Arab issues and the creative media sector are among the most important programs needed by those working in the press sector. Likewise, the Sharjah Press Club highlights the importance of using different technological tools in journalism and media in the current era. Journalists should be trained on media data based on digital technologies, such as phone journalism, to produce a comprehensive journalist capable of collecting, purifying, and broadcasting news in a professional manner that is compatible with social media platforms. Additionally, data journalism has proven its effectiveness as a journalistic template that attracts readers. Moreover, journalists should employ artificial intelligence techniques professionally to serve the media sector and the podcast industry, which has started to attract a large segment of society. With the large flow of information that has resulted from the increase in social media users, journalists should be trained on how to verify information as part of their professional responsibility.

The interviewees agreed on the importance of using artificial intelligence technologies in training programs. For example, the President of the Journalists Association said that workers in the media sector need to participate in training programs to develop their skills and learn about the latest developments in the profession. In recent years, digital media has become the most widespread and influential form, and artificial intelligence has played a greater role in the field of journalism and media, which prompted the association to organize several workshops and specialized courses in the field of artificial intelligence and digital media, and specialized courses in the fields of interactive media by training journalists to talk to the camera, photograph, and write stories for social media.

Likewise, officials at the Sharjah 24 news website underscore the necessity of ensuring that journalists receive advanced training courses that nourish their expertise and increase their knowledge in the field of optimal use of modern technological tools, social media, and artificial intelligence techniques.

Officials at the Emirates News Agency shared the same vision and highlighted the importance of specialized training programs in light of the rapid developments in the field of communication, social media, and artificial intelligence software with respect to press production and editing, skills for creating digital content, strategies for communicating with the public on social media, and journalism ethics.

4. What efforts do you make to ensure good professional practices?

The Emirates Journalists Association has demonstrated the importance of its professional work and supporting the rights and interests of journalists, enabling them to carry out their mission under the protection of the principle of freedom of the press while maintaining the principles of society and professional ethics, raising awareness, and deepening cultural trends and coordinating efforts with the cultural movement and various media agencies in society

in general. The association is considered an authentic incubator for all those working in journalism. Based on this role, it is concerned with effective communication with individuals and institutions.

To ensure good professional practices, seminars and workshops are held, and experts in the field of journalism are hosted to meet journalists and transfer their experiences. The association expresses that they are in a permanent workshop to ensure the ideal model of communication and coordination with media agencies as well as their leaders and cadres to discuss issues related to the profession and its technical and cognitive dimensions. These efforts have established a solid professional relationship between the association and all media institutions in the UAE.

At the Sharjah 24 news site, there is self-responsibility for all employees, in addition to professional follow-up and direct daily supervision over the editorial and technical processes to ensure the implementation of the editorial principles and policies applicable in Sharjah 24, the emirate, and the UAE. This systematic process ensures continued professional performance at its best. Furthermore, the news site periodically includes journalists in the advanced courses to strengthen their skills according to their various media specializations.

The Sharjah Press Club stated that they promote awareness of good professional practices through initiatives targeting various members of society, such as on social media platforms, to raise awareness of the importance of sharing correct information and the necessity of ensuring the accuracy of the information before sharing it.

In addition to educating the new generation about the standards and foundations of media work and training them in cooperation with professional institutions and experienced media figures, good professional practices are enhanced through the "Ithmaar" initiative. This initiative was launched in 2019 to enhance media

capabilities and talents and consolidate media awareness among the new generation from 10 to 17 years old through an interactive program that addresses the most important aspects of journalism and media in an interactive manner by combining theoretical and practical aspects. Further, this initiative entails field visits to media institutions to closely learn about all stages of content production in its various forms and raise awareness of the pillars of the media industry.

Evidently, the importance of such initiatives lies in the fact that they establish media generations from a young age according to scientific foundations and media standards to enable them to assume responsibility in the future and achieve media excellence that characterizes the UAE.

The WAM representative stated that professional practices differ among media entities; however, there are commonalities. The WAM adopts “Credibility is our strength” as its slogan, as good professional practices require the credibility of news content, transparency and objectivity in the assignment of topics, and reliability in reporting facts and events with responsibility that considers several aspects.

The Dubai Press Club implements initiatives that serve the press and media sector and workers through various aspects and establish professional media concepts and standards. However, it believes that the greatest responsibility in that aspect is carried by more specialized institutions.

5-To what extent can press clubs and the Emirates Journalists Association contribute to supporting professional relations with foreign media institutions?

The above question aimed to examine how to strengthen professional relationships and cooperation between Emirati press clubs and the Emirates Journalists Association and foreign media institutions.

Half of the questionnaire respondents believed that professional relationships can be strengthened by building joint professional ties. Meanwhile, just under one-third of the sample

indicated that the exchange of knowledge and experience enhances professional ties, while approximately 20% of the sample said that professional cooperation can be achieved by organizing joint media events. All respondents emphasized the importance and role of clubs and the Journalists Association in establishing new partnerships with foreign institutions. In particular, professional relationships can be established with foreign institutions through the transfer of expertise and experiences.

