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THE TREATMENT OF POLITICAL CRISES IN LEBANESE ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes opinion discourse in Lebanese electronic newspapers, focusing on structural and thematic features, editorial attention to political crises, and the media frames and persuasive strategies used in coverage. It also examines the relationship between these elements and editorial orientations. Using a descriptive-analytical approach, the study applies content analysis to 156 opinion articles from Al-Akhbar, An-Nahar, and Al-Joumhouria (2020–2023). Findings show that opinion discourse reflects political and editorial positions rather than neutrality, with variations in crisis coverage and framing across newspapers. Finally, The study concludes that media coverage is closely linked to political contexts and recommends strengthening balanced reporting and professional standards.

KEYWORDS: Electronic journalism, political crises, opinion articles, media framing, journalistic discourse, Lebanon.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political crises are among the most complex phenomena in societies characterized by political divisions and the intersection of local, regional, and international factors. Their repercussions are not limited to political and institutional structures, rather, they extend to the public sphere, influencing the formation of individuals' awareness and their perception of political reality. In this context, the media plays a pivotal role in conveying, framing, and interpreting crises, particularly during periods marked by intensified events and rapid political transformations.

The development of electronic journalism has contributed to a qualitative transformation in the contemporary media landscape. It has become a key medium for covering political crises due to its speed of publication, continuous content updates, and diversity of journalistic formats, in addition to its direct interaction with unfolding events. Within this framework, opinion articles emerge as an influential discursive space that goes beyond merely presenting facts. They contribute to interpreting and framing events, constructing political meaning, identifying actors and responsibilities, and reproducing political narratives according to specific intellectual and ideological perspectives.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to analyze the electronic journalistic treatment of political crises in Lebanon, which represents a significant case illustrating the complex interplay between media and politics in a context characterized by sharp polarization and ideological division. The study focuses on a critical period extending from 4 August 2020 to 4 August 2023, a timeframe marked by an unprecedented overlap of political crises. These include the Beirut Port explosion and the ensuing conflict over the course of the investigation, recurring government paralysis crises, the maritime border demarcation dispute with Israel, and the presidential vacuum.

The study is theoretically grounded in framing theory, which serves as an analytical approach for understanding how issues are selected and highlighted, and for revealing how meanings are constructed within journalistic texts. This occurs through the use of language, symbols, and discursive strategies that shape the audience's perception and interpretation of political reality. Accordingly, the study aims to deconstruct the ways in which the newspapers *Al-Akhbar*, *An-Nahar*, and *Al-Jomhouria* employ opinion articles as instruments of political framing, thereby contributing to the interpretation of political crises, the reproduction of

their meanings, and their redefinition within the public sphere.

Chapter I: The Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This chapter constitutes the foundational entry point of the study, as it situates the reader within the scientific and methodological frameworks upon which the research is based. It outlines the conceptual, theoretical, and procedural dimensions of the study in examining the nature of the Lebanese electronic press's treatment of political crises.

1.1. Research Problem

Political crises are among the most prominent issues within media discourse due to the political and social complexities they entail and the challenges they pose to media institutions in terms of reporting and interpreting them. In the Lebanese context, these complexities are further intensified by the nature of the political system, which is characterized by deep divisions and political polarization, as well as the interaction between domestic, regional, and international factors. Consequently, the media becomes a central actor in shaping the meanings of crises and redefining them within the political landscape.

With the rapid shift toward the digital sphere, electronic journalism has emerged as a primary medium for covering political crises, particularly through opinion articles, which constitute a central space for constructing political discourse, framing events, and presenting specific interpretative readings of developments. Media literature suggests that this form of discourse may extend beyond the informational and interpretative functions of journalism, relying instead on framing and persuasive strategies that organize events within political narratives reflecting particular editorial and ideological orientations.

However, the nature and limits of this journalistic treatment, as well as the ways in which reference frames and discursive strategies are constructed within opinion articles in the Lebanese electronic press, remain analytically underexplored. Accordingly, the problem of this study lies in the need to analyze the electronic journalistic treatment of political crises in Lebanon and to examine the characteristics of opinion discourse, as well as the framing and persuasive mechanisms employed by electronic newspapers in interpreting crises and reproducing their meanings within the public sphere. Based on this premise, the central research question of the study is formulated as follows: How does the Lebanese electronic press address political crises?

1.2. Research Questions

From this central problem, several research questions emerge:

- What formal and thematic characteristics distinguished opinion articles in the newspapers Al-Akhbar, An-Nahar, and Al-Jomhouria in their treatment of the four political crises addressed in this study?
- How was the coverage of political crises distributed in opinion articles across the electronic newspapers in terms of the level of editorial attention?
- What types of persuasive appeals were used in opinion articles, and how did their use vary according to the newspaper and the type of crisis?
- What media frames were employed by the electronic newspapers in addressing political crises, and how were these frames related to their editorial policies and political orientations?
- What editorial objectives did the electronic newspapers seek to achieve through opinion articles in their coverage of political crises, and how did these objectives differ among them?

