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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**COMMUNITY JOURNALISM AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN EGYPT:**
**THE CASE STUDY OF SAHAFET WELAD EL-BALAD PROJECT**
A Thesis Submitted to the

**Public Policy and Administration Department**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Public Policy

By Rasha Saad Tawfik

Under the supervision of Dr. Khaled Zakaria Amin
FALL14

The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy
Department of Public Policy and Administration

# COMMUNITY JOURNALISM AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN EGYPT: THE CASE STUDY OF SAHAFET WELAD EL-BALAD PROJECT

Rasha Saad Tawfik

Supervised by Dr. Khaled Zakaria Amin

## ABSTRACT

While Egypt enjoyed a heritage of local community press, genuine professional endeavors were nearly non-existent till recently. However, with Egypt undergoing a transitional phase, the emergence of community journalism became central to facilitate the shift into a more democratic state. Hence, this study explores the relation between community journalism and civic engagement in Egypt through examining a case study, El-Fayoumeya newspaper published as part of Sahafet Welad El-Balad media project. The study also discusses the state of community journalism in Egypt and the government's media policies related to the issue. This includes an assessment of the state of community journalism in Egypt's governorates, taking into account the challenges it faces and opportunities ahead. Moreover, the study examines the effect of political and socioeconomic status on civic engagement in Egyptian local governorates in post 2011 Revolution, and verifies whether the state of community journalism in Egypt's governorates matches with the definitions of the concept found in the literature. The study utilizes a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods through combining interview data and survey data. It concludes that the poor heritage of community journalism is mainly an outcome of the constraining media policies adopted by the consecutive Egyptian governments to ensure tightening its control over privately-owned newspapers. Also, of the three broad categories of civic engagement (Awareness, Interaction and Participation), awareness is the most evident outcome of recent community journalism initiatives in Egyptian governorates.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES:

**Introduction**

The use of news media has often been associated with civic engagement as the principal means by which citizens stay informed about their local governments. Many studies link local media with the participation and empowerment of citizens in their communities (McLeod, 2000; O'Neil, 2009; Lee & Thynne, 2011; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Cohen, 2002).

Through news, citizens acquire information about issues and problems in their community and learn of opportunities and ways to participate. In this sense, civic engagement acts as a basic tenet of democracy (Lowndes, 1995).

While the Western world enjoyed decades of successful community journalism practice, autocratic Arab rulers were not interested in any media that encouraged local communities to celebrate their specific ethnicity, language, culture or religion. Local communities that can control the means to express themselves, communicate within their own populations, and develop mechanisms for speaking to local and regional powers, are instantly empowered in ways not easily tolerated by authoritarian power (Kuttb, 2012).

According to Kuttb (2012), Arab authoritarian regimes have always assumed that the "denial of community-based freedom of expression would produce stability."

However, following the 25th of January 2011 Revolution, this ground was shaken. Egyptians were ready to break taboos and molds in their struggle to attain "Bread, Freedom and social justice." Taking stock of these drastic changes, the Sahafet Welad El-Balad project was born in September 2011 to bring community journalism into effect in Post-Revolution Egypt.

Sahafet Welad El-Balad is a media company for profit, registered with the ministry of investment for media services. So far, the company publishes ten weekly newspapers in six governorates: Marsa Matruh, Fayoum, Beni Suef, Assuit, Qena (Abu Tisht, Nagaa Hamadi, Dishna, Qena City), Qus, and Luxor.

Founders of the project regard community journalism as an essential component of supporting democratic practice at the grass-roots level and boosting freedom of expression and media excellence in post-Revolution Egypt.


## Research Problem

During the past decade, the concept of community journalism has been evolving in many parts of the world. While there are different reasons behind this strong emergence, one thing is assured: community journalism does not only impact the industry but also has the greatest impact on democracy and good governance. The literature tackling community journalism is abundant with writings that link the concept to the virtues of accountability, participation and empowerment.

While Egypt enjoyed a heritage of local community press, genuine professional endeavors were nearly non-existent till recently. Moreover, the heritage of community journalism does not show an adherence to neither the concept nor its above-mentioned virtues.

This poor heritage was partially because of the constraining media policy which the consecutive Egyptian governments adopted for several decades to ensure tightening its control over privately-owned newspapers. Constraining legal frameworks, specifically, in issues pertaining Ownership and Authority led to the demise of local journalism industry in Egypt.

As a result, the production of newspapers in Egypt was extremely centralized. The news focus has been always on the big cities of Cairo and Alexandria. News circulated about the rest of the country has always been within the framework and perspective of how national media outlets see the rest of the country. The idea that decentralized media production, especially the press, should go side by side with national media outlets was not considered. As such, local citizens in Egyptian governorates were marginalized.

However, after the eruption of the Arab Spring, the questions of freedom of expression and civic engagement became central. The most of Egypt's marginalized groups, especially outside Cairo, became more encouraged to contribute in society and make their voices heard, along with the most zealous of professional media people who found the proper atmosphere to realize this vision of empowering the local media as a step towards over all development.

It is, thus, crucial to address the inhibitive media policies that restrict the establishment of privately-owned newspapers in governorates. It is equally essential to assess, after years of operation, to what extent did these initiatives succeed in achieving their goals and to what extent were the local citizens responsive to these initiatives. In other words, in the Egyptian context, to what extent did community journalism affect civic engagement at the governorates' level?

## Research Objectives

This study aims at:

- Exploring the relation between community journalism and civic engagement in Egypt.

- Assessing the state of community journalism in Egyptian local governorates, including challenges it faces, and opportunities ahead.

- Examining the effect of political and socioeconomic status on civic engagement in Egyptian local governorates in post 2011 Revolution.

- Verifying whether the state of community journalism in Egyptian local governorates matches with the definitions of the concept found in the literature.

## Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does community journalism affect civic engagement at the governorates' level in Egypt?

2. What is the state of community journalism in Egypt's local governorates? What are the challenges it faces, and what are the opportunities ahead?

3. What is the effect of political and socioeconomic status in Egypt after the 2011 Revolution on civic engagement in Egypt's local governorates?

4. Does the state of community journalism in Egypt's local governorates match with the definitions of the concept that are found in the literature?

# Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework

This chapter includes the definitions of the Independent Variable: Community Journalism, and the Dependent Variable: Civic Engagement. It also includes how both variables are conceptualized in this study.

## 1.1 Definitions of Community Journalism

In its simple definition, community journalism is the coverage of local news by local professional journalists who would gather stories that benefit and serve their community (Gillis & Moore, 2003).

It is small-town journalism without ''security guards at the front desks'' (Hatcher, 2004) where journalists genuinely care about their audiences (Waddle, 2003).

Based on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO's definitions of community media, it is independent, civil society based journalism that operate for social benefit and not for profit.

Thus, community journalism is one that is operated " in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community," and is accountable by the communities they serve (UNESCO, 2003).

Many scholars focused on the close relations between the readers, the newspaper and the journalist where a genuine caring relationship replaces profit motives (Waddle, 2003).

A journalist is seen to better serve his community if he is a member of it and "not an elitist member of the media or society" (Gillis & Moore, 2003).

For others, community journalism occurs only when journalists become

"citizen journalists, intimately involving themselves in the welfare of the place, the civic life of their towns." Community journalism flourishes when journalists are "an active member of the very community they're covering" (Lauterer, 2000).

Community journalists are hailed as playing a significant role in "defining and reflecting the perspectives of community members" (Husselbee & Adams, 1996).

While there are broad definitions of the concept of community journalism, a unified definition always proved difficult to reach because the term "community" itself is usually related to a variety of meanings.

During the 20th century, community journalism referred to "small-town" or "hyper local" newspapers that were distributed in specific geographic areas, with an emphasis on local news that would only be of interest to the members of this community (Reader, 2012).

Yet, during the 21st century, the concept was broadened to include cultural as well as geographic proximity. The concept included special-interest magazines, ethnic newspapers, online-only newsletters for professional communities, local independent radio, hyperlocal websites (Reader, 2012) as well as groups that share ideologies or simply a common interest in anything such as favorite sport or club (Christensen & Levinson, 2003).

