

Gatekeeper in the Digital Communication and Media Environment and its Contribution to Preserving Intellectual Security

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Abstract

The gatekeeper concept receives attention given Internet-introduced changes to the communication environment - multiplied media means, diversified practices, emerged phenomena. This open, accessible digital space features public participation in current event/issue discussions. However, threatening, misguided ideas also occur, negatively impacting people's lives, beliefs, morals, values, principles, especially among digitally-addicted children, youth. Hence, we address the gatekeeper-intellectual security relationship based on the gatekeeper's known roles in guarding, monitoring, selecting communication/media content to preserve the public from transgressions and threats. Using qualitative methodology, interviews were conducted with ten academics about the gatekeeper's digital environment definition, attributes, traditional vs. digital differences; intellectual security threat types/forms; gatekeeper contribution to preserving intellectual security; and obstacles and artificial intelligence challenges. Specialists highlighted similarities in traditional and digital gatekeeper definitions, roles, tasks but noted updated digital mechanisms are required per new environment characteristics. Complementary forms occur from journalists to algorithms. Communication/media legislation plays a content monitoring, violation confrontation, intellectual security preservation role. Attributes like objectivity, honesty, integrity and ethical commitment are vital for effective roles. Varied threats negatively affect individuals, groups, societies, nations. Saudi Arabia uses an integrated strategy involving specialized parties to combat intellectual security threats. Included recommendations for evolving intellectual security-related gatekeeper scientific theories, research benefit, academic involvement, gatekeeper technological/legislative updating, user framing to aide gatekeepers, collaborative global efforts, awareness raising, and provision of capabilities to optimize gatekeeper roles.

Keywords: Audience protection; Cybersecurity; Ideological threats; Information filtering; Online content; Technological oversight

The concept of the gatekeeper is considered among the concepts that receive researchers' interest, especially in light of the changes that the Internet and technological tools have introduced to the communication and media environment, where the means have multiplied, practices have

diversified, and new phenomena have emerged. The new digital environment is characterized by open and accessible spaces in which all people participate without discrimination or differentiation, expressing their opinions and positions on current events and issues of concern

or interest to public opinion. But at the same time, these open spaces are teeming with toxic, misguided and dangerous ideas that threaten people's lives and harm their beliefs, morals, values and principles, especially among children and youth who are addicted to using modern communication tools such as smart devices. Children, women and youth are among the groups that are quickly and easily affected by everything these open spaces generate in terms of violent, extremist, racist and deviant discourses.

Hence came our interest in the subject of the gatekeeper and its relationship to intellectual security from the standpoint of our belief in its great role and awareness of the functions it undertakes and the roles it plays in guarding, monitoring and selecting communication and media content published to the public with the aim of preserving it from transgressions and intellectual threats in environment and in the digital communication and media environment in the information age and its strong and direct influence on minds and behaviors, and the negative employment of modern technological means to undermine nations, peoples, states and global stability.

Global reports and statistics show the overwhelming spread of modern communication means relying on smart devices, and the increase in hours spent using the Internet to view and follow content published by websites and digital platforms such as YouTube and Netflix, with the dangerous and deviant ideas, practices and beliefs this content carries, and encouragement of intellectual and behavioral deviation. Recently, artificial intelligence technology has emerged, further complicating matters and putting the world and societies in front of new challenges and a future whose features have not yet taken shape in light of this new technology that amazingly mimics reality and humans, leaving us puzzled, unable to distinguish between what is real and what is virtual.

Research Problem

In this research, we seek to know the role and tasks of the gatekeeper in the digital environment and the extent of his contribution to preserving intellectual security by asking the following main question: To what extent does the media gatekeeper contribute to preserving intellectual security and confronting the many serious threats in the communication, media and digital environment?

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics and features of the gatekeeper in the digital communication and media environment and the similarities and differences with the gatekeeper in the traditional environment?

2. What are the types and forms of intellectual security threats in the digital communication and media environment?

3. How does the gatekeeper in the communication and media environment contribute to achieving intellectual security?

4. What are the obstacles that prevent the gatekeeper from contributing to achieving intellectual security and the future challenges in light of the use and employment of artificial intelligence technology?

The Key Concepts

Concept of the Digital Communication and Media Environment

The communication and media environment has for decades been characterized by features associated with traditional media such as press, radio, television, and cinema, in which journalists and media professionals play the main role as producers and editors of communication and media content. The aforementioned media play the role of intermediaries that deliver content to audiences, whose role has been limited to receiving, consuming and interacting within the extent allowed or permitted.

This image changed with the emergence and spread of the Internet and new tools and means made available by technological developments, such as social media platforms and digital platforms. The overlap of media led

to the emergence of multimedia means that combine the characteristics of all traditional media in one device or tool, such as smartphones and mobile devices.