1.3. Research Hypotheses

Based on the research problem and questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- There is no statistically significant relationship between headline types of opinion articles and electronic newspaper orientations.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between types of opinion articles and publication objectives of electronic newspapers.
- There are statistically significant differences among authors types in the use of accompanying elements in opinion articles in electronic newspapers.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between electronic newspaper orientations and types of persuasive appeals used in opinion articles.
- There are statistically significant differences between types of persuasive appeals used in opinion articles and types of political crises.

1.4. Significance

The significance of this study can be highlighted through several scientific and methodological aspects:

- Contributing to filling a research gap resulting

from the limited number of Arabic and foreign studies addressing the topic of this research, within the limits of the researcher's knowledge

- Providing methodological value through the adoption of an analytical approach that focuses on opinion discourse in the Lebanese electronic press and the framing patterns and discursive strategies employed in addressing political crises.
- Addressing contemporary political issues that directly affect Lebanese society and have tangible implications for its political, economic, social, and humanitarian realities.
- Opening new research horizons for scholars in the fields of media and communication and encouraging further studies that contribute to enriching scientific knowledge and developing the Arabic media research literature.

1.5. Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyze the formal and thematic characteristics of opinion articles published in Al-Akhbar, An-Nahar, and Al-Jomhouria in their treatment of the four political crises examined in the study.
- To examine how the coverage of political crises in opinion articles is distributed across electronic newspapers in terms of the level and volume of editorial attention devoted to each crisis.
- To identify the types of persuasive appeals used in opinion articles and analyze variations in their use according to the newspaper and the type of political crisis.
- To identify the media frames adopted by electronic newspapers in addressing political crises and analyze their relationship with the editorial policies and political orientations of each newspaper.
- To analyze the editorial objectives pursued by electronic newspapers through opinion articles in their coverage of political crises and identify the differences among them.

1.6. Key Concepts

The researcher presents below the main concepts upon which this study is based:

1.6.1. Journalistic Treatment

Journalistic treatment refers to the manner in which media outlets address a particular issue or phenomenon by selecting information from multiple

sources, organizing, framing, and presenting it within a framework that reflects the orientations and perspectives of the media institution (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). This process involves varying degrees of accuracy and objectivity, contributing to the presentation of facts, their interpretation, and the highlighting of their implications (Al-Shaibani, 2008, p. 17).

Operationally, journalistic treatment in this study is defined as the media effort undertaken by the electronic newspapers included in the research sample in addressing Lebanese political crises during the specified time period.

1.6.2. *Electronic Journalism*

Electronic journalism refers to periodical newspapers published through the Internet and digital communication platforms without reliance on printed editions. It is characterized by specific organizational and technological features, including methods of categorization and presentation, the provision of interactivity, and the rapid updating of content (Abu Rashid, 2020, p. 94).

In this study, the term refers to the electronic versions of the newspapers An-Nahar, Al-Akhbar, and Al-Jomhouria.

1.6.3. *Political Crises*

Political crises are defined as situations of tension or sudden transformations affecting the political system and threatening its stability and balance (Abdel-Kafi, 2011, p. 23). Such crises may lead to a decline in the level of trust between the authorities and society, the disruption of state institutions, and the emergence of forms of protest or civil disobedience (Al-Hariri, 2012, p. 34).

Within the framework of this study, the political crises under examination include: the Beirut Port explosion, the government paralysis crisis, the maritime border demarcation with Israel, and the presidential vacancy crisis.

2. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

This section reviews the most prominent studies that have examined the content of digital media coverage, with the aim of identifying the relationship between the political orientations of media institutions and the patterns of treatment they adopt in addressing crises.

- The study by (Shaima Saoudi & Wifaq Burku, 2022) aimed to examine the treatment of the issue of Arab normalization with Israel by the Arabic-language RT news website. The study analyzed the topics addressed and the

coverage styles adopted during the period from August to December 2020. It employed the descriptive analytical method using content analysis on a random sample of published materials. The findings revealed a clear focus on the political dimension of normalization (58.4%), followed by the economic dimension (27.3%). The coverage relied heavily on short news items, which constituted about 68% of the total coverage, supported by images, links, and video clips.

- The study by (Mohamed Hafez & Sherif Al-Labban, 2018) focused on the news frames adopted by Arab electronic newspapers in covering the 2017 Qatar crisis, in light of the relationship between the political orientations of states and the nature of the media discourse they produce. The study used the descriptive analytical method and a comparative approach, relying on content analysis of the main pages of four Arab electronic newspapers during the period from 5 June to 5 August. The results showed that the frame of severing relations with Qatar constituted the largest proportion of coverage (55.8%), followed by the frame of accusing Qatar of supporting terrorism (32.1%). The findings also revealed a clear relationship between the political orientations of states and the persuasive appeals used in the coverage.
- (Sally Nabawy, 2018) analyzed the electronic news coverage of the January 25 Revolution of 2011 in several Egyptian and Arab newspapers, focusing on the relationship between textual and visual content and their reflections on the political positions of media outlets. The researcher employed the descriptive analytical method using content analysis to examine texts and images published between 25 January and 11 February 2011 within a sample that included both governmental and opposition media. The results indicated a clear relationship between the nature of the coverage and the political orientation of the newspapers, as a higher proportion of materials in opposition media had a pro-revolution tone (60.5%) compared to government media (24%). Opposition newspapers also relied more heavily on images and video clips in their coverage.
- (Jalila Abdullah, 2017) studied the coverage of the Iraqi political crisis in the newspapers Elaph and Al-Bawaba Gate during July and August 2010, in the context of disputes over