In this sense, there are three domains of community: community as a place, community as a social structure and community as a social process (Stamm & Campbell, 1983).

Community as a place refers to home ownership, years of residence in the community and anticipated length of stay. Community as a social structure refers to friendships, neighborly relations, and volunteering for the welfare of the community. Community as a social process involves engaging in community affairs, attending

meetings, sharing concerns and thoughts, and facilitating change.

## 1.2 Definitions of Community Journalism in a global context

While there is a broad consensus in the US of what community is all about, in a global context, the term does not have universal application.

In developing nations in Africa, community journalism plays the role of assisting in the diffusion of health care information and in the reporting of news in countries ravaged by war, usually in situations where journalists often face great impediments to press freedoms (Dadge, 2006).

In the eastern-European nations, the community press is exploring new terrain as it tries to help formerly communist countries transition toward democratic governance and discussions of national identity (Hatcher, 2012).

In China, where in recent years news media have seen lessened governmental restrictions, a fascinating transition may be occurring away from a highly regulated, national media toward a more locally autonomous system with less government control and a new possibility for community media (Hatcher, 2012).

The definition of the word 'community', for example, bore than one meaning South African context. While the anti-apartheid movement used it to mean those coming from poor and marginalized backgrounds, the liberals used it to mean 'black' At present, the definition adopted referred to "people in a particular local area who share similar problems and interests as a collectivity" (Rama & Louw, 1993).

This definition was influenced by the realization of the crucial role that community radio plays for the disadvantaged sections of society, that is "the

empowerment of the people by giving them the means to inform and be informed within a participative communication medium" (Rama and Louw, 1993).

## 1.3 Conceptualization of Community Journalism

This study, however, is concerned with community journalism as a synonym to small town newspapers (local journalism in Egyptian governorates,) and is confined to print journalism.

Community journalism, in this study, also refers to professional news coverage that should not be confused with the work of citizen journalists, who are often unpaid amateurs.

The study utilizes UNESCO (2011) definition of community journalism as independent, civil society based journalism that operates for social benefit and not for profit. It is operated " in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community," and ensures a sense of "connectedness" between citizens and their communities.

## 1.4 Definitions of Civic Engagement

There is also a lack of consensus among scholars over the definition of "civic engagement."

The term, however, mostly refers to the way citizens participate and engage in their communities to improve living conditions for themselves and for other people.

The word "civic" comes from the Latin word *civis* which has two meanings when translated in the English language: city and citizen. Civic engagement is, thus, about rediscovering politics, the life of the polis, the city where men and women

speak and act together, as citizens. The word *civic*, when connected to engagement, implies work, work that is done publicly and benefits the public, and is done in concert with others (Ronan, 2004).

Civic engagement is generally divided into two types of participation: political and civic. The former is "informal" and entails individual actions that aim at government such as voting or calling for a change in public policy. The latter is "formal" and refers to charitable activities whose purpose is to help community fellows (Thorson, 2005).

According to the World Bank (2003), civic engagement is defined as the participation of private actors in the public sphere to influence decision-making or pursue common goals. This should be conducted 'through direct and indirect interactions of civil society organizations and citizens-at-large with government, multilateral institutions and business establishments" (World Bank, 2003). There are definitions that limit the term to a specific realm or type of activity.

Civic engagement as community service: Some definitions of civic engagement emphasize participation in voluntary service to one's local community, either by an individual acting independently or as a participant in a group. According to this view, civic engagement is regarded as an individual's duty to "embrace the responsibilities of citizenship with the obligation to actively participate, alone or in concert with others, in volunteer service activities that strengthen the local community" (Diller, 2001).

Civic engagement as collective action: Other definitions restrict the term to apply just to action taken collectively to improve society. According to this view, civic engagement is regarded as "any activity where people come together in their role as citizens" (Diller, 2001) and as " the means by which an individual, through

collective action, influences the larger civil society" (Benshoten, 2001).

Civic engagement as political involvement: Yet other definitions limit the meaning of the term to activities that are not only collective but that are specifically political (i.e. that involve government action). According to this view, civic engagement is regarded as distinct from an individual ethic of service "in that it directs individual efforts toward collective action in solving problems through our political process" (Diller, 2001).

Civic engagement as social change: In his definition of the term, Crowley (2012) focuses on the element of social change inherent in civic engagement. According to Crowley (2012) Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of the community in order to help shape its future, and has to ultimately "include the dimensions of social change."

Other experts also define the term in a broad way. They believe that there is no clear cut distinction between civil and political engagement and that both types are interrelated. For example, Carpini (2004) defines the term as encompassing a wide range of activities of different types. According to Carpini (2004) civic engagement can take many forms "from individual voluntarism to organizational involvement to electoral participation."

Another group defines the term in a very expansive way as "all activity related to personal and societal enhancement which results in improved human connection and human condition" (Diller, 2001).

## 1.5 Conceptualization of Civic Engagement

The study conceptualizes civic engagement according to Carpini's (2004) wide view which integrates both civil and political engagement. Accordingly, Civic engagement is conceptualized as "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" (Carpini, 2004). This includes "efforts to directly address an issue, work with others in a community to solve a problem, or interact with the institutions of representative democracy" (Carpini, 2004).

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section reviews the international and Egyptian literature available on Community Journalism. It includes: The (Re)emergence of the concept of Community Journalism; the Role of Community Media, Community Journalism and Civic Engagement; Community Media, Democracy and Empowerment; Community Media, Good Governance and Development; Community Media as a return to the original roots of Journalism; Challenges facing Community Media; and Community Journalism in Egyptian literature.

## 2.1 The (Re) Emergence of Community Journalism

The notion of community journalism is hardly a new one. However, during the past decade, the concept gained much fascination and interest among industry analysts.

The literature available on the topic points out that the reason behind this strong comeback of community journalism lies in the fact that most regions where the boom is taking place are undergoing a transitional phase that paved the way for this shift. The literature, however, refers to two trends in this matter: the first is the effect of economic transition on the reemergence of community journalism in countries such as the US and the UK, the second is the effect of political transition on the emergence of community journalism in countries such as South Africa. In other words, while the former example shows a rebirth of an old notion as a result of economic decline, the latter shows an adoption of the concept in the hope of facilitating political transition.

Concerning the effect of economic transition on the reemergence of

community journalism, one theory is that the diminishing influence of larger newspapers (in the US and the UK) and the decline in number of their circulation allowed localized news outlets to flourish and become more prominent (Conhaim, 2006).

During these times of financial troubles, local publications had the power to remain profitable by focusing on small target audiences, and offer unique, concentrated, localized content as their niche product. So in addition to succeeding in gaining financial prosperity, "hyper-local newspapers offer a potential avenue for print media to remain the culturally dominant institutions within communities" (Conhaim, 2006).

On the other hand in some developing countries, the emergence of community media, is also often associated with wider political change particular the deepening of democracy and the strengthening of civil society (Carlsson, 2010).

The Egyptian case falls in the last category. While Egypt suffered a poor heritage of underdeveloped community media, a new wave has emerged since the 2011 Revolution including community newspapers, Internet news sites, Online radio and YouTube channels. Initiators were hopeful that their contribution to community journalism would facilitate democratic transition of the country (Berger, 2013).

## 2.2 The Role of Community Media

The UNESCO (2008) defines the role of Community Media as "provid(ing) communities with access to information and voice, facilitating community-level debate, information and knowledge sharing and input into public decision- making." There is a reference in the literature to the role of community newspapers as "key

stakeholders and players in the forces that help build and celebrate their communities (Jock, 1995).

The literature, however, includes a debate over whether community journalism should act as a listener or a leader to the citizens. Some of the writings focus on the role of community journalists mainly as listeners for their audience. Their mission, hence, is to throw light on the needs of their audience, the local citizens, and increase communication among them (Lowrey, 2008). However, the majority of scholars support a leadership role where community journalism outlets were considered as a "social glue."

To embrace this leadership role, community journalism is often associated to a three-phase process that is believed to lead to civic engagement: consciousness raising, working through the issue with the community, and issue resolution.