6-From your point of view, how can professional relationships be developed between journalism institutions (clubs, associations, media institutions) operating within the UAE?

The researcher sought to identify the most effective forms and possible extent of cooperation between local media institutions from the journalists’ viewpoints. Most participants emphasized the exchange of knowledge and experiences, organizing joint events, and unifying efforts to serve the media vision of the UAE. Although most answers highlighted the importance of the exchange of knowledge and experiences, all responses provided valuable insights for achieving cooperation. Notably, “data exchange” was not chosen by any of the respondents.

7-What are your expectations regarding the future of journalism in the UAE?

The researcher sought to identify the expectations of professionals regarding the future of journalism in the UAE and its trends. The majority of participants (70%) expected the future of journalism to be closely linked to the greater integration of technology into media work. Meanwhile, 20% of the respondents thought that mobile journalism would be the dominant form of journalism. Interestingly, few participants believed in the death of traditional journalism and suggested podcast production as an alternative to traditional journalism content. This indicates that the media sector will undergo further changes in the future due to the prevalence of digital content and an increasing trend toward direct interaction with the audience.

Hence, media institutions should focus on employing new technical tools to improve quality and keep pace with future trends in the profession. Moreover, journalists should continue to develop their skills to keep up with technological changes and employ new technological tools in producing media content.

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the roles of professional journalism associations in developing the journalism profession in the UAE.

Regarding the professional role, the results showed a positive vision, with approximately 46% of the respondents saying that the activities and training programs provided by press clubs and the Journalists Association in the UAE are advanced and approximately 26% considering it important. Moreover, more than 80% of the participants were very interested and interested in attending the events held by these institutions.

More than half of the respondents believed that the programs contributed to strengthening professional relations between workers in the community. This result confirms the importance of specialized programs and events for those working in the media sector in the UAE. This is evident from the participants' broad interest in attending training workshops, followed by forums and media gatherings, while they showed the least interest in social activities.

In terms of professional development, half of the journalists believed that professional relationships could be strengthened by building joint bonds, while approximately one-third of the sample believed that strengthening professional links can be achieved through the exchange of knowledge and experiences. Further, one-fifth of the sample believed that organizing joint events can strengthen professional connections. Despite the differences in the participants' views of the factors that may contribute to building bonds between them, they underscored the importance of all factors in achieving this goal. Therefore,

media institutions can establish stronger professional partnerships through knowledge exchange and joint initiatives to serve media development in the UAE.

The participants also highlighted the importance of professional cooperation in unifying efforts to serve the media vision of the UAE. The majority of respondents (70%) believed that the field of journalism is moving toward greater integration with technology, while 20% believed that mobile journalism is the future of journalism. Further, few participants believed in the absence of traditional journalism and the reliance on podcast production as an alternative to traditional journalism's content. This necessitates media institutions to keep pace with technological developments and employ them in producing media content.

The research findings indicated that institutional, cultural, and economic factors are linked to the development of media work. Hence, media institutions should develop media curricula to keep pace with technological developments and changes in society's media consumption habits while providing sufficient financial funding and qualified job cadres to enhance the production of attractive journalistic materials.

Furthermore, they should develop plans that encourage students to select journalism as their major, strengthen programs aimed at countering the spread of rumors and misinformation on social media platforms, establish a strategic partnership between media and government institutions, keep up with modern management concepts, and ensure continuous learning and academic qualification for workers in the journalism sector.

Through the interviews, it became clear that there is a consensus among representatives of the examined institutions that press associations and clubs have proven their professional competence and vital roles in serving the media sector in the UAE.

Their efforts comprise diverse events and initiatives, such as training programs and

platforms for dialogue sessions and discussions with world-class experts. Through these events and initiatives, media institutions in the UAE support the media sector and its affiliates, enhance media performance and good professional practices, raise awareness, and qualify new media generations.

The results illustrate the emphasis placed by these associations (the Emirates Journalists Association, the Sharjah Press Club, and the Dubai Press Club) on identifying the professional needs of the various affiliated members (professional journalists, professors, students of journalism and media, and social media influencers) through opinion polls, direct meetings, and event recommendations, to develop plans that are tailored for each category.

Local media institutions in the UAE emphasize strengthening professional partnerships with each other. Moreover, they pursue cooperation with foreign institutions, such as the Emirates Journalists Association, through its membership in international federations, the Sharjah 24 news exchange website, and events organized by the Sharjah Press Club and the Dubai Press Club.

Nevertheless, cooperation with foreign institutes faces several challenges. The most significant obstacle is the lack of appropriate timetables for all parties to implement joint activities. Therefore, procedures may take considerable amounts of time in other institutions, delaying or hindering cooperation activities. Other challenges include the lack of adequate budgets.

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