political positions and party and sectarian conflicts. The study relied on the descriptive analytical comparative method using content analysis applied to a purposive sample of published materials. The results showed that diverse information sources were used in nearly (70%) of the coverage to highlight particular aspects of the crisis in line with editorial orientations. Most materials also had a clearly political character (69.9%), compared with a smaller proportion that showed relative neutrality.

- The study by (Omar Ali & Mohammed Musharraf, 2017) examined the coverage of the Al Jazeera Net website of the Turkish coup attempt in July 2016, aiming to identify the main topics, sources, and journalistic formats used during the period from 15 July to 15 August 2016. The study used the descriptive analytical method with content analysis applied to a random sample of published materials. The findings revealed a clear focus on the political dimension of the coup (66%), while highlighting the issue of external interventions (34%). Short news items dominated the coverage (55%) compared with reports and interviews, reflecting a tendency toward rapid news reporting rather than in-depth analysis.
- (Kohie Watanabe, 2017) focused on patterns of bias in the coverage of the Ukrainian crisis by two Russian news agencies: the official ITAR-TASS and the independent Interfax, during the period from November 2013 to November 2015. The study relied on the descriptive analytical method and content analysis applied to a large purposive sample. The results indicated clear differences between the two agencies. The official agency adopted a discourse supporting the Russian position (65%) compared with (35%) in the independent agency. It also recorded higher levels of bias (73% versus 27%), reflecting the selective use of news frames serving institutional orientations.
- The study by (Ahmed Ani, 2015) analyzed the coverage of the Iraqi political crisis in 2014 by the websites Al Jazeera Net and Al Arabiya Net during the period from 1 May to 1 August 2014, using the descriptive analytical method and content analysis applied to a random sample. The findings revealed differences in angles of treatment between the two websites. Al Jazeera Net focused on highlighting the

rejection by political forces of forming a government led by Nouri al-Maliki (68.3%), whereas Al Arabiya Net focused on accusing al-Maliki of sectarianism (31.7%). The results also indicated limited reliance on the official Iraqi news agency compared with a stronger presence of other political sources.

- (Abu Bakr Al-Salhi, 2014) examined how Egyptian electronic newspapers (Youm7, Al-Ahram, and Al-Wafd) addressed Arab political crises following the Arab Spring revolutions, during the period from January 2011 to December 2012. The study used the descriptive analytical method and content analysis applied to a purposive sample. The results showed that violent events in Egypt dominated the coverage (45.2%), followed by crises of political transition (30%). There was also a clear reliance on newspaper editors as primary sources of information (61.4%). The findings further revealed a strong presence of editorial objectives in directing coverage, particularly the aim of influencing public opinion (67%).
- (Manal Jarad, 2013) highlighted the treatment of the Palestinian political division crisis by websites affiliated with the Fatah and Hamas movements during the period from July 2007 to July 2009, using the descriptive analytical method and content analysis applied to a purposive sample. The results showed that factional media discourse had a provocative or polarized character (about 61%), compared with limited calls for reconciliation (22%), and weak supporting programs (25.6%). The findings also revealed notable reliance on unofficial sources close to these websites (52%), which contributed to reinforcing partisan tendencies and deepening political division.
- The study by (Ali Dashti, 2009) focused on the role of Kuwaiti electronic journalism in addressing political crises following the death of the Emir of Kuwait in 2006. The study relied on the descriptive analytical method and content analysis applied to a random sample of materials published between January and July 2006. The findings indicated that about (72%) of the materials adopted a direct critical discourse, compared with (19%) with an interpretative character and (9%) neutral news coverage, reflecting a wide margin of freedom in coverage. The results also showed that more than half of the materials (54.1%) were linked

to interactions that extended beyond the digital sphere and influenced political mobilization, indicating the transformation of electronic journalism into an influential actor in managing political conflicts.

2.1. Commentary on Previous Studies

Previous studies share a common focus on analyzing the nature of media treatment of political crises. Most of them have demonstrated a relationship between the political orientations of media institutions and the framing patterns adopted in coverage, reflecting a clear presence of ideological dimensions within journalistic discourse. These studies generally belong to descriptive research and have primarily relied on the descriptive analytical method and the content analysis technique to examine the characteristics of news or opinion texts within specific time periods.