Consequently, community journalism is a drive that encourages people to lead the media, expressing to it what is significant to them, and "directing how the media can provide that forum for the citizens to engage in problem solving" (Gillis & Moore, 2003).

However, this debate could be settled according to the phase in which community journalism resides. If it is in a preliminary phase and serves under developed communities who have little tradition of democracy it will be more engaged in its role as a listener and eye opener. However, once it is in a progressive phase or serving more developed communities with a heritage of democratic practices, it will take a leadership role.

## 2.3 Community Journalism and Civic Engagement

The literature is abundant with studies that link ''community journalism'' directly to a responsibility and capability to promote civic engagement. These studies underline the genuine capacity of community journalism sources to ''bring about a revitalized citizenship'' (Lowrey, 2008).

According to these studies, the emergence of community media is often linked with wider political change particularly the strengthening of civil society (Carlsson, 2010).

Citizens who use news media are more likely to trust their community, participate in community groups, engage in political discourse with neighbors, and have higher levels of engagement than those who do not consume local media (McLeod, Scheufele, and Moy, 1999; Stamm, 1985; Viswanath, 1990).

And, of all news media, reading newspapers, specifically, has a stronger influence on civic engagement than using other media, such as television and the Internet (Becker & Dunwoody 1982; Robinson & Levy, 1996).

While there is a consensus in the literature over the positive correlation between newspaper readership and civic engagement, there is a debate on which comes first and is the drive behind the other. Some scholarly writings support the view that newspaper readership is the originator of community ties (Jeffres, 2002), while others argue that community ties are the originators of readership (Stevenson & Ismach, 1979). A third group contends that the relation between both is complex in its nature (Stamm, 1985).

## 2.4 Community Media, Democracy and Empowerment

Early writings about the reemergence of community media focused on the positive impact of the phenomenon on democracy and citizens' empowerment. According to this view, the evolution of democracy and empowerment was an end in itself.

Scholars saw in the ability of media to share information a force that empowers citizens "regardless of who and where they are," and hence ensures a democratic society (Carlsson, 2010).

Writings focused on the ability of Information to mobilize, increase transparency and accountability. Access to information was also credited with stimulating participation and active citizenship.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, through communication, citizens acquire information about issues and problems in the community and learn of opportunities and ways to participate.

In this sense, freedom of expression and media independence are portrayed as integral to effective implementation of democracy as well as "an informed and empowered citizenry engaged in transparent and accountable governance process" (Carlsson, 2010).

The empowerment gained by community media can pressure governments to respond to communities' demands. As noted by Sen (1999), the response of a government to the severe woes of its citizens often depends on the pressure that these citizens put on it. Thus, according to Sen (1999), the exercise of political rights including voting, criticizing and protesting among other actions, can make a "real difference to the political incentives that operate on a government."

Also, community media as a kind of participatory mediated communication can enable grassroots people to set their own agendas and develop solutions which may be unique to local problem situations (UNESCO, 2014).

## 2.5 Community Media, Good Governance and Development

However, since 2005 (several years after the launching of the UN millennium Development Goals project) many scholars realized that good governance can not be regarded as a privilege or an end in itself because it has direct impact on development. According to their view, it has been increasingly clear across the world that democratic shortcomings are a great impediment to development goals. Accordingly, there was more focus on the role of community media not only to empower and give voice to the voiceless but also to facilitate developmental goals.

In brief, the literature refers to two phases in the role of community media. The first phase occurs on the short term where community media plays a crucial role in encouraging public participation, strengthening diversity and giving voice to the voiceless.

The second phase, however, occurs over the long-term, where local media becomes able to create a suitable environment for development by helping people formulate goals and plans for how to improve their lives.

Eventually, effective local media helps contextualize national development programs within community frameworks and bring these goals closer to their intended beneficiaries (UNESCO, 2008).

In this sense, Egypt' community media, as a newly born phenomenon, is positioned in the first phase, short term category where it is giving voice to the people and encourage their public participation and respect to pluralism.

## 2.6 Community Journalism as a return to the roots of Journalism

For some scholars, community journalism, is not actually a new concept as much as the foundations on which journalism was first established.

In fact, in its concern to strike relationships between the media and the citizens as equal participants in the entire governance process, community journalism is a return to the core of what journalism was all about (Gillis & Moore 2003).

Community Journalism is celebrated as a serious effort to return to the reputation journalism once had through restoring the role of the press to its original purpose—that is, to serve as a breeding place for ideas and opinions *(*Herbert, 1996).

"Community journalism is a movement of practicing journalists to do their job better and to make the impact of the media for meaningful" (Charity, 1995).

## 2.7 Challenges facing community media

According to UNESCO (2011), the case studies related to community media showed that for such a significant medium to thrive, two important conditions are required: an enabling policy environment and a   model of sustainability that guarantees its continued independence and effectiveness. UNESCO (2011) noted that an important conclusion is that the policy, legal and regulatory framework remains the single most persistent obstacle to sustaining community media.

This applies to the Egyptian case where Community media is facing the same

challenges of impeding legal structure and sustainability as will be discussed later in the study.

## 2.8 Community Journalism in Egyptian Literature

There are a number of studies that reflected on community journalism (journalism in governorates) in Egypt, all of which are conducted before the 2011 Revolution. Some of these studies examined the impact of community journalism on decision-making (El-Shahawy, 2003) others reviewed how community journalism dealt with local community issues (Abdel Baqi, 2001) and the role of community journalism in the development of local communities in Egypt (El-Dessouqi, 1981).

In his study, El-Shahawy (2003) examined the dynamics between the political power and local press in Gharbeya governorate.

El-Shahawy's study concluded that the limited role of community journalism in impacting decision-making is proportional with the limited role which public opinion play in local communities.

The majority of respondents of the survey underlined that the community press plays a limited role in decision-making on the local level and that the local press cannot hold the political local power accountable.

The study concluded that it was difficult to point out which is the cause and which is the effect meaning did the limited role of the press lead to the limited public opinion or vice versa.

The study, though focused on one governorate, reflected a general context of the state of community journalism in Egypt.

The studies available in the Egyptian literature, however, ignored the role of

the local citizens in this relation and lacked a thorough analysis of the effect of the community journalism on their engagement.

The significance of this study, however, lies in the fact that it is the first to examine and assess the relation between community journalism and civic engagement in Egyptian local governorates.

This study benefited from previous definitions, methodologies, literature related to the topic. The contribution of this study is that it is the first to be conducted to examine the Egyptian case.

# Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This section discusses the methodology employed in this study. It includes the logic behind selecting Sahafet Welad El-Balad media project as a case study in general and the selecting El-Fayoumeya newspaper (as one of its publication) published in Fayoum in particular. It also includes means of selecting the sample.

**Selection of Sahafet Welad El-Balad Project:**

As mentioned above, the study examines a case study, Sahafet Welad El-Balad project, as a genuine attempt towards community journalism in Egyptian governorates. There are a number of reasons behind the selection of Sahafet Welad El-Balad project: Its publications are influential actors on the local level with examples of public responsiveness. It employs professional, full time local journalists rather than citizen journalists. It offers regular training to its own journalists to develop their skills. It delivered training to journalists and students of journalism at the Media Center in several governorates. It has established a permanent Training Center working with regional universities on revenue share basis. It follows a financial sustainable model. It is the only local news company running an SMS service.

**Selection of th Fayoum and El-Fayoumeya newspaper:**

The governorate of Fayoum is selected as a case study because of its diversified nature: Its economy is diversified to include tourism, industry, agriculture and fishing. It is both urban and rural. It has the nature of Upper Egypt and near Cairo and lies in the heart of Egypt.

**Methodology:**

The study uses a mix of the qualitative and quantitative methods that combines interview data with survey data (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Clark, 2011). Given the non-existent literature of community journalism in Egypt, both methods are at the cutting edge of the study.

**Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with stakeholders: readers and media professionals to explore the influences that shape community journalism in Egypt and control its state. This includes the local factors as well as the impact of the government's media policies.

Interviews with readers offered an insight into how they perceive the role and significance of community journalism and if they link information gained with civic engagement.