Hence, the communication model, its components and communication activities have changed. Sources have multiplied and diversified (traditional sources but also ordinary citizens who entered the media world through the Internet and new technological tools). Means have diversified (mobile screens, mobile phones, computers) and content has overlapped in written, audiovisual and interactive forms. The recipient has become active, broadcasting, criticizing, transferring and producing content, information and news. The once unified audience has fragmented, Al-Zyadi and Ghazouani (2021). However, the communication and media environment has also led to communicative chaos in the absence of censorship and the emergence of individuals, groups and entities with hidden identities and goals who have exploited the new environment for negative purposes.

Concept of the Gatekeeper

The concept of the gatekeeper has been associated with media work and with the theory of the same name developed by psychologist Kurt Lewin in the 1940s. The gatekeeper's work is summarized in playing the role of intermediary between communication and media content and the audience by analyzing how and why information or events move and transform from their source and from reality to become news in the form of news stories broadcast on television or published in newspapers after being edited by media professionals.

In the 1950s, researchers moved on to studying and analyzing news content to understand how media professionals process news material before broadcasting or publishing it to the public. Studies concerned with the gatekeeper continued in subsequent historical periods, with the primary objective being to understand the criteria and mechanisms for selecting information and events in newsrooms

and ways of processing them in form and content before the public receives them.

It was found that the decision to allow information to enter or exit the media institution and its selection or rejection by gatekeepers were individual decisions or related to the system of media institutions. This process of selection and filtering is a stage during which the information will be reshaped and edited in a way that makes it different in form and content from the original information. Hence, the entry of information into the media becomes monitored by gatekeepers who decide whether to allow the information to pass or not during its journey. This power in front of and behind the gateway to the public controls and contributes to or limits the flow of information related to an event before it reaches the audience.

Gatekeepers in the media institution are journalists, editors-in-chief and section heads who adhere to the institution's editorial policy. This policy is tied to the ideological, political and partisan affiliations of the newspaper or radio station, and employees of the media institution are committed to and implement this policy by playing their role as gatekeepers towards the information and events that reach them from news agencies and other media and fieldwork. They select events that will be formulated and edited in a style consistent with this editorial policy, while many other events and information are excluded despite their importance.

Concept of Intellectual Security

Some have defined intellectual security as people living safely and reassured in their countries, homelands and societies regarding the components of their authenticity, qualitative cultures and intellectual systems. It is an essential and necessary aspect in the life of societies and is also a measure of the development and civility of nations. Intellectual security aims to preserve the identity of societies and protect minds from intellectual invasion, cultural deviation and religious extremism. Thanks to intellectual security, the stability of nations and societies is achieved, and it is

contributed to by many parties such as the family, educational institutions, the media, security agencies and others. Religious scholars define it as achieving cohesion and unity in thought, approach and purpose. In its absence, there will be a flaw in security in all its aspects. Achieving it protects society in general and youth in particular, and protects them from foreign destructive ideas that come their way. Intellectual security also examines ways to confront crime in general and crimes of violence in particular. Accordingly, we can deduce the importance of intellectual security for the individual, society and nations, Al-Sudees (2016).

The Efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Combat Terrorism, Extremism and Preserve Intellectual Security

In this context, we present the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to combat extremism and terrorism and preserve intellectual security. The world is witnessing today and praising the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to combat extremism and terrorism and advocate peace and fraternity, as prescribed by our benign religion of Islam. Saudi Arabia has developed an integrated strategy with the participation of ministries, agencies and Saudi and international entities to combat extremist ideology and counter all forms of threats to intellectual security. This strategy combines security, legislative, social preventive and media awareness aspects.

On the security level, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud launched the Islamic Coalition in 2015, which united the efforts of Islamic countries (42 Arab and Islamic countries). This coalition focuses on coordination, planning and building military capabilities to combat terrorism and facilitate the secure exchange of information in order to deter violence and terrorist attacks. Saudi Arabia's experience in confronting the phenomenon of terrorism is a model to be emulated, and has received local and international appreciation for its high security expertise, which enabled it to defeat and triumph over terrorism. It has also

been able to thwart many terrorist operations through preemptive strikes that foiled many terrorist operations, according to a security strategy that has earned the appreciation of the whole world.

The Kingdom's security strategy is accompanied by intellectual, social, awareness projects, advisory, containment and care committees for those deceived by extremist groups. It has also enacted a number of legal and judicial legislations that help protect society from the effects of this phenomenon and eliminate it. Among these initiatives and projects is the Ideological Protection Center, a global center specializing in promoting religious and intellectual awareness of the moderation of Islam and its values of moderation in the face of extremism and terrorism, targeting their intellectual roots through its initiatives, programs and projects, Intellectual Protection Center (2024). It contributes to promoting awareness of the methodology of Islamic moderation and deconstructing the concepts of extremism and terrorism by spreading the correct concepts of religion and enlightened thought, and protecting societies from extremist and terrorist ideas.