Within this context, the present study intersects with these scholarly efforts in terms of methodology and research tools. However, it distinguishes itself by focusing on opinion articles in three Lebanese electronic newspapers and by adopting a comparative approach to media frames, persuasive appeals, and patterns of editorial attention devoted to crises. Previous studies have contributed to shaping the research problem, identifying its knowledge gaps, and selecting the appropriate theoretical framework and methodology, thereby supporting the scientific value of the present study and strengthening its position within the relevant body of literature.

2.2. Media Framing Theory

The study is grounded in Media Framing Theory as an analytical framework for understanding how journalistic discourse is constructed in the treatment of political crises.

Media Framing Theory is considered one of the most prominent analytical approaches explaining the role of media in constructing meaning and shaping public perception of events. The theory was developed by the scholar in media and public affairs Robert Entman, building upon earlier conceptualizations by the American journalist and thinker Walter Lippmann regarding the mental images through which individuals perceive reality (Entman, 1993, p. 27). The theory assumes that events do not possess fixed meanings; rather, their meanings are constructed through the frames within which they are presented. Media institutions select certain aspects of reality and highlight them within specific linguistic and symbolic contexts, thereby

influencing how audiences perceive and interpret events.

The American sociologist Erving Goffman defines a frame as a mechanism for organizing social experiences, while framing refers to the manner in which a media message is constructed and presented (Al-Bishr, 2017, p. 53).

Entman identifies four main functions of framing: defining the problem, diagnosing its causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies (Entman, 1993, pp. 52–53). This gives media discourse an interpretative dimension that goes beyond merely setting priorities. The literature also distinguishes between generic frames and issue-specific frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, pp. 93–95), which allows for analyzing variations in how different media outlets address the same crisis. The theory gains particular significance in the context of political crises due to its capacity to reveal how meaning is reorganized within journalistic discourse (Janssen, 2006, p. 27).

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This section outlines the methodological procedures of the study, including the identification of the study type and the methodology employed, as well as the study population and sample, data collection tools, procedures of validity and reliability, and the statistical analysis techniques used.

3.1. Type of Study and Method Used

This study falls within descriptive research, as it adopts the descriptive analytical method, utilizing content analysis to examine opinion articles published in the electronic newspapers included in the study sample.

3.2. Study Population and Sample

The study employed the constructed week sampling technique to select the days included in the analysis, resulting in a temporal sample of 138 days for each newspaper. The total number of opinion articles analyzed reached 141 articles, distributed as follows: 49 articles in Al-Akhbar, 52 in An-Nahar, and 40 in Al-Jomhouria. These articles constituted the units of analysis examined at both the formal and thematic levels.

The articles were selected according to two criteria: their inclusion in the opinion section and their discussion of one of the following political crises: the Beirut Port explosion, government paralysis, maritime border demarcation, or the presidential vacancy. The newspapers were selected due to their differing political orientations, allowing

for a comparative approach that reflects the diversity of Lebanese media discourse.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

The study relied on a content analysis form as the primary data collection tool to examine the nature of the treatment of political crises in opinion articles at both the quantitative and qualitative levels. The sentence or idea was adopted as the unit of analysis. The content was classified into two levels: the formal level, which relates to the presentation of the journalistic material-such as the type of article, headline, author, and accompanying elements-and the thematic level, which reflects the core of the discourse and includes the issues addressed, key actors, persuasive appeals, publication objectives, orientations, and media frames.

3.4. Validity and Reliability Procedures

The content analysis form was subjected to validity and reliability procedures according to established methodological standards to ensure its accuracy and reliability in measuring the phenomenon under study.

3.4.1. Validity Procedures

The researcher presented the content analysis form to a number of academic reviewers specialized in media and scientific research in order to evaluate its items and verify their clarity and accuracy, which falls within the scope of face validity. Based on their feedback, the necessary modifications were made, including reformulating and reorganizing certain items to ensure the tool's suitability for application. Content validity was also ensured by constructing the instrument based on the theoretical framework of the study-particularly Media Framing Theory-as well as benefiting from relevant previous studies, thereby enhancing the consistency of the items with the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses.

3.4.2. Reliability Procedures

The reliability of the content analysis tool was tested using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient according to the following statistical formula (Field, 2018, p. 49):

$$\alpha = k / (k - 1) (1 - (\sum s_i^2) / (s_t^2))$$

To measure the degree of consistency and stability, the researcher employed the test-retest method by applying the analysis form to a subsample representing (10%) of the total analytical sample, equivalent to 14 opinion articles out of 141. The form was first applied to this subsample on 13 February 2024, and then reapplied to the same items two weeks later.

The reliability coefficient values were as follows:

- α : Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient = 0.88

- k : number of analytical categories = 12

$\sum s_i^2$: sum of variances of analytical categories = 18.36- s_t^2 : total variance of the analysis tool = 82.45

Accordingly, the reliability coefficient is considered statistically high, indicating a strong degree of consistency and reliability in the results of the content analysis.

3.4.3. Statistical Analysis Tools

The study data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), based on descriptive and inferential statistical methods appropriate to the nature of the variables and their measurement levels.

