




Media Representations of Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Critical Analysis from Social Work Perspective

Concept Note



DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



h²
Hochschule
Magdeburg • Stendal

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Project team: Prof. Sahar Almakhamreh, Dr. Jehad Alsaideh, and Dr. Asem Albakar

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a development in the quality of the Jordanian media discourse. Media outlets, in their various forms, have had an increased impact on the Jordanian society and the various movements occurring within it, whether political, social, or otherwise.

Although media has been and remains to be one of the most important drives of public opinion and source for its information, their role has amplified lately. Recent Events that included waves of asylum seekers arriving in Jordan, the rise in the number of non-Jordanian workers in the labor market has led to this expanded role of the media. These events have divided the options in front of various media outlets into 2 categories: either to be the safety valve for our multicultural society, or to be a party in the conflict, broadcasting materials that lead to diffusion, discrimination, and division.

Throughout, different opinions have surfaced about the role of the media in this tumultuous time. Some considered that it should stand with the public good of society and be a source of safety, stability, and a tool to fight against racism, xenophobia and discrimination. Others, on the other hand, said that it is the opposite as it in fact fuels hate, thus keeping the scene always tense and on fire.

There is a substantial body of literature arguing that economic, cultural and security concerns about refugees and migrants gain significant traction in people's minds (Esses et al., 2017). However, it is important to remember that most people hold complex views towards refugees and migrants: attitudes are formed based on a complex web of concerns, through a process that relies as much on emotion and individual values as on a rational analysis of evidence (Purpose, 2017).

Social work in Jordan works on developing intervention in many domains. Al-Makhamreh, and Hutchinson (2018), and Almakhamreh, (2019) stated that refugees have been challenged the practice of social work in many field and at all levels, ie, individuals, group, community and society, as well as social policy level. Media is one of the significance fields of social work to be investigated and developed, as there is a lack of studies that tackle social work, refugees and media. Therefore, it is expected that this study will enhance the competences of social workers' intervention at media level. By doing so we are applying the ethics, values, and principles of social work that grew out of humanitarian and democracy roots. Where advocacy and negotiation' skills should be vital implications for social work practice.

Research rationale and objectives

The research team has taken this initiative to conduct “Media Representations of Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Critical Analysis from Social Work Perspective”. In order to profoundly explore to what extend media representation of Syrian refugees impact the community's understanding of the Syrian displacement in Jordan.

The research's findings will contribute to developing social work interventions in media and elevating social workers' skills in using media as an advocacy and mass communication tool. Moreover, this research would contribute in develop media curriculum for social work in general.

This research is guided by the following key questions:

- How has the media depicted Syrian refugees in Jordan?
- How has media impacted on host community's understanding of Syrian displacement in Jordan?
- How do host community members perceive media contents that are related to Syrian displacement in Jordan?

- How do Syrian refugees perceive media contents that are related to Syrian displacement in Jordan?
- What are the feature /role of social work with media dealing with refugees?

Field Work Methodology

This research will use mix methods to explore and examine the ways in which Jordanian media represent the Syrian displacement in Jordan. We will start with quantitative survey targeting Jordanians and Syrian refugees who aged 16 years old and above and live in Amman, which hosts 29.5% of Syrian refugees in Jordan (around 193,865 individuals).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with media experts, social workers, and the Cyber Crimes Unit. Also, in order to understand profoundly the role of the mass media and other media methods, such as TV, Radio, social media, and written newspapers, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework to inform our methodology. CDA aims to understand and address social issues by critically examining what is included or excluded in texts, and what is 'perspectivised' through linguistic processes (KhosraviNik, 2010).

Because we will explore this subject for the first time in Jordan from social work perspective, we believe that the triangulations can support the trust and the accountability of the findings. Also if we could compare this with our colleagues in Germany, it will reflect crucial and critical findings that will never be captured in other methods.

The research team will use media dependency theory, which indicates that audience depend on media as the main mass communication tool that would help us in understand why and how media contributes in changing people attitude and behaviours (Darwish, 2012).

Moreover, the magic bullet theory of mass communication will be also used in this research. It assumes that the media create messages with a specific purpose – that is, to elicit a specific

response. People react in the same manner to a message. The effects of the media's "bullets" or "syringes" are immediate and powerful, often resulting in swift behavioral changes (Al-Majahra & Hilal, 2012, p.279). Additionally, the ecological approach to problem solving will be used to understand situations using the cultural language context.

What's more, the research team will use the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy which indicates how thoughts are related to feelings and behavior.

We are hoping to bring evidence base to support social work role and develop implications and model of social work intervention at the media field.

The Planned Budget

Based on the consultations that were conducted with the participants of last year project, the project team prepared the planned budget for the project activities as shown in table (1).

The Project's Primarily Plan

The project team has selected the Scientific Research Assistant for this project, a master student of Social Work refugees and migrations, at the German Jordanian University, while the three students and the academic assistant are going to be interviewed between 19 and 23 July 2020.

Table 1: The Project's Primary Plan

Task	Start Date	Due Date
Orientation meeting with all the project participants (2019 and 2020) and conducting capacity-building assessment	1/10/2020	–
Workshop on advocacy in social work	–	3/10/2020
Workshop on cultural competences interview and research ethics	–	10/10/2020
Workshop on analyses qualitative interviews	–	17/10/2020
Workshop on writing an academic research paper	–	24/10/2020
Workshop on critical thinking	–	29/10/2020
Workshop by media experts	–	31/10/2020
Literature review	1/11/2020	14/11/2020
Designing the research tools (Questions of KIs and survey's questions)	15/11/2020	20/11/2020
Data collection phase	22/11/2020	12/12/2020
Data analysis for quantitative data	13/12/2020	19/12/2020
Writing transcription for semi-structured interviews	13/12/2020	19/12/2020
Writing the research article	20/12/2020	23/1/2021
Preparing the presentation for research's findings	11/6/2021	19/6/2021
Workshop on presentation skills (Before Germany's mobility)	–	26/6/2021

References

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