The tasks of the Ideological Protection Center include clarifying the reality of Islam that calls for peace and targeting the ideological roots of extremist ideology, immunizing Muslim societies from the infiltration of extremist ideas, promoting the values of moderation and centrism, and providing intellectual initiatives to the Islamic Military Alliance to combat terrorism. The Center seeks to achieve these tasks through: addressing the attempts of extremist thought to tamper with religious texts and adapt them to serve its goals, confronting the intellectual controversies that the extremist party tried to infiltrate in order to attract targeted groups, and responding to a number of terms whose connotations the obfuscating party tried to distort.

The Global Center for Combating Extremism (Etidal) is also a unique center founded in 2017

based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Its mission is to combat extremism and eradicate its roots and promote tolerance and coexistence between peoples. This center also seeks through its activities to manufacture and promote a media discourse consistent with the culture of moderation, as well as monitor, analyze and prevent extremist activities and raise societal awareness.

For example, the joint efforts between the Global Center for Combating Extremist Thought (Etidal) and the Telegram platform in the field of combating extremist content have achieved new results, bringing the total number of extremist content removed since February 2022 until the end of the third quarter this year to 129,634,467 million extremist content and the closure of 14,516 extremist channels on the platform, Global Center for Combating Extremist Thought (2024).

Saudi Arabia has also hosted global meetings, conferences and seminars that brought together specialists, interested parties and researchers on extremist phenomena and discourses and mechanisms to confront them and combat them and improve ideas, peoples and societies from their destructive negative effects.

The Cultivation Theory

The foundations of the Cultivation Theory were laid down by researcher George Gerbner and his colleagues who were interested in studying the influence of television on the audience in the 1960s. At that time, television was the widespread mass media in all homes whose programs were intensively consumed by the American public and relied upon for entertainment through intensive exposure to advertisements and watching television drama, series, and movies, which gave rise to violent behaviors that Gerbner studied and showed that television played a major role in generating this violence.

The theory basically links the cumulative and comprehensive influence of television and the way in which the audience sees the world they live in. It clarifies the role of television in

shaping people's knowledge and ideas and the processes of constructing meaning and shaping social facts and learning. This great cultural power of television made it introduce an alternative symbolic environment to the social reality through the content it presents, and it cultivates new norms, values and behaviors in place of the norms and values of the lived reality.

The theory sees that watching television leads to "adopting a belief about the nature of the social world that confirms stereotypes and selective points of view that are placed in news and TV programs. The power of television lies in the symbolic images provided by its dramatic content about real life that individuals watch for long periods. The influence is not direct, but is first based on learning and then building perspectives on social facts, (Bailey, Fox, & Grabe, 2013)."

The gradual adoption of cultural values and beliefs, ideologies and world views in a similar way for a homogeneous audience leads to the convergence of people's visions and the fading of differences. Hence, the formation of what the theory calls the prevailing trend that is shaped by dissolving traditional social differentiations, integrating divergent and different groups into one direction, and finally achieving agreement by unifying interests.

The Cultivation Theory focused on television as a source among the sources of the socialization process. Since watching television for long hours from an early age makes viewers influenced by what is presented to them of repeated patterns, different social roles, and content, especially violent scenes.

Today, with the spread of modern means of communication and media, including social media and technological tools such as smartphones, iPads and smart watches, researchers see that these modern means cultivate - as does television - negative and dangerous ideas, beliefs and behaviors in the public that uses intensively and regularly these means for long hours without supervision. This was also confirmed by many studies such as the

study that sought to monitor, analyze and interpret the impact of youth and adolescents' immersion in social media on their perception of the reality around them, by applying it to an issue that preoccupied Egyptian public opinion in 2019.

The study revealed many results; The most prominent was the high intensity of exposure of young people and teenagers to social media in general and for diverse reasons such as entertainment, leisure time, communication with others, and following others' opinions regarding community issues. The interest rates in the aforementioned case in the study were found to be high. Social media was the primary source for following news of the case and its developments, followed by television. A correlational relationship was revealed between the level of assimilation of young people and adolescents into social media and their coverage of the case, which affected the perceptions formed about the reality around them. The evaluation of young people and adolescents of the positive roles of social media was high, as was their awareness of the level of violence in the society around them and the high percentage of those who see reality as full of violence, Al-Mohammadi (2020).

Previous Studies

Previous studies have addressed the topic of the media gatekeeper, intellectual security, or the new communication and media environment and practices through it from various approaches combining humanities, security, communication and media, technology, and computer science.