These methods included:

- Frequencies and percentages to describe sample characteristics and the distribution of variables.
- Chi-Square Test of Independence (χ^2) to measure the significance of differences and relationships between nominal and ordinal variables, as well as for hypothesis testing.
- Spearman Correlation Coefficient (ρ) to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between ordinal variables.

Chapter II: Results

This chapter presents the results obtained from the analytical study in order to answer the research questions and test its hypotheses, based on the data derived from the content analysis form.

4. RESULTS OF THE CONTENT ANALYSIS

This section presents the results of the content analysis of opinion articles published in the electronic newspapers under study. The results are organized into three interrelated dimensions: the formal structure of opinion articles, the analysis of their content, and the orientations and reference frames in light of Media Framing Theory, providing a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of journalistic treatment.

4.1. The Formal Structure of Opinion Articles

This dimension examines the formal structure of opinion articles in terms of article types, headline patterns, accompanying elements, and the identity of the authors, as these elements influence the formation of the reader's initial impression and guide the reception process before engaging with the content in depth. The main findings are as follows:

- Regarding article types, analytical articles recorded the highest proportion in covering

the four crises: the Beirut Port explosion (62.4%), government paralysis (53.1%), maritime border demarcation (50%), and the presidential vacancy (56.8%), compared with the limited presence of editorial and critical articles and the almost complete absence of column articles. A comparison among the three newspapers revealed that Al-Akhbar displayed greater diversity in article formats depending on the nature of each crisis and the intensity of its political stance toward it. In contrast, An-Nahar and Al-Jomhouria maintained a relatively consistent reliance on analytical articles, presenting interpretative discourse that linked events to institutional and political contexts, although not entirely free from selective angles carrying implicit biases. This indicates that the selection of article type was associated with editorial choices reflecting each newspaper's construction of political narratives.

- Concerning headline types, the findings showed that informational headlines dominated in the crises of the Beirut Port explosion (50%) and government paralysis (43.8%), while interrogative headlines prevailed in the maritime border demarcation crisis (45.8%), and exclamatory headlines were most frequent in the presidential vacancy crisis (35.1%), whereas rhetorical or denunciatory headlines appeared less frequently. At the newspaper level, Al-Akhbar relied primarily on direct informational headlines supported by exclamatory and denunciatory forms, consistent with its sharply critical discourse. An-Nahar combined informational and interrogative headlines to stimulate questioning, while Al-Jomhouria employed a broader variety of headline styles reflecting a moderate approach that blends reporting and analysis. This indicates that the headline performed a directive discursive function reflecting each newspaper's positioning.
- With regard to the accompanying elements of articles, electronic services ranked highest in the crises of the Beirut Port explosion (33.2%) and government paralysis (30.7%), while advertisements were most prominent in the maritime border demarcation crisis (31.3%), and images and internal links were most common in the presidential vacancy crisis (32.3%), compared with a lower presence of external links. At the newspaper level, Al-Akhbar relied heavily on electronic services

and advertisements to enhance interaction and guide readers within the digital platform. An-Nahar focused on combining images, advertisements, and electronic services to provide a visual and interactive dimension to the content and support its subscription system. Meanwhile, Al-Jomhouria was distinguished by the broader use of internal and external links to connect articles with broader contexts and enhance browsing activity. This variation reflects differences in the newspapers' approaches to managing their relationship with readers within the digital environment, consistent with the findings of (Sally El-Nabawy, 2018).

- In terms of article authors, the results indicated that articles signed by journalists' names constituted the dominant category across the four crises: the Beirut Port explosion (68.8%), government paralysis (56.3%), maritime border demarcation (58.4%), and presidential vacancy (83.8%), while unsigned articles or those attributed to other types of authors appeared less frequently. This suggests that the selection of authors played a key role in shaping editorial discourse. By relying on writers aligned with their orientations, newspapers were able to reinforce and reproduce their political positions and influence the direction of public debate. This finding is consistent with the results reported by (Ali A. Dashti, 2009).

4.2. Content Analysis of Opinion Articles

This dimension presents the results of the content analysis of opinion articles in Lebanese electronic newspapers in terms of the issues addressed, key actors, patterns of persuasive appeals, and publication objectives. These elements reveal the nature of journalistic discourse and the priorities guiding the treatment of political crises. The main findings are as follows:

- Regarding the issues addressed, the course of the judicial investigation in the Beirut Port explosion ranked first with (44.8%), with variations in attributing responsibility depending on the editorial orientations of the newspapers. In the government paralysis crisis, the causes of the crisis ranked first with (28.6%), within a discourse focused on analyzing the political factors underlying the crisis. In the maritime border demarcation crisis, indirect negotiations occupied the leading position with (28.1%), accompanied by

differences in evaluating the role of political actors between supportive and critical approaches. In the presidential vacancy crisis, the role of Hezbollah emerged prominently with (23.9%), with clear variations between attributing responsibility to the party and defending it. Overall, the findings reveal a selective character and a clear dominance of political framing, alongside a decline in social and livelihood dimensions in interpreting the crises.