Before conducting the field-work, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with other stakeholders. An interview was conducted with the founders of the project that delved into the concept behind the project, performance, the paper's funding and means of sustainability. In addition, interviews also included managing editors of the newspaper's offices in governorates to assess the impact of the experience so far.

Interviews with media development experts in Egypt were also conducted to examine the impact of the government's media policies on community journalism in Egypt. The selection of the media experts was based on the diversity of their expertise that enables them to have an insight on the issue: they are aware of the legal framework that governs media in Egypt, they also took part in training hundreds of

journalists in both Cairo and governorates for several years and they have been involved in media development programmes that included government as well as private entities.

**Survey:** As for the quantitative method, a survey was conducted to test civic engagement indicators. A statistical analysis (frequency analysis) was used to analyze results of the survey regarding the effect of community journalism on civic engagement.

The design of survey questions was based on "Indicators of Engagement" set by Keeter, Zukin, Andolina, and Jenkins (2002). These are:

**Civic indicators**: Community problem solving, Regular volunteering for a non-electoral organization, Active membership in a group or association, Participation in fund-raising run/walk/ride, other fund-raising for charity.

**Electoral indicators:** Regular voting, Persuading others, Displaying buttons, signs, stickers, Campaign contributions, Volunteering for candidate or political organizations

**Indicators of political voice:** Contacting officials, Contacting the print media, Contacting the broadcast media, Protesting, E-mail petitions, Written petitions, Boycotting, Buycotting, Canvassing.

**Sampling**: The sample used in this study, in both interviews and survey, is a purposive non-random sample. As a result of the confidentiality of the distribution rates, the number of the sample was decided upon the estimation of the paper's managing editor. The number was set at 25.

Due to security constraints, telephone was used to conduct the survey.

The sample was selected from readers' subscription list. Their phone numbers were offered by the paper's managing editor.

The observation tool is also employed in this study. The survey was conducted in the El-Fayoumeya head office in Fayoum thus offering a chance to monitor first hand how the office is operated.

For the data collection, primary resources were used including: Media laws and regulations related to local media and community journalism.

Secondary resources were also utilized including: Books, review articles, Researches, publications that are relevant to the research question.

## Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This section tackles the findings and analysis of the data collected through the qualitative and quantitative methods. It consists of three parts. The first part discusses the context of community journalism in Egypt which is mostly based on the interviews, primary and secondary data. The second part is related to findings and analysis of the survey questions related to Demographic and Background factors. The third part tackles findings and analysis of the survey questions related to Community Journalism and Civic Engagement.

## 4.1 The Context of Community Journalism in Egypt

The findings in this part are mainly the outcome of interviews with founders of the Sahafet Welad El-Balad project and media professionals. Findings are also based on reviewing media laws and regulations related to local media and community journalism as part of primary data collection. Secondary resources such as researches and publications related to the subject were also consulted.

## 4.1.1 Community Journalism and The Legal Framework

The legal framework governing the media in Egypt is very complex in general. In fact Egyptian media is heavily controlled by a variety of legal provisions. The two main laws that affect it are the Constitutional Law and the Press Law. However, media is also affected by the Penal Code, the Journalism Regulation Law, the State Documents Law, the Party Law, the Civil Servants Law and the Intelligence Law.

For community (local) newspapers, it is the regulations that tackle Ownership and Authority that affect them the most. In general, the press law imposes strict

conditions on the establishing and structuring of the privately-owned newspapers.

While the Press Authority Law No. 148 of 1980 recognized the independence of the press as a "fourth estate," it tightened government control by limiting media ownership to legal persons and parties (Issawi, 2014)

According to article 52 (Press Law, 1996) privately-owned local newspapers and monthly magazines must take the form of co-operatives that are owned exclusively by Egyptians, with no one person owning more than ten percent of the overall capital.

Also, according to the same article, prior to publication, owners of newspaper must deposit in full in an Egyptian bank a substantial sum of "paid-in or contributed capital." This is set at one million Egyptian pounds for dailies, LE 250,000 for weeklies and LE100,000 for monthlies.

However, with high levels of poverty in Egypt in general, many people, including professionals, can not afford licensing. This means that only big businessmen will be able to own newspapers or media outlets as the case is.

"What we call the independent press in Egypt is actually privately-owned press. It is owned by a couple of businessmen whose interests are high with the government" (interview with one of the founders of Sahafet Welad El-Balad).

There has been a number of independent privately-owned community newspapers in Egyptian governorates during the since the early 20th century. The centralization of media outlets, however, began in 1956 when late President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the press. The Press Law transferred the main print publishing houses' management to the government and abolished private ownership of newspapers. The law required any new publication to obtain a license from the government, and strengthened the control of the ruling party over the media. The law

was revised during the subsequent presidency of Anwar Sadat in the early seventies. With the re-introduction of the multiparty system, political parties in the opposition were granted the right to publish their own newspapers. The Supreme Press Council, created in 1975, and owns 49 percent of the major publishing houses' shares, was legally bound to give a response to an application for a newspaper license within 40 days (Issawi, 2014).

This has changed since the 2011 Revolution, and more flexibility has been shown. Issuing licenses and permits for newspapers has been granted only by notification.

However, the financial, and other structural constraints, remained an obstacle to the establishment of independent newspapers.

These constraints over the establishment of newspapers were criticized as illegitimate and in direct contradiction with international standards and freedom of expression (Mendel, 2011).

Also, the various financial conditions, including those limiting ownership to ten per cent of the overall capital and imposing capital deposit requirements, were shunned as unjustifiable under international law.

While there is an understanding towards preventing excessive concentration of newspaper ownership, imposing a ten per cent limit on ownership is not necessary to achieve this goal. Given widespread experience in other countries, capital deposit requirements are not imposed in democracies and do not prove necessary to protect the public (Mendel, 2011).

Another legal challenge facing community newspapers is that, pursuant to article 80, the licensing of privately-owned newspapers ends by the death of their owners. This also caused many newspapers to close down.

The Press Syndicate has made some efforts to address this problem, including providing training to local journalists and stepping up efforts to establish sub-syndicates representing local journalists in addition to the existing sub-syndicate in Alexandria.

There have been also discussions by the Press Syndicate and Supreme Press Council, to address the above-mentioned legal challenges facing local newspapers. However, to date none of these efforts materialized.

The status of community journalists is even more fragile than the status of their newspapers. The majority of local journalists are not registered with the Journalist syndicate. Thus they are subjected to arbitrary decisions by their administrative authorities in newspapers and they face legal prosecution in publishing crimes without support from the syndicate (UNESCO, 2013).

The system for registering/licensing journalists in Egypt is also complex. Formally, according to Article 65 of the Journalist Syndicate Law, an individual needs to be a member of the Syndicate to practice as a journalist, although this only applies to the print media sector.

That article states that regular individuals may not engage in professional practices or perform press-related functions unless they are registered in the Syndicate rosters.

Article 103 of the same law prohibits owners from hiring journalists who are not members of the Syndicate. According to Article 115, breach of these articles may result in a prison sentence for up to one year and/or a fine of up to 300 Egyptian pounds. In practice, however, many people would work as journalists without being registered as a member of the Syndicate (UNESCO, 2013).

There is also a monopoly of the state-owned press organizations to the

printing and distribution services. Printing a paper is monopolized by the big state-owned organizations: Al-Ahram, Al-Akhbar and Al-Gomhoreya. While prices of printing are already high within state-owned printing houses, the other two options are either to print on white paper or print digitally for extremely high price (interview with one of the founders of Sahafet Welad El-Balad).

There has been no free development of distribution networks outside state-owned Al-Ahram's making distributing the paper for any small organization a big problem. Al-Ahram's distributing network also is based on fixed points that do not necessarily give access to many of the targeted areas the small organizations are seeking (interview with one of the founders of Sahafet Welad El-Balad).

## 4.1.2 Community Journalism and the Legacy of Centralization

There is a debate whether the complex and often confusing media regulations tackling ownership and authority are intentional and aim at impeding the emergence and development of independent journalism and controlling the medium as part of the traditional authoritarian rule, or is it an unintentional practice stemming from mere mismanagement as the case is in many sectors in the country including media in general. It is, however, agreed that there is a heavy heritage of centralized management that is making it challenging for the government to cope with the needs of a modern society and a media landscape that is changing rapidly due to technological advancements.