Belghitiya, 2022

The exploratory study sought to understand the relationship between media content and the audience in the new communication environment that restored the importance of the recipient as an active member in the process of receiving media messages, and to understand how media content is received in this environment. The study concluded that media and communication technology enhanced the interactive relationship between the recipient and

media content according to the circumstances and contexts in which the communication process takes place, taking into account the social and demographic characteristics of the media audience.

Al-Bishari, 2020

The study aimed to identify the basic characteristics that distinguish social media sites and the psychological and social implications of using these sites, which allowed the production of a new communication environment that influenced meeting the psychological and social needs of individuals.

The study showed that this new communication environment has an authority produced by the interaction within it between its members, and derives its legitimacy from the masses themselves and from the characteristics of the environment itself, which are characterized by speed and participation, while the traditional authority of legal, governmental and media institutions has declined.

The study concluded on the importance of educating individuals about the dangers resulting from the random uses of social media sites, especially psychologically and socially. This awareness requires communication, media and legal supports.

Zidan, 2022

The study aimed to identify the relationship between the use of auto-suggest technology in social media site conversations and user privacy in Egypt, as this technological tool works to hide certain content and recommend other content to the user based on the policy of the website to which the conversation belongs.

The researcher used the questionnaire tool to collect data, which was distributed to a sample of 410 individuals who use social media site conversation programs in Egypt.

The study reached a number of results, most importantly that respondents find the minimum of what they aspire to in the possibilities offered by the conversations, but they felt that auto-suggest technology threatens their privacy in most cases.

Ahmed, 2023

The study sought to reveal the attitudes of the Saudi audience towards interactive chat technology via "Chatbot" robots in customer service and their evaluation of this experience, in order to determine the future of employing these technologies in public relations and marketing.

The study was based on the theory of diffusion of innovations and the technology acceptance model as a theoretical framework, and employed the sample survey methodology applied to a purposive sample of 220 individuals from the Saudi audience in the age groups between 15 and 60 years old.

The study reached several results, most importantly that 57.7% of respondents confirmed that dealing with Chatbot programs is easy, and they recommend the hotel booking, clothing purchases and restaurant services sectors for the application of interactive chat robot technology. 42.9% confirmed that they use Chatbot for the purpose of inquiring about a product or service, and that their use of it to request technical support or solve a problem was 38.8%, while use to express opinion or complaint was 18.3%. 70% indicated that they prefer to deal with the human element while requesting the product or service through companies' websites, compared to 18.2% who confirmed that they prefer to deal with chat robots, and 11.8% of the sample stated that they do not find a difference in dealing between chat robots and the human element in customer service. The overall evaluation of the sample towards the experience of using Chatbot tended towards a "very good" rating, with an overall average score of 3.61.

Olsen, Solvoll, & Futsæter, 2022

The study aimed to understand people's attitudes towards the role of news media as gatekeepers during the COVID-19 pandemic, by monitoring the quality of news and the accuracy of information related to the pandemic. The researchers also sought to explore the gatekeeper functions of news media during crises, when the need for reliability of news and information is

important and critical in an information environment full of misleading information and news.

The researchers used a questionnaire tool that was distributed to a sample from Norwegian society, which is characterized by high levels of trust in social institutions, including the national press.

The study found that respondents strongly supported the gatekeeper role in news media during the pandemic, with particular demographic differences and discrepancies among the elderly, women, the educated and those with higher education, whose attitudes were more positive towards news media gatekeeping compared to the rest of the sample.

Al-Khair, 2021

The study sought to identify the functions and roles performed by social media network editors and the standards governing their performance, the challenges they face, the characteristics of the work environment related to their performance, and the extent of their participation and influence in the editorial decision-making process on websites.

The study used the survey methodology, which was employed in a survey of a sample of social media network editors on Egyptian websites, using the questionnaire tool. The interview tool was also relied upon to collect data and information about the subject.

The study concluded several results, including the diversity of social media editors' functions and the importance for them to acquire technical and editorial skills to perform their work. Facebook topped the list of platforms most used by websites. The standards governing their performance varied, including those related to content production, editing and publishing on different platforms, and others related to content management ethics, interaction with the audience and monitoring comments.

The study showed that the editors do actually influence the editorial decision-making process on the studied websites through several steps that integrate with each other in influencing the

agenda of issues and topics for the website. The speed in publishing news and the small number of staff in social media departments were among the biggest challenges facing editors.

Al-Qahtani, 2019

The study aimed to investigate methods of enhancing moderation and moderate concepts among female students, and identify patterns of deviant thinking and behaviors stemming from it that threaten the security of societies and university society in particular. It also aims to identify obstacles to enhancing intellectual security within the university community and determine the knowledge and behavioral requirements necessary for that.