- With respect to prominent actors, the overall distribution indicated that the judges overseeing the investigation into the Beirut Port explosion received the most prominent coverage with (17.6%), with differences in attributing responsibility depending on each newspaper's editorial orientation. In the government paralysis and maritime border demarcation crises, Hezbollah emerged prominently with (16.7%) and (29.7%) respectively, with differences in describing its role between critical and supportive perspectives. In the presidential vacancy crisis, the candidate Suleiman Frangieh dominated the coverage with (18.6%), as he was one of the most prominent names proposed for the presidential position and because his candidacy was linked to complex domestic and regional political balances. These findings indicate that highlighting certain actors was not neutral but rather occurred within a political framing aligned with the editorial orientations of each newspaper.
- Concerning persuasive appeals, emotional appeals dominated in the Beirut Port explosion (43.4%) and maritime border demarcation (40.4%) crises, while rational appeals prevailed in the government paralysis crisis (44.1%). In contrast, fear appeals dominated the discourse in the presidential vacancy crisis, reaching (53%). In terms of editorial tendencies, Al-Akhbar presented a shifting discourse combining rational and fear appeals depending on the context. An-Nahar relied more clearly on emotional and fear appeals in order to mobilize readers and highlight political risks, while Al-Jomhouria focused primarily on emotional appeals with a noticeable presence of rational appeals. This variation confirms that persuasive appeals were not secondary elements within the discourse; rather, they constituted a structural component of framing mechanisms and the

influence on public opinion formation, consistent with the findings of (Mohamed Gad Al-Mawla Hafez & Sherif Darwish Al-Labban, 2018).

- As for publication objectives, the findings showed that the hierarchy of objectives varied depending on the nature of each crisis and the positioning of each newspaper within the political landscape. Guiding public opinion ranked first in the Beirut Port explosion and presidential vacancy crises with (34.5%) and (28.8%) respectively, while criticizing performance dominated in the government paralysis crisis (30.9%), and revealing facts ranked first in the maritime border demarcation crisis (28.3%). These findings indicate that electronic newspapers employed opinion articles as instruments supporting their editorial choices. This result is consistent with the findings of (Abu Bakr Habib Al-Salhi, 2014).

4.3. Orientations and Reference Frames in Light of Media Framing Theory

This dimension analyzes the orientations of coverage and the reference frames adopted by electronic newspapers in light of Media Framing Theory, with the aim of revealing how political crises are framed and how their meanings are directed within journalistic discourse. The main findings are as follows:

- In terms of orientations, crises were not presented as neutral events but rather within frames reflecting the political positioning of each newspaper. A supportive orientation prevailed in the coverage of the Beirut Port explosion (56.3%), whereas an oppositional orientation dominated the crises of government paralysis (56.3%), maritime border demarcation (45.8%), and the presidential vacancy (51.4%). In this regard, Al-Akhbar adopted a discourse supportive of the Resistance Axis, while An-Nahar demonstrated a clear opposition to it. Al-Jomhouria, meanwhile, appeared more flexible, alternating between criticism and support. These findings indicate that the orientations expressed in opinion articles contributed to reproducing political divisions within media discourse and influenced public perceptions of political crises, consistent with the findings of (Manal Jarad, 2013).
- With respect to reference frames, the findings revealed that electronic newspapers employed frames that either emphasized attributing responsibility to specific actors or interpreted crises in light of political and external

considerations. In this context, the responsibility frame dominated the coverage, with the category of state institutions recording the highest proportion in the Beirut Port explosion crisis (74.4%), while the category of presidential candidates ranked first in the presidential vacancy crisis (41.5%). In contrast, the political frame was particularly prominent in the crises of government paralysis and maritime border demarcation, especially the category of foreign interventions, with proportions reaching (73%) and (65.2%) respectively. This diversity indicates that framing was shaped by guiding editorial and ideological considerations, consistent with the findings of (Watanabe, 2017).

- Finally, in relation to Media Framing Theory, the data revealed clear consistency with the core principles of the theory as articulated by Robert Entman. The findings show that electronic newspapers did not present political crises as neutral events; rather, they reconstructed them within selective interpretative frames by highlighting certain elements while marginalizing others, assigning responsibility, and shaping meanings in ways that served their editorial perspectives. This was particularly evident in the treatment of the four political crises examined in this study by the three Lebanese electronic newspapers, through mechanisms such as issue selection, headline construction, identification of key actors, and the direction of public discourse. Consequently, the differences observed in orientations, persuasive strategies, and news frames confirm Entman's argument that media institutions organize information within frames that emphasize certain meanings while excluding others, thereby influencing how audiences think about events.

4.4. Hypotheses Testing

This section is devoted to testing the study hypotheses derived from the theoretical and methodological frameworks. The Chi-Square Test of Independence (χ^2) was used to measure the significance of relationships and differences between variables, helping to interpret patterns in the treatment of political crises in opinion articles published in electronic newspapers. Accordingly, the study hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant relationship between headline types of opinion articles and electronic newspaper orientations.