An extended period of state controlled and highly centralized media has resulted in confusion as to what role media should play in a modern functioning society and especially at the local level (interview with a media development expert).

This has also resulted in media professionals not having enough actual skills or knowledge (and that includes media management) to properly cope with the tremendous responsibilities media has in informing the public, serving as a watchdog (interview with a media development expert).

### 4.1.3 Heritage of Community Journalism

There is a heritage of local print media in Egypt, but this heritage is poor and sometimes ill reputed due to different reasons.

On the professional level, most of these newspapers are poorly funded, hire untrained reporters, do not abide by the rules of journalism, they are poor in content and they are not published regularly (El-Shahawy, 2003).

On the political level, many newspapers were related to local municipalities which were dominated by the then ruling National Democratic Party. Other newspapers were related to other political parties who would publish special issues only during parliamentary elections as a forum to run political campaigns for their candidates. In other words, local newspapers acted as a propaganda tool for political purposes that were not concerned with informing or empowering the citizens.

Another example of local media was that owned by businessmen who would license their newspapers from Cyprus to escape procedures and monitoring from Egyptian authorities. Their papers do not have editorial independency and mix between editorial and advertising (interview with one of the senior editors of Sahafet Welad El-Balad).

Local journalists receive lower salaries and incentives compared to their colleagues working at newspapers in Cairo and who are members of the syndicate.

Local journalists in Egypt often do not receive much training. They usually have low skills. Many local talented journalists relocate in Cairo in search of better chances. This negatively affected the quality and efficiency of local press. Thus, capacity building became a huge challenge to set up a newspaper in governorates (interview with one of the founders of Sahafet Welad El-Balad).

## 4.2 Demographic and background factors

This section discusses demographic and background factors of respondents of the survey. This includes year of readership, Readership Behavior, Print and Online readership, Reading Time, Section readership, Age, Education Level, Monthly income, Gender, Alternative sources of Information, Affiliation to a political party, Contribution to election campaigns and Private versus public sector.

## 4.2.1 Year of Readership

The majority of respondents started reading Al-Fayoumey in 2012, the same year it was launched, representing 48% of total respondents.

Respondents who started reading the paper in 2013, followed representing 32%. In the third category come those who started reading El-Fayoumeya in 2014, representing 20%.

This means that the majority of respondents have been following the paper for three years, which gives more credibility to their assessment.

**Table 4.2.1: Year of Readership**

| Year of Readership | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| 2012 | 12 | 48 |
| 2013 | 8 | 32 |
| 2014 | 5 | 20 |

**(Source: the author)**

## 4.2.2 Readership Behavior

The majority of respondents buy the paper on a weekly basis representing 84% of total respondents, and only 16% buys it on an irregular basis.

**Table 4.2.2: Readership Behavior**

| Readership behavior | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 21 | 84 |
| No | 4 | 16 |

**(Source: the author)**

## 4.2.3 Print and Online Readership

Almost the entire sample read the print copy representing 92%, while only 08% do not read it. Respondents who read the on line version represent 60% (some of whom also read the print), and 40% said they do not.

**Table 4.2.3: Print readership**

| Print Readership | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 23 | 92 |
| No | 2 | 08 |

**(Source: the author)**

**Table 4.2.4: Online readership**

| Online Readership | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 15 | 60 |
| No | 10 | 40 |

**(Source: the author)**

## 4.2.5 Reading Time

Respondents were asked to choose among five categories listed in the following

table.

**Table 4.2.5: Reading Time**

| Reading Hours | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| 30 Minutes | 6 | 24 |
| 1-2 Hours | 16 | 64 |
| 2-3 Hours | 3 | 12 |
| 3+ Hours | 0 | 0 |

**(Source: the author)**

The majority of respondents read the paper in 2-3 hours weekly representing 64%, whereas 24% reads it in 30 minutes, followed by 12% who reads it in 2-3 hours. None of the respondents exceeded three hours.

## 4.2.6.1   Readership

Respondents were asked to choose among four categories that names sections in the paper. The question measures which types of reporting the respondents deemed important.

**Table 4.2.6: Section readership**

| Sections | Frequency | % |
|----------|-----------|-----|
| Politics | 7 | 28 |
| Social | 1 | 04 |
| Features | 15 | 60 |
| Culture | 2 | 08 |

**(Source: the author)**

Most of the respondents prefer the features section with 60%, followed by politics with 28, whereas 08% chose entertainment sections and 04% preferred social sections.

## 4.2.7 Age

Respondents are classified according to seven age categories listed in the following table. Respondents who were less than 18 years old were excluded. This is because

Egyptian citizens who are less than 18 cannot vote and the survey includes
questions about voting.

**Table 4.2.7: Age**

| Age | Frequency | % |
|-----|-----------|---|
| 18-25 | 4 | 60 |
| 26-30 | 7 | 28 |
| 31-35 | 3 | 12 |
| 36-40 | 2 | 08 |
| 41-45 | 1 | 04 |
| 46-55 | 7 | 28 |
| 56+ | 1 | 04 |

**(Source: the author)**

As shown in the table there is a variety in the age groups of the respondents. The
majority is equally distributed between the two age categories 36-40 years old and
46-55 years old. Both had similar representation of 28%. This is followed by the
age group 18-25 years old representing 16%, and the 31-35 years old representing
12%. The lowest were the 41-45 and 56+ age groups, both having similar
representation of 04%.

## 4.2.8 Education Level

Respondents were asked to specify their level of education according to seven categories.

**Table 4.2.8: Education Level**

| Education | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Basic Diploma | 0 | 0 |
| Thanaweya Amma | 0 | 0 |
| Technical Thanaweya | 0 | 0 |
| College Diploma (Ma'had Motawaset) | 5 | 20 |
| University Student | 1 | 04 |
| University Graduate | 17 | 68 |
| Post-Graduate | 2 | 08 |

**(Source: the author)**

The majority of respondents are university graduates representing 68%, followed by college diploma holders representing 20%. Both postgraduates and university students were close in representation with 08% and 04% respectively.

## 4.2.9 Monthly income

Respondents were asked to choose between five income categories.

**Table 4.2.9: Monthly Income**

| Monthly Income | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1000 LE | 3 | 12 |
| 1000-3000 LE | 18 | 72 |
| 3000-5000 LE | 4 | 17 |
| 5000-7000 LE | 0 | 0 |
| 7000-9000 LE | 0 | 0 |

**(Source: the author)**

As shown in table, the majority of 72% of respondents earn EGP 1,000 - less than EGP 3,000, followed by 17% who earn EGP 3,000 - less than EGP 5,000. A number of 3 respondents or 12% earn less than EGP 1000 which could be explained by the 0ne respondent who was a university student and two females who were not enrolled in jobs.

## 4.2.10 Gender

**Table 4.2.10: Gender**

| Gender | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 21 | 84 |
| Female | 4 | 16 |

**(Source: the author)**

Both male and female took the survey, however the males represent the majority of the sample as 21 males took the survey representing 84%, whereas females represent 16% as four females took the survey.

## 4.2.11 Alternative sources of Information

Respondents were asked to choose between eight categories that represent different sources of information.

**Table 4.2.11 Alternative sources of Information**

| Alternative sources of information | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Newspapers | 8 | 32 |
| TV News | 9 | 36 |
| TV Talk shows | 0 | 0 |
| Radio News | 0 | 0 |
| Radio Talk shows | 0 | 0 |
| Magazines | 0 | 0 |
| Internet | 11 | 44 |
| None | 2 | 08 |

**(Source: the author)**

According to the table, the majority of 44% relies on the Internet as a source of news and information. The TV news and other newspapers come next and are close with 36% and 32% respectively. Only 2 respondents representing 08% relied

totally on El-Fayoumeya as their sole source of information.

The majority of respondents who rely on national newspaper as another source of information are of an older age, while respondents who rely on the Internet are of a younger age.

## 4.2.12 Affiliation to a political party

Respondents were asked to choose "Yes" or "No" to the question: Do you belong to a political party? The majority of 72% responded with "No", while the remaining 28% responded with "Yes."