The study belongs to the category of descriptive studies using the social survey methodology with sampling.

The study reached a number of results, most importantly holding training courses and workshops to correct misconceptions and address patterns of deviant thinking expressed by the sample, paying attention to media awareness within the university community to overcome obstacles to enhancing intellectual security, adding curricula and subjects containing the concept of intellectual security, its importance, methods of enhancing it, and guiding female students to the national role expected of them within academic preparation programs.

Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2018

The study sought to understand the role and impact of editors of official social media platforms of Dutch journalistic institutions as gatekeepers, by analyzing and comparing the content of six Dutch newspapers on their Facebook pages. The study concluded that gatekeepers play their role through the selection and filtering of content and the reformulation of news, stories and information to suit their audience. The researchers concluded that there is a need to reconsider the concept and role of the traditional gatekeeper and update it in line with the requirements and elements of the new digital communication environment.

Scheffauer, Goyanes, & de Zúñiga, 2023

With the emergence of social media as a news source relied upon by professional journalists, algorithms play a gatekeeper role through the digital selection and processing of content, which may affect the relationship between public opinion and journalists and media credibility. This study sought to determine whether public confidence in news and information is affected when the gatekeepers are algorithms or journalists. The results showed that public confidence was not affected whether the gatekeepers were journalists or algorithms that selected, filtered and formulated the news. At the same time, however, the researchers found the importance of professionals' role as gatekeepers to enhance audience confidence in published content, especially in the digital environment where the use of social media has spread and all individuals, without exception, contribute to publishing news and content that is not always accurate, but incorrect or fabricated.

Rusdi & Rusdi, 2020

The study addressed the speed of information spread in the digital environment, where sometimes it is difficult to verify its accuracy and truthfulness. As a result, the media fall victim to this speed and contribute to the spread of incorrect information due to the pressure of the media industry that requires speed in broadcasting and publishing, despite journalists working in these institutions adhering to professional standards in their practices. This research sought to explore the role of journalists as gatekeepers to limit the spread of false information in the digital environment and maintain the credibility and accuracy of published content.

The researchers concluded that the role and tasks of journalists have become difficult given the changes experienced by the journalism profession and the impact of technology on their work. This necessitates journalists keeping pace with these changes so that they can perform their duties with all honesty and continue to play their role as media gatekeepers, enlightening public opinion and shaping it.

Agha, Agha, & MAGSI, 2017

The study aimed to determine the exposure rate to the phenomenon of electronic bullying among female university students in Pakistan through a field study conducted on a sample consisting of 120 individuals from four different universities in the Sindh region.

The study results indicated that female university students are constantly threatened and blackmailed through social media networks. The results showed that 49% of female students who were exposed to threats and blackmail did not confess to being subjected to such practices to their families so as not to be doubted. Therefore, young women prefer to suffer in silence for fear of being criticized or blamed by their fathers, which encourages the use and employment of the electronic environment to abuse female students and negative practices.

The study also revealed that female students who are subjected to blackmail are unaware of the laws on cyber crimes and the penalties associated with them.

Pałka-Suchojad, Kraków 2021)

In this study, the researcher refers to the need to review the concept of the gatekeeper in light of the technological developments that have affected the media environment and the emergence and growth of social media use. The researcher points out the importance of revisiting the definition and functions of the gatekeeper by taking into account the outputs and new practices generated by the network, such as the information bubble, echo chamber, and information selection by users and algorithms. The current trend in gatekeeping the digital environment is the emergence of the user as an active element who plays this role through monitoring, selection and exclusion of content that does not suit them.

Comments of the Previous Studies

In light of reviewing the previous studies, we concluded that they range from studies that address the concept of the gatekeeper in media and communication in general and his tasks, whether through traditional or new approaches to

the concept, to studies that present the characteristics of the digital environment and its components, and studies on journalists, media professionals and digital content writers and their role in selecting and publishing content to the public. In addition to studies on some negative phenomena and practices in the digital environment such as the bullying phenomenon.

However, previous studies have not linked the gatekeeper to intellectual security in the digital environment, which distinguishes our research from these studies and makes us unique in our approach, presentation and treatment. We sought to highlight this close relationship between the gatekeeper and intellectual security, as through his duties of screening and verifying communicational and media content in the digital environment, he contributes to confronting the many serious threats and helps preserve the ideas and orientations of the public from negative influence and deviation.

The issue of preserving intellectual security and mechanisms to confront threats is also a current and extremely important topic that drives us as a specialist and researcher in communication and media to delve into and explore new mechanisms that benefit and educate public opinion and help maintain the stability and security of peoples, societies, nations and countries and protect them from deviations and dangers, especially in light of the speed of emergence and spread of dangerous phenomena, practices and discourses, and the rise in the rate of cyber crimes and the ease with which the youth category is influenced by extremist and deviant content due to their excessive use of social media sites.