Table (1): Distribution of Opinion Articles by Headline Types and Electronic Newspaper Orientations.

Headline Types	Informational		Interrogative		Exclamatory		Denunciatory		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Newspaper Orientations										
Supportive	33	57.9	12	30.7	6	22.2	3	16.6	54	38.3
Oppositional	18	31.6	23	59	19	70.4	14	77.8	74	52.5
Neutral	6	10.5	4	10.3	2	7.4	1	5.6	13	9.2
Total	57	100	39	100	27	100	18	100	141	100
Chi-Square Test (χ^2)	Chi-square value (χ^2) = 22.90 Degrees of freedom (df) = 6 Critical value = 12.592 p-value = 0.000 Cramer's V = 0.27									

The table above illustrates the distribution of opinion articles by headline types and electronic newspaper orientations, thus enabling an analysis of the relationship between headline format and the political stance adopted by journalistic discourse.

From a statistical standpoint, the results demonstrate that the calculated value of the Chi-square test (χ^2) amounted to (22.90 > 12.592), which exceeds the critical value at the significance level ($p < 0.05$) with (df = 6). This confirms the existence of a statistically significant relationship between headline type and newspaper orientation. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted.

Regarding the strength of this association, Cramer's V recorded (0.27), indicating a weak to moderate relationship. This suggests that headline type contributes to shaping the editorial orientation of the newspaper, although it does not constitute the sole determining factor of its political stance.

- Hypothesis 2: There is a statistically significant relationship between types of opinion articles and publication objectives of electronic newspapers.

Table (2): Distribution of Opinion Articles by Article Types and Publication Objectives in Electronic Newspapers.

Article Types	Editorial		Column		Analytical		Critical		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Publication Objectives										
Diagnosing the crisis	7	53.8	1	12.5	5	7.6	2	3.7	15	10.6

Revealing facts	2	15.4	1	12.5	9	13.6	5	9.3	17	12.1
Criticizing performance	2	15.4	5	62.5	22	33.3	26	47.1	55	39
Guiding public opinion	1	7.7	-	-	26	39.4	18	33.3	45	31.9
Proposing solutions	1	7.7	1	12.5	4	6.1	3	5.6	9	6.4
Total	13	100	8	100	66	100	54	100	141	100
Chi-Square Test (χ^2)	Chi-square value (χ^2) = 37.87 Degrees of freedom (df) = 12 Critical value = 21.03 p-value = 0.000 Cramer's V = 0.30									

Table (2) depicts the distribution of opinion articles by article types and publication objectives in electronic newspapers, facilitating an analysis of the relationship between article format and the communicative objectives pursued in their coverage of political crises.

The statistical findings indicate that the calculated value of the Chi-square test (χ^2) stood at (37.87 > 21.03), which surpasses the critical value at the significance level ($p < 0.05$) with (df = 12). This confirms the presence of a statistically significant relationship between article type and publication objective. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted.

In terms of the strength of the relationship, Cramer's V reached (0.30), reflecting a moderate association. This indicates that article format contributes to shaping the communicative objectives of electronic newspapers in their treatment of political crises, although it is not the sole determining factor.

- Hypothesis 3: There are statistically significant differences among authors types in the use of accompanying elements in opinion articles in electronic newspapers.

Table (3): Distribution of Opinion Articles by Author Types in the Use of Accompanying Elements in Electronic Newspapers.

Use of Elements	Yes		No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Author Types						
Unsigned	8	57.1	6	42.9	14	100
Editor-in-chief	7	58.3	5	41.7	12	100
Journalist	38	54.3	32	45.7	70	100
Expert/Specialist	10	55.6	8	44.4	18	100
Total	63	55.3	51	44.7	114	100
Chi-Square Test (χ^2):	Chi-square value (χ^2) = 0.09 Degrees of freedom (df) = 3 Critical value = 7.815 p-value = 0.99 Cramer's V = 0.03					

Table (3) presents the distribution of opinion articles by author types in the use of accompanying elements in electronic newspapers, enabling an examination of the relationship between author identity and the level of accompanying elements in

the text.

The statistical analysis reveals that the calculated value of the Chi-square test (χ^2) reached (0.09 < 7.815), which is below the critical value at the significance level ($p > 0.05$) with (df = 3). This indicates that there are no statistically significant differences among author types in the use of accompanying elements in opinion articles. On this basis, the alternative hypothesis (H1) was rejected and the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted.

As for the strength of this association, Cramer's V registered (0.03), reflecting a very weak, almost negligible relationship between the two variables. This confirms that author type is not a significant factor influencing the level of use of accompanying elements in the text.

- Hypothesis 4: There is a statistically significant relationship between electronic newspaper orientations and types of persuasive appeals used in opinion articles.

Table (4): Distribution of Opinion Articles by Electronic Newspaper Orientations and Types of Persuasive Appeal.