## 4.2.13 Contribution to election campaigns

Respondents were asked to answer with "Yes" or "No" to the question: Did you contribute in any election campaigns? The majority of 60% responded with "No" while the remaining 40% responded with "Yes."

## 4.2.14 Private versus public sector

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they work to the private or public sectors. Both sectors were represented by 44% of respondents. (08% of respondents were students)

## 4.3 Community Journalism and Civic Engagement

The following three sets of survey questions are intended to measure civic engagement. The questions are designed to primarily explore the first research question: To what extent does community journalism affect civic engagement at the

governorates' level in Egypt?

The three sets also include some questions that shed light on the current political and socioeconomic status in Egyptian local governorates. The responses to these questions offer an insight to the research question: What is the effect of political and socioeconomic status in Egypt after the 2011 Revolution on civic engagement in Egyptian local governorates?

In order to rate the overall level of civic engagement, attitudes were organized into the categories which operationally define civic engagement making use of "Indicators of Engagement" set by Keeter, Zukin, Andolina & Jenkins, 2002.

These categories include the "civic Indicators", "Electoral Indicators" and "Indicators of Political Voice."

Perception of the role of community journalism on civic engagement in Egypt's governorates was measured through 11 closed-ended questions on a five-point likert scale: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly disagree. Two of the questions are "Yes" or "No".

Based on this scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree).

## 4.3.1 Civic Indicators

The six relevant activities are: "Talking with others about community needs," "Discussing political affairs," "Discussing socio-economic affairs," "Political awareness," "Social awareness," and "Volunteer to solve community problems."

**Table 4.3.1: Civic Indicators**

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I get together with others to talk about the community's needs | 14 56% | 3 12% | 7 28% | 0 0% | 1 04% |
| I discuss political affairs with others | 15 60% | 3 12% | 4 16% | 0 0% | 2 08% |
| I discuss socio-economic affairs with others | 14 56% | 2 08% | 8 32% | 0 0% | 0 0% |
| I consider political awareness a priority | 21 84% | 2 08% | 2 08% | 0 0% | 0 0% |
| I consider social awareness a priority | 20 80% | 4 60% | 1 04% | 0 0% | 0 0% |
| I volunteer to help solve community problems | 13 52% | 2 08% | 7 28% | 5 20% | 5 20% |

**(Source: the author)**

**Talking with others about community needs**:

 (Table 4.3.1) shows that more than half of the sample strongly agree that they talk with others about community needs representing 56%, while 12% agree. Some 28% of respondents are neutral and 04% strongly disagree.

**Discussing political affairs:**

Respondents were asked if they discuss with others political affairs such as cabinet

reshuffles, official statements, ministerial decrees, terrorist attacks..etc.

(Table 4.3.1) shows that 60% of respondents strongly agree that they discuss political affairs with others while 12% agree. Some 16% are neutral, whereas 08% of respondents strongly disagree.

**Discussing socio-economic affairs:**

Respondents were asked if they discuss with others socio-economic affairs such as subsidy, rational cards, the availability and prices of bread, sugar and oil.

(Table 4.3.1) shows that the majority of 56% of respondents strongly agree that they discuss socio-economic affairs with others, while 08% agree. A block of 32% of respondents is neutral.

**Political awareness:**

(Table 4.3.1) shows that the total majority of 84% of respondents strongly agree that they consider political awareness a priority, while 08% agrees. A similar 08% of respondents are neutral.

**Social awareness:**

(Table 4.3.1) shows that a majority of 80% of respondents strongly agree they consider social awareness a priority, while 16% agrees. A minority of 04% are neutral.

**Volunteer to solve community problems**:

(Table 4.3.1) shows that more than half of the respondents strongly agree that they volunteer to solve community problems representing 52%, while 08% agree. A

number of 28% are neutral whereas an equal 2% of respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Based on the above figures, it is obvious that respondents in this set highly appreciate the importance of awareness both on the political and social levels, as well as discussing community social, economic and political affairs. However, when it came to volunteering to help solve community problems, the number of respondents involved in this practical activity dropped. This result shows that talking about the community and considering awareness a priority do not necessarily mean volunteering or working to solve these problems.

Moreover, based on one-on-one interviews with respondents, it is safe to conclude that the act of volunteering referred to in the survey is not necessarily an outcome of reading El-Fayoumeya. In fact, most of the respondents who volunteer to help solve community problems are either politically active (a member of a political party, human rights organization or a political activist,) or do so out of their religious beliefs that put helping others as a sacred duty.

It is similarly difficult to conclude that discussing political and social affairs with others is an exclusive outcome of reading El-Fayoumeya. While more than half of the respondents said they do discuss political and social affairs, some of them mentioned the practice as part of cultural habit. "Getting together to discuss politics and our daily needs in a coffee shop is a daily ritual since our grandfathers," one of the respondents said. However, respondents noted that while they were used to discussing general political issues that are related to the country's policies, they now more often discuss local-oriented issues of their governorate as a result of the knowledge and awareness created thanks to El-Fayoumeya. It is, thus, clear that while the act of reading El-Fayoumeya did not create the ritual of discussing community, it

did impact the topic of these discussions and set its local tone.

## 4.3.2 Electoral indicators

The relevant activities are "considering voting a priority," "voting in Egypt's presidential elections 2012 and 2014," "responsibility to vote in upcoming parliamentary elections," "intention to vote in upcoming parliamentary elections."

This set of survey questions throws light on some possible answers to the research question: What is the state of political and socioeconomic status in Egypt after the 2011 Revolution on civic engagement in Egyptian local governorates?

**Table 4.3.2: Electoral indicators**

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I consider voting a priority | 20<br><br>80% | 3<br><br>12% | 0<br><br>0% | 1<br><br>04% | 1<br><br>04% |
| It's my responsibility to vote in Egypt's upcoming parliamentary elections | 21<br><br>84% | 0<br><br>0% | 0<br><br>0% | 1<br><br>04% | 3<br><br>12% |

**(Source: the author)**

**Table 4.3.3: Electoral indicators**

| Statement | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| I intend to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections | 21<br><br>84% | 4<br><br>16% |
| I voted in Egypt's presidential elections 2012 | 21<br><br>84% | 4<br><br>16% |
| I voted in Egypt's presidential elections 2014 | 24<br><br>96% | 1<br><br>04% |

**(Source: the author)**

**Value of voting:**

(Table 4.3.2) show that a majority of 80% of respondents strongly agrees that they

consider voting a priority, while 12% agrees.

An equal percentage of 04 of respondents disagrees and strongly disagrees

respectively.

**Voting responsibility in parliamentary elections:**

(Table 4.3.2) shows that a majority of 84% of the sample strongly agrees that it is

their responsibility to vote in Egypt's upcoming parliamentary elections. However, a

percentage of 04 of the respondents disagree and 12% strongly disagrees.

**Voting attitude in 2012 presidential elections:**

(Table 4.3.3) shows that the majority of 84% respondents opted for "Yes" in the

question related to voting in the 2012 presidential elections, while 16% voted "No".

**Voting attitude in 2014 presidential elections:**

(Table 4.3.3) shows that an overall majority of 96% respondents selected "Yes" in

the question related to voting in the 2014 presidential elections, while 04% voted "No".

**Voting intention in parliamentary elections:**

(Table 4.3.3) shows that a majority of 84% of respondents opted for "Yes" in the question related to their intention to vote in the upcoming parliamentary elections, while 16% opted for "No."

Based on the above figures, the utmost majority of respondents clearly appreciate the value of voting. In fact, electoral indicators were the highest among the three sets. Rates of respondents' indicating their appreciation to the value of voting correspond with the act of voting.

Moreover, based on the one-on-one interviews, the minority which was not active in the electoral activity either by answering negatively to the value of voting or their intentions to boycott parliamentary elections did so because of political reasons/motives rather than unawareness of its significance. In other words it is their conscious decision to be disengaged.

A group of respondents who said will boycott coming parliamentary elections expressed their distrust of the electoral process and its integrity. Others, disappointed of the outcome of the 2011 and 2014 movements as a whole, expressed disinterest and a decision to disregard the whole electoral process in Egypt.