Through this research, we seek to enlighten and educate public opinion about the risks of the digital environment and the importance of the gatekeeper's role within it.

Research Methodology and Data Collection Tool

This research is belonged to qualitative research that is concerned with studying facts, events, phenomena and their elements in their

overall context, analyzing and interpreting them in order to reach certain conclusions. The subject of the gatekeeper and his role in preserving intellectual security is studied in our research, and this role is sought to be known and understood and its relationship with intellectual security in the digital environment is explored by having the diverse threats that abound in this environment monitored and how contribution is made to confronting them by having its role activated and its supervisory, screening, filtering and exclusion functions practiced of what harms the public or threatens their physical and especially intellectual security.

To have the research objectives achieved, reliance was made on the interview tool, which is one of the least used tools in communication and media research due to its difficulty, as effort, time and expenses are required by it. But at the same time, it is a tool that allows respondents' depths to be delved into to know their ideas, opinions and beliefs and to have new dimensions in research identified that cannot be accessed through other methods. Collecting data directly from respondents through verbal interaction is allowed by it, going beyond abstract answers to questions and statistical data provided by other research tools, with opinions and ideas being expressed by respondents.

The interview's advantages are many, including the making sure by the researcher himself that the respondents will answer the questions themselves during the interview and the answers will reflect their personal opinion without intervention of a relative's or friend's influencing those answers, as happens for example in mail or other indirect means. It also helps difficulties that sometimes lead to distorted answers or insufficient respondent responses to be overcome, as ambiguous seemingly questions are explained by the researcher, terms, expressions and used words are clarified, and respondents to answer all questions are stimulated by the researcher. Accordingly, confidence in obtained results becomes very high due to their precision, attention to detail and high

response rate and consistency with research objectives.

The standardized interview based on predetermined questions directed to all respondents with the same wording and order found in the interview form was chosen by us. Questions combined closed-ended and open-ended questions in order to clarify and have respondents' depths delved deeper into.

The research sample consisted of a group of faculty members, researchers and doctors specializing in communication and media in all its disciplines, and ten members specializing in online journalism, radio, television, public relations, advertising, digital communication and media, and multimedia from various Saudi and Arab universities were contacted.

Methodological and scientific procedures for the interview were followed by us, where an email explaining the research problem and objectives was sent to sample members and their consent to conduct an interview was asked from them as it is the standardized scientific research tool to collect information, opinions and perspectives on the issue raised and to benefit from them in having the research questions answered. Agreement was made by them all that the interview would be direct via Zoom application due to distance (being in a different city or region from researcher) or due to professional or personal commitments that prevent face-to-face interview. Scheduling of an interview with each sample member according to the date and time convenient for them was done by us, and over the period from February 2024 to October 2024 via the Zoom application, conduction of all interviews was done.

Distribution of the interview questions over four main axes:

1. Definition of the gatekeeper in the digital environment, its characteristics, attributes and comparison with the gatekeeper in the traditional environment

2. Types and forms of threats in the digital environment

3. The contribution made by the gatekeeper in the digital environment to preserving intellectual security

4. Gatekeeper and future obstacles and challenges in the digital communication and media environment

Discussion and Analysis

Section 1: Definition of the gatekeeper in the digital environment, its characteristics, attributes and comparison with the gatekeeper in the traditional environment

The faculty members in the research sample agree with the aforementioned definition of the media gatekeeper in this research, and they added that there are gatekeepers outside the media institution, the first of whom is society with its various components of civil society, associations and bodies that aim through their activities to educate, enlighten and guide. The systems, legislations and laws that regulate media work also play the role of gatekeeper based on monitoring content and ensuring compliance with these laws without exceeding them and adhering to the culture, values, principles, customs and traditions of society. Hence, these laws and legislations become a deterrent barrier to anyone who exceeds limits or undermines the stability of society and the security of the country and people.

These general laws exist in all countries and societies of the world, despite their different ideological, political, social and economic systems, aiming to maintain stability and social balance away from rumors, sedition, confusion and prejudice. The specialists added that given his important role, the gatekeeper must have attributes such as credibility, objectivity, professional expertise, good knowledge of society, and its religious and cultural characteristics and commitment.

Today in the digital age, the communication and media gatekeeper has changed and new gatekeepers have emerged, generated by the Internet and imposed by the characteristics of new technology. Journalists,

media, laws and legislations are no longer the only actors and controllers of information and news. Among these new gatekeepers are the owners and holders of digital platforms, websites and algorithms that control content, as the latter receive, organize, purify information, then process it and provide it to users. These algorithms rely on criteria such as number of clicks, navigation, downloads, views, shares and other indicators related to the digital environment that reflect the habits and practices of users that have been recorded by the memory of electronic and smart devices.