Newspaper Orientations	Supportive		Opposing		Neutral		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Types of Appeals								
Emotional	45	86.5	6	12.8	4	9.5	55	39
Rational	5	9.7	38	80.9	7	16.8	50	35.5
Fear	2	3.8	3	6.3	31	73.7	36	25.5
Total	52	100	47	100	42	100	141	100
Chi-Square Test (χ^2)	Chi-square value (χ^2) = 72.26 Degrees of freedom (df) = 4 Critical value = 9.48 p-value = 0.000 Cramer's V = 0.71							

Table (4) illustrates the distribution of opinion articles by types of persuasive appeal and electronic newspaper orientations, providing a basis for analyzing the relationship between persuasive discourse patterns and the editorial stance adopted by each newspaper.

The statistical results show that the calculated value of the Chi-square test (χ^2) amounted to (72.26 > 9.48), which is higher than the critical value at the significance level ($p < 0.05$) with (df = 4). This demonstrates the existence of a statistically significant relationship between type of persuasive appeal and newspaper orientation. Thus, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted.

With respect to the strength of this relationship, Cramer's V was found to be (0.71), indicating a strong association. This highlights that the type of persuasive appeal plays a significant role in shaping the editorial orientation of opinion articles.

- Hypothesis 5 :There are statistically significant differences between types of persuasive appeals used in opinion articles and types of political crises.

Table (5): Distribution of Opinion Articles by Types of Persuasive Appeals and Types of Political Crises.

Types of Appeals Crises	Emotional		Rational		Fear		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Beirut Port Explosion	60	60.6	25	25.3	14	14.1	99	100
Government Paralysis	28	30.1	50	53.8	15	16.1	93	100
Maritime Border Demarcation	7	14.9	25	53.2	15	31.9	47	100
Presidential Vacancy	24	45.3	6	11.3	23	43.4	53	100
Total	119	40.8	106	36.3	67	22.9	292	100
Chi-Square Test (χ^2)	Chi-square value (χ^2) = 60.62 Degrees of freedom (df) = 6 Critical value = 12.592 p-value = 0.000 Cramer's V = 0.32							

The table above shows the distribution of opinion articles by types of persuasive appeals and types of political crisis, thus enabling the identification of patterns in persuasive discourse according to the nature of the crisis addressed in the electronic newspapers under study.

Statistical evidence indicates that the calculated value of the Chi-square test (χ^2) reached (60.62 > 12.592), which is above the critical value at the significance level ($p < 0.05$) with (df = 6). This demonstrates statistically significant differences in the types of persuasive appeals used according to types of political crises. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted.

Regarding the magnitude of these differences, Cramer's V recorded (0.32), indicating weak to moderate differences. This suggests that the type of political crisis plays a noticeable role in determining the pattern of persuasive appeal in opinion articles, although it is not the only influencing factor.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this analytical study demonstrates that the treatment of political crises by Lebanese electronic newspapers was not merely neutral or descriptive; rather, it was characterized by framing patterns reflecting their political positioning and editorial choices. The results revealed statistically significant relationships between the political orientations of newspapers and the patterns of treatment adopted in opinion articles, whether at the level of headlines, reference frames, persuasive appeals, or publication objectives.

These findings confirm that opinion discourse does not merely reflect events but contributes to reconstructing them within selective interpretative frames that assign responsibilities and shape meanings, in line with the principles of Media Framing Theory. The results also showed that elements of presentation and persuasion did not perform merely a formal function; rather, they constituted a structural component in the production of meaning and the direction of audience reception.

Accordingly, the study concludes that Lebanese electronic journalism represents a double-edged sword in the context of political crises. On the one hand, it provides space for interpretation, enriches public debate, and enhances the circulation of information. On the other hand, it may slip into selective framing that reflects existing biases and deepens political and social polarization. In light of this, the study highlights the importance of further research into the mechanisms of interaction between the structure of media discourse and patterns of its reception, in order to enhance understanding of the dynamics of public opinion formation during political crises.

5.1. Recommendations

In light of the findings of the study, several professional, academic, and research-oriented recommendations can be proposed as follows:

- Strengthening standards of professionalism and objectivity in opinion articles by clearly distinguishing between the informational and opinion-oriented nature of journalistic content and avoiding the use of provocative persuasive appeals.
- Reconsidering the media frames adopted in the coverage of political crises and striving to adopt balanced interpretative approaches that allow for presenting and analyzing events without reproducing political divisions.
- Developing editorial policies that take into account both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of media discourse, thereby enhancing the social responsibility of journalistic institutions and limiting the stimulation of negative emotions.
- Emphasizing the training of journalists in crisis communication, through specialized training programs that enhance analytical skills and responsible interpretation, and that support the media's role in de-escalation and promoting public understanding.
- Conducting qualitative discourse analysis studies that complement quantitative analysis

in order to reveal the symbolic structures and implicit assumptions embedded in the treatment of crises.

- Conducting comparative studies between

electronic journalism and traditional media in order to identify differences in patterns of coverage, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of media influence dynamics.

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