The number of respondents who voted in the 2014 elections (96%) outweighed those who voted in 2012 elections (84%). Based on one-on-one interview with respondents, those who boycotted the 2012 elections did so because candidates in both rounds were either "remnants of the old regime" or "from the Islamic bloc," both which do not reflect the "Revolution" and the new Egypt these respondents were seeking. In the 2014 elections, these respondents voted to support Hamdeen Sabahi

whom they considered a reflection of the meanings of the "Revolution" against Abdel

Fatah El-Sisi.

## 4.3.4 Indicators of political voice

The relevant activities are "expressing opinion through the press," and "expressing

opinion to public officials."

**Table 4.3.4: Indicators of political voice**

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I express my opinion through the press | 10 40% | 3 12% | 9 36% | 3 12% | 0 0% |
| I express my opinion to public officials | 3 12% | 3 12% | 8 32% | 1 04% | 10 40% |

**(Source: the author)**

**Public opinion expression through the press:**

Respondents were asked if they express their opinion through the press by sending

emails, letters, SMS, or fax.

(Table 4.3.4) shows that 40% of respondents strongly agrees that they express

their opinions through the press, while 12% agree. A percentage of 36 are neutral

while 12% disagree.

**Public opinion expression to public officials:**

Respondents were asked if they express their opinion to public officials through sending petitions, letters.

(Table 4.3.4) shows that an equal percentage of 12 of respondents strongly agree and agree that they express their opinion to public officials, whereas, 32% are neutral, 04% disagree and the majority of 40% strongly disagree.

Based on the above figures, indicators of political voice are weak. However, the probability of respondents expressing their opinion through the press is much higher than expressing it to public officials. Based on one-on-one interviews, respondents who do not send complains to officials either think these complains will be disregarded or, as in case of public servants, they feel it is a bold act that might portray them as troublemakers. The press, in this formula, acts as "the mediator" that would guarantee adequate concern from the side of the officials and at the same time tame fears from the side of complainers that they might appear as troublemakers.

As mentioned above, these three sets attempt to answer the main research question: To what extent does community journalism affect civic engagement at the governorates' level in Egypt?

Prior to answering this question, it is important to underline there are different levels, expressions and applications of civic engagement.

These can be broadly classified in three broad categories of: awareness, interaction and participation.

A review of the answers to the survey questions and one-on-one interviews show that the major and exclusive effect of El-Fayoumeya, as representative of community journalism, on civic engagement at Fayoum, is on the level of awareness.

52

Not only is the level/category of Awareness the highest in rates among survey takers, but it is also the only level where the impact of El-Fayoumeya is exclusive and is not confused/ mistaken with other factors.

The meaning of "Awareness" as discussed in this section refers to citizens becoming informed about their local affairs: a policy, a problem or the ongoing news. It is attaining enough knowledge that enables citizens to form a rational judgment or opinion about it (Sherrod, Flanagan & Younis, 2002).

Thus, while results of the above three sets might not look outright positive, a look at the significance of "Awareness" and the political context of these results helps put them in better perspective.

First, the awareness function of media is at the heart of civic engagement. Being the first in the chain of civic engagement, awareness is the main force/mover that generates the other two levels of interaction and participation. The chain might break at the level of awareness and fail to generate satisfying interaction and participation. However, neither "Interaction" nor "Participation" can materialize without "Awareness."

Second, in a country that is undergoing a transition to democracy such as Egypt, and in a governorate whose citizens complained they had little access to knowledge and information about their community for the longest years, "Awareness" is fundamental and is a great achievement in itself.

The second research question tackled by these three sets is: What is the effect of political and socioeconomic status in Egypt after the 2011 Revolution on civic engagement in Egyptian local governorates?

Of the two effects, the political status after the 2011 Revolution has an obvious influence.

Based on one-on-one interviews with respondents, this political status created three groups among respondents. The first group, more than half of the sample, consists of respondents who were not politically active before the Revolution. For this group, the Revolution was an eye opener to the power of the People- their own power. This group is not much concerned about the outcome of the Revolution or the way it is heading. They are more focused on the revelation of their own power. This realization triggered an interest in politics that did not exist before and a belief that change is always possible.

The second group consists of those who were politically active before the Revolution and took a very active part in it. This group, disappointed by the outcome of the Revolution boycotted some activities of the political process such as voting for example. They, however, are still politically active in opposing the regime. With El-Fayoumeya daring to be critical of the regime and publishing news about cases of violations of human rights, abuses and government shortcomings, this group found a window for their views.

A third group of respondents were also politically involved before the Revolution. However, disappointed by the outcome, they decided to abandon the political process altogether including voting and even following news. This group's reading preferences went to culture and entertainment sections of the paper.

From the above it is clear that El-Fayoumeya acted as a platform that supported the second group who were already politically active before the Revolution, and as a source of knowledge and awareness for the first group of those who were not politically active.

## 4.4 Community Connectedness

This set of questions is related to the level of community connectedness. The relevant activities are: "following news about local government and local public affairs", "thinking of ideas for improving the community", "contributing to solve community problems", the perception that "contribution makes a difference n community and the personal welfare." This set answers the research question: Does the state of community journalism in Egypt's governorates match with the definitions of the concept that are found in the literature?

**Table 4.4: Community Connectedness**

| Statement | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I follow local news | 14 56% | 8 40% | 3 12% | 0 0% | 0 0% |
| I think of ideas for improving the community | 17 68% | 7 28% | 1 04% | 0 0% | 0 0% |
| Citizens should contribute to solve community problems | 21 84% | 4 16% | 0 0% | 0 0% | 0 0% |
| My contribution makes a | 18 72% | 6 24% | 1 04% | 0 0% | 0 0% |

| difference | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

**(Source: the author)**

**Informed about local affairs:**

(Table 4.4) shows that more than half of the respondents representing 56% strongly agree they follow news about local government and local public affairs, while 4% agree. Also 12% are neutral.

**Thinking of improving community:**

(Table 4.4) shows that a majority representing 68% of the respondents strongly agree they think of ideas for improving the community, while 28% agree. A minority of 04% are neutral.

**Contribution to improve community:**

(Table 4.4) shows that the majority representing 84% strongly agree citizens should contribute to solve their community problems, while 16% are neutral.

**Value of Contribution:**

(Table 4.4) shows that a majority of 74% of respondents strongly agree their contribution makes a difference in their community, their children's and their own welfare, while 24% agree. 04% are neutral.

As mentioned above, this set reflects an answer to the research question: Does the state of community journalism in Egypt's governorates match with the definitions of the concept that are found in the literature?

Based on the above results, respondents showed very high levels of

community connectedness which is one of the main traits/outcomes of community journalism.

These results match definitions of community journalism found in the literature underlining that community newspapers emphasize "connectedness " by showing the community members that they, as individuals, matter. (Jock, 1995).

The results also emphasize Carey's (1997) view that " news reading as done by members of a town, can potentially draw people together by shared knowledge and culture."

## 4.5 Reader's expectations and satisfaction

This set of five open-ended questions is related to reader's expectations and satisfaction. The relevant activities are: "easy access to reporters of El-Fayoumeya", "publishing complains and conveying them to the governor/officials through El-Fayoumeya", "holding the local administration accountable for certain issues through El-Fayoumeya", "expressing opinion in a certain official through El-Fayoumeya", and "the extent to which local authorities take into consideration the problems that El-Fayoumeya highlights."

This set answers the research question: Does the state of community journalism in Egypt's governorates match with the definitions of the concept that are found in the literature? Additionally, the observation tool was used to answer this question.

The majority of respondents gave positive replies about these questions. They reflected their satisfaction of the easy access to reporters and their confidence that they can reach officials and get their complains resolved through them.

This complies with definition of the concept of community journalism as "accessible," (Lauterer, 2000), is small-town journalism without "security guards at the front desks" (Hatcher, 2004) where journalists genuinely care about their audiences (Waddle, 2003).