So information and news moved from newspapers, radio and television channels to satellites, then computers, digital interactive platforms, and subsequently gave the public importance and ability to evaluate this information and news. Participants and users now decide which events are worth paying attention to and can become news that furnishes the media.

Section 2: Types and forms of threats in the digital environment

The Internet opened vast spaces that transcended the geographical, cultural and moral boundaries of peoples and countries, enabling the public to cross the gatekeeping gates imposed by traditional media. The opportunity was made available to everyone without exception in the east and west to write, express, publish, photograph, document, cover instantly, and conduct interviews. A new type of journalism and media called citizen journalism gradually emerged.

The faculty members and researchers, the research sample, see that the Internet and technological tools enabled the ordinary citizen to enter the world of media, communication and journalism through the new digital gateway, armed with tools such as smartphones, filming and editing equipment, publishing, and became a new player in The space of communication and media has reached the point that the traditional media has come to rely on it to provide instantaneous and immediate content.

And they see that the recipient who was yesterday merely an element in the communication process whose role was limited to receiving and being influenced primarily by media content has become today the core and essence of the communication process. In addition to the qualities of interactivity and immediacy of the new digital means, the recipient has become a content producer, promoter, and the digital environment - after opening its doors to everyone - has provided an opportunity for the emergence of persons and parties that hide behind devices and screens and seek to negatively influence users.

Threats take different forms, including ideas, content, behaviors, practices, and perhaps the most prominent and most dangerous are those related to thought such as extremist discourse, immoral and pornographic content, content that threatens domestic security and stability of society, content that threatens morals and values and encourages deviant behavior and adoption of deviant ideas, content that threatens privacy and private life, as well as social ills and vices such as drugs and illegal, religiously and morally prohibited substances, alien cultural content that threatens to eliminate local culture, and violence and crime such as murder, human trafficking, emotional and financial blackmail, and bullying.

Section 3: The contribution of the gatekeeper in the digital environment to preserving intellectual security

All faculty members and researchers believe that the gatekeeper greatly contributes to preserving intellectual security in the digital environment. One professor says that many predicted the disappearance of the media gatekeeper with the spread of the Internet among the general public and the freedom to transfer and disseminate information and content without restrictions or controls, and there has become absolute freedom. This situation reminds us of the history of press and media freedom in the world.

The press lived in the Middle Ages before the French Revolution, the darkest periods when authoritarian systems prevailed that imposed restrictions and censorship on the press, prohibited the free circulation of newspapers, and made the licensing of printing houses a privilege enjoyed by loyalists to rulers and religious authorities rather than others. After the French Revolution swept away these authoritarian systems and their repressive practices against the press and media, the winds of freedom blew and the ideas of enlightenment philosophers spread, who called for absolute freedom without restrictions or laws in practicing journalism, provided that journalists are ethical in their practices and adhere to codes of honor that require self-commitment towards the profession and society.

Unfortunately, however, this absolute freedom led to legal, moral and social violations, as journalists - in the name of absolute freedom - committed violations and crimes of publication against individuals (privacy - defamation ...) and groups, societies and nations. Based on the foregoing, we see that the absolute freedom brought by the Internet and technological developments, for all the advantages, positives and facilitation it provided in many fields, it also came with a package of violations that laws and legislation sought to confront through continuous accompaniment and update. Here, the communication and media gatekeeper plays a major role and contribution in confronting and limiting violations.

This contribution is by monitoring the content published by modern media such as social networking sites and digital platforms, and blocking content that calls for extremism, racism, deviance, violates societal principles and values, or calls for provoking discord and undermining societal stability or disturbing public order and security of the country and people.

In this context, faculty members support the preventive, legal and legislative measures taken by countries through their

security and regulatory agencies to block or delete digital content that has exceeded legal, moral, religious and societal limits. Communication and media specialists confirmed that there is a strong return at the level of scientific approaches, research and studies to the idea of the gatekeeper in the digital environment and his contribution to framing the communication and media practices of journalists and the general public. This idea was mentioned in some of the previous studies mentioned in the research.

Section 4: Gatekeeper and future obstacles and challenges in the digital communication and media environment

Faculty members believe that there are many obstacles hindering the work of the gatekeeper, including what is related to the speed characteristic that distinguishes the preparation and publication of digital communication and media content. Content is a commodity that deteriorates quickly and must be consumed quickly, otherwise it becomes useless given the daily renewal of events and news, and what was important and followed by most of the public yesterday becomes useless and valueless the next day. This speed is a challenge for the gatekeeper who must verify and scrutinize information and news before publishing or broadcasting it.

Among the obstacles is what is related to technology and its tools that are developing at an astonishing rate in a short period of time, which sometimes makes it difficult to keep pace with changes and updates and makes the gatekeeper somewhat outdated compared to content producers, preparers and users who closely follow and keep pace with these technological developments and easily adapt to them.

Hacking and hackers are also among the obstacles that prevent the gatekeeper from playing his role. These individuals or entities have often succeeded in penetrating devices, websites and accessing and taking over data and information that is then used and blackmailed for. Countries, ministries, institutions and

individuals have not been immune from these prohibited practices and breaches. Hence, the monitoring process becomes difficult and complicated in the face of this type of threat, especially with the rapid development of technological tools, devices and software.

According to specialists, artificial intelligence technology has further complicated matters and is one of the biggest future challenges for the gatekeeper in the digital environment. This new technology has search, collection, writing and drafting capabilities that mimic human mental and intellectual abilities, simulate his reality and sometimes surpass it, which inspires fear in everyone. Although many glorify the positive aspects of this technology, no one hides the dangers and threats it poses, including identity theft, mimicking image, voice and human interaction to the point where it is difficult to distinguish between real and virtual.

In this context, we are surprised by news daily of incidents that confirm the danger of this new technology: the news site of the American TV channel CNN published a news that a 14-year-old American teenager named Sewell committed suicide after having been in contact for months via his device with an artificial personality created by artificial intelligence technology and developed a relationship with this personality to the point where he no longer distinguished between reality and fiction. His mother filed a lawsuit against the artificial intelligence company and stated on the channel that there is no oversight or protection and therefore artificial intelligence technology is behind and the cause of her son's suicide, (Duffy, 2024).

The debate is still going on today about artificial intelligence technology between supporters, opponents and those afraid of its effects and repercussions on individuals, groups, societies and countries.

Conclusion

In the conclusion the researcher has come to key points, information, ideas and research results:

The concept, characteristics and attributes of the gatekeeper in traditional media and in the digital communication and media environment are very similar in terms of definition, role and tasks, but the digital environment requires renewing the working mechanisms of the gatekeeper in line with the characteristics of this new environment

The tasks of the communication and media gatekeeper consist of selecting information and content, filtering it and excluding what may cause physical and mental harm to the recipient, while retaining what is useful and sound

The communication and media gatekeeper takes different but complementary forms, starting from the journalist, content editor and preparer, to the editor-in-chief, officials and managers of digital platforms and websites, as well as the algorithms created by modern technology

Communication and media laws and legislation play a major role in monitoring content in the digital environment, confronting violations and crimes, and preserving intellectual security

Society, with its various components, has a role in alerting and confronting content that threatens its thinking

The gatekeeper must have important and necessary qualities to play his role, most notably objectivity, honesty, integrity and commitment to professional and ethical standards

The gatekeeper needs to keep pace with rapid technological developments in order to continue monitoring content and preserving the public's thinking

The ordinary citizen now plays the role of gatekeeper by editing, filming, recording and publishing content on digital platforms and social media using technological tools. He also excludes content that does not suit him or align with his personal preferences and interests and

contributes to the widespread promotion of content he likes and approves

Threats to intellectual security in the media in general and especially in the digital environment take different and varied forms, including content that threatens the identity, beliefs, values, morals and privacy of individuals and negatively affects individuals, groups, societies and nations

The rate of digital and electronic crimes has risen frighteningly and no person, entity or state is safe from these crimes such as security breaches, hacking, blackmail, bullying, human trafficking

Countries, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, seek to combat and limit threats to intellectual security through a clear, integrated strategy and participation of specialized and diverse parties.

Recommendations

1. Updating scientific theories and intellectual approaches related to the gatekeeper to keep pace with changes in the communication, media and digital environment

2. Benefiting from studies and scientific research to develop the concept, role and tasks of the gatekeeper in the digital environment

3. Involving academics and researchers in developing a new mechanism for practicing the gatekeeper's role and performing its tasks in the digital environment

4. The necessity of gatekeepers in the digital environment keeping pace with the latest in technological tools

5. Continuous training to keep up with new developments

6. Continuous updating of laws and regulations to keep pace with changes resulting from technological developments

7. Framing users and the public in a way that benefits the gatekeeper and makes them an aide during the performance of his tasks

8. Unifying the efforts of official and unofficial bodies to confront threats to

intellectual security in all countries and societies with their differences and diversity

9. Awareness that threats and risks to the intellectual security of societies and peoples are global, crossing geographical and cultural borders, and not local, regional or specific to one society over another

10. Intensifying awareness campaigns about the dangers and threats to intellectual security

11. Providing human, material and technological capabilities so that the gatekeeper plays his role to the fullest

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