Based on observation, there is an easy access of complainers to the newspaper and the reporters' willingness to publish the complaint. As the researcher was present at the paper's headquarter, a complainer was already present there seeking the help of reporters to publish a complaint against a slaughterhouse in his village that pollutes the environment by throwing its wastes in the surroundings. The complainer, a reader of El-Fayoumeya himself, came to the paper's headquarters after a recommendation from a friend of his who had his complaint published and resolved through the paper.

In fact, El-Fayoumeya works towards establishing itself as an influential actor on the local level and has some examples of public responsiveness. On 17 May 2014 the paper published a one-page expose on local government negligence in draining wastewater in several villages in Fayoum resulting in disease. One week after its print, the story prompted a visit by the governor to the affected areas and a commitment to solving the problem. A picture of the governor during the visit was published in the paper.

## 4.6 Perceptions of El-Fayoumeya

This set is based on the answers of respondents to an open-ended question that directly probed respondents' view on the effect of El-Fayoumeya on them and their community.

The utmost majority of respondents agree that "Awareness" is the greatest and

most celebrated influence of El-Fayoumeya in their lives.

Respondents referred to awareness on two levels. The first level is awareness as access to information and knowledge about their community and surrounding. Respondents said El-Fayoumeya "introduced me to my community" (35-year-old, male), "opened a new world to me" (25-year-old, female), "offers in-depth reporting" (45-year-old, male), "throws light on news from distant small villages and reports about the problems facing its people" (36-year-old, male).

The second level is awareness as apprehension of their own power as citizens. Respondents said El-Fayoumeya  "emphasizing the power of the people" (40-year-old, male), "taught me that resolving problems in the community is a result of the concerted effort of people" (22-year-old, female), "the voice of the vulnerable and the poor" (23 year old, male), "induced a feeling that as a citizen I can do anything and do not have to wait for officials to think of a solution" (53-year-old, male).

The second effect respondents referred to is the professionalism of the paper's reporters and adherence to basics of journalism such as accuracy, neutrality and credibility. The coverage of the newspaper was described as "credible and accurate," "truly independent," "respects plurality."

The third effect is offering a space for Freedom of expression.

"Reporters in El-Fayoumeya helped me publish about human rights violations. As a medium it gave me a space to freely express my opinion without fear from their side and with great impartiality," (30-year-old, male lawyer.) "It gave us a space as amateur writers to express our opinion," (35 year old, male).

The fourth effect is the positive role it plays in the development of the civic society. Respondents acknowledged that the service Al-Fayoumey provides has a role in the development of the civic society" (18-year-old male) and that " unlike national

papers like Al-Akhbar and Al-Ahram, El-Fayoumeya focuses on our local news, my neighbor's and my community's affairs." (26-year old, male).

The fifth influence is that El-Fayoumeya is a revival of the once genuine model of local newspapers that seek content over revenues and that is published on a regular basis. Respondents said that "El-Fayoumeya filled the need for a local newspaper that communicates with citizens," (56-year-old male) and that it is "a comeback to the respectful local press of the 1940s."

## Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

This part discusses the conclusion, recommendations and limitations of this study.

One of the main conclusions of this study is that the media policy imposed by the Egyptian government since 1956 till date has had its negative toll on the state of community journalism in Egyptian governorate.

Following the nationalization of the press, the government imposed restricting legal regulations on issues such as Ownership and Authority, the establishment of independent privately-owned community newspapers has been impeded.

According to article 52 of Press Law No. 96 of 1996, privately-owned local newspapers and monthly magazines must take the form of co-operatives that are owned exclusively by Egyptians, with no one person owning more than ten percent of the overall capital. Also, according to the same article, prior to publication, newspaper owners must deposit in full in an Egyptian bank a substantial sum of "paid-in or contributed capital." This is set at one million Egyptian pounds for dailies, LE 250,000 for weeklies and LE 100,000 for monthlies.

Of the three broad categories of civic engagement (Awareness, Interaction and Participation), awareness is the most evident outcome of community journalism in Egyptian governorates.

Awareness achieved the highest rates among survey takers and is the only factor that can be proved as exclusively a result of reading El-Fayoumeya as an example of community newspapers.

Awareness with its both meaning: information and empowerment rated high in both survey questions and one on one interviews.

Given the political context, awareness can be seen as a small step towards

civic engagement but a great leap towards democracy.

As mentioned above, in a governorate whose citizens felt they were kept in the dark for the longest years, "Awareness" is fundamental and is a great achievement in itself.

There is a satisfying level of "Interaction" among respondents. However, this category can be the outcome of other factors such as the culture of the people/place rather than the exclusive factor of reading community newspapers.

With the exception of voting, "Participation" is the least rated of the three factors amongst respondents.

The political status after the 2011 Revolution caused a mixed reaction as to its effect on civic engagement. Respondents were divided into three groups.

The first group, which represents the majority of respondents (60% said their concern increased after political movements in 2011 and 2013) are those who were not politically active before the Revolution. For this group, the 2011 Revolution was an eye opener to the power of the People_ their own power. This revelation prompted an interest in politics that did not exist before and a belief that change is always possible.

"My interest in politics increased after these political movements. I know now that whatever I do matters/will have an impact" (40 year old, male.)

"I became more interested to follow news about the country," (47 year old, male)

"All these political developments (movements) confirmed the power of the citizens. Even the war on terrorism would not have materialized without an authorization from the people," (37 year old, male)

The second group consists of those who were politically active before the

Revolution and took a very active part in it. This group, disappointed by the outcome of the Revolution boycotted some activities of the political process such as voting for example. They, however, are still politically active in opposing the regime. With El-Fayoumeya daring to be critical of the regime and publishing news about cases of violations of human rights, abuses and government shortcomings, this group found a window for their views.

A third group of respondents were also politically involved before the Revolution. However, disappointed by the outcome, they decided to abandon the political process altogether including voting and even following news. This group's reading preferences went to culture and entertainment sections of the paper.

"I was more interested in politics before 2013. I decided to boycott the tug of war in the media and the confusing news that became impossible to follow. I only follow cultural and sports news" (50 year old, male).

From the above it is clear that El-Fayoumeya acted as a platform that supported the second group who were already politically active before the Revolution, and as a source of knowledge and awareness for the first group of those who were not politically active.

In fact the state of community journalism in Egypt represented by El-Fayoumeya matches the definitions of the concept. Respondents showed very high levels of community connectedness which is one of the main traits/outcomes of community journalism.

Moreover, respondents reflected their satisfaction of the easy access to reporters and their confidence that they can reach officials and get their complains resolved through them. This complies with definition of the concept of community journalism as "accessible," (Lauterer, 2000), is small-town journalism without

"security guards at the front desks" (Hatcher, 2004) where journalists genuinely care about their audiences (Waddle, 2003).

Additionally, there is awareness from founders and reporters with their mission they are key stakeholders and players in the forces that help build and celebrate their communities (Jock, 1995). These realizations match with the definitions of the concept in the literature.

This study on the state of community journalism in Egyptian governorates is ground-breaking. However, future research should be conducted also in Fayoum to see development after a year from now. The study should include a wider range of sample. It should also include interviews with city officials and advertisers in addition to journalists and readers as stakeholders. The future studies on community journalism in Egyptian governorates should consider the role the culture of the people and the place plays on civic engagement. Researchers should explore the particularity of the term "community" in the Egyptian context.

The study could also be replicated in one or more other governorates where the Welad El-Balad initiative is operating to be able to generalize findings.

The government should reconsider its media policy and ease restrictions concerning the ownership of newspapers and the monopoly of national press.

Due to time limitations the study was restricted to assessing the Sahafet Welad El Balad project in only one governorate. Security limitations also led to restriction in the movement of the researcher and hence interviews and survey were conducted over the phone. This, and the great confidentiality surrounding the rate of distribution of El-Fayoumeya (and other Sahafet Welad El-Balad newspapers) affected the number of the sample and created a shortcoming in the ability to generalize findings. Also, there were limitations regarding the ability to rule out other

factors, including the people's culture, that might have had an effect on civic engagement rather than reading local newspapers.

This study highlighted the significance of community journalism in the welfare of the people and their community. Giving needed concern to the flourishing of community journalism will not only reflect on the political transitional shift into a democratic state but will also reflect on the overall development of the country.

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