THE IMPACT OF SAUDI SYSTEMIC FACTORS ON INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM

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Acknowledgements

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis was solely carried out by me. It has not been previously submitted to this or any other institute for the award of a degree or any other qualification.

Abstract

Investigative journalism is considered one of the most important types of news reporting although importantly it differs according to the media environment in which it is practised. This study addresses gaps in the literature by exploring the practice and status of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. This research examines the factors that influence investigative journalism, focusing on the relationship between systemic elements and the practice of investigative journalism from the perspectives of journalists and editors-in-chief. The study attempts to elucidate the ways that political, cultural and religious considerations influence investigative journalism. The mixed method approach adopted in this study combines interviews with editors-in-chief and questionnaires with journalists from all Saudi newspapers. Gatekeeping as a theoretical framework is employed to examine the extent to which the systemic factors, particularly the political and religious, impact on the practice of investigative journalism. Based on current literature and the findings of this study, the practice of investigative journalism is not common in Saudi Arabia, and there is a lack of professional recognition of investigative journalism influenced by inadequate training, financing and consideration of its importance. This study has established that the obstacles and restrictions imposed upon journalists by the systemic environment are unique to the socio-political climate in Saudi Arabia. Hence, this study has contributed to the existing body of research, finding that the government has the most influence over the practice of investigative journalism, while other factors such as culture and religion are influenced by the government. Moreover, this study has identified gatekeeping as a multi-stage process that is initiated prior to launching journalistic investigations and continues throughout the news cycle up to and through post-production.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

1.1. Chapter overview

This chapter outlines how this thesis fills a gap in the literature related to investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. It considers the background of the study, its importance, aims and objectives, research questions, methodology and contribution.

1.2. Background

This study focuses on the current state of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and the factors that influence it. Several studies have been conducted on investigative journalism in the West (Aucoin, 2007; de Burgh, 2008; Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Feldstein, 2006; Hume & Abbot, 2017; Mair & Keeble, 2011; O'Neill, 2010; Sullivan, 2013). The Western-centric research may not be applicable in the Saudi context, as it is a culture based on Islam and a different type of royal governance. Hence, this study presents an empirical evidence of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

The literature suggests that investigative journalism is a special kind of journalism. It plays a key role in serving society by detecting corruption, enhancing transparency and reinforcing public opinion. It has the power to instigate public debates. Investigative journalists often shoulder the responsibility for uncovering societal corruption and mistakes (Coronel, 2009; de Burgh, 2008; Kaplan, 2013; A. D. Kaplan, 2008; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014; O'Neill, 2010; Sullivan, 2013). Furthermore, investigative journalism has been considered a tool to develop media content (Kaplan, 2013). Meg Gaydosik, a senior media development advisor with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), said, 'Investigative journalism

is one component of media development but an increasingly important one … While the tools may have changed, accurate, documented investigative reporting is still one of the most important functions of the media' (Sullivan, 2013, p. 10).

The literature indicates that organisational, journalistic routine, individual, political and cultural forces shape media content (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). However, the influence of such forces differs from one society to another, from one culture to another and from one organisation to another. These forces have been studied in the context of investigative journalism in the West (Abdenour, 2015; A. D. Kaplan, 2008; Lublinski et al., 2016; Raphael, Tokunaga, & Wai, 2004; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013) and have indicated that the main factors that influence investigative journalism are economic, organisational, legal, journalistic routine and individual factors. Apart from facing many challenges including pressure from media owners and advertisers, investigative journalists also have to grapple with the high costs of investigation because of the vigour with which it is undertaken (Aucoin, 2007; Kaplan, 2013; Marsh, 2013; Ntibinyane, 2018). However, in more authoritarian countries, political and cultural factors are more influential as journalists are under the watchful eye of the government and other powerful pressure groups (Bebawi, 2016; Jurrat, Lublinski, Mong, Akademie, & Welle, 2017).

In the context of Saudi Arabia, the literature has portrayed a negative image of Saudi journalism as being loyal to the government and subjected to various levels of influence, predominantly culture, religion and government (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Al-Kahtani, 1999; Al Maghlooth, 2013; Alhomoud, 2013; Awad, 2010; Rugh, 2004). It is for that reason that Saudi newspapers are greatly impacted by systemic factors, which restrict their independence in what they can publish. This makes the relationship between the media and systemic factors in Saudi Arabia a complicated

one. This study presents an understanding and evaluation of the effects of systemic factors on investigative journalism through the opinions of journalists and editors-in-chief. Hence, the study captures the intricate relationships among factors that influence investigative journalism.

1.3. Statement of the problem

Studies examining investigative journalism in the West are numerous (Abdenour, 2015; Aucoin, 2007; Bulatovic, Bulatovic, & Arsenijevic, 2011; Feldstein, 2006; Fleeson, 2000; Gearing, 2014; Santamaría, 2010). Some studies have shown that the practice of investigative journalism has increased in the past decade (Kaplan, 2013; Rabiea, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). Investigative journalism has led to reform in societies by informing people of the truth about their communities and beyond concerning what was hidden from them. This activity has positively impacted societies (Coronel, 2009; de Burgh, 2008; O'Neill, 2010). Nevertheless, investigative journalism faces a number of challenges including high cost, lack of financial support, time pressure, governments and pressure groups (Bebawi, 2016; A. D. Kaplan, 2008; Raphael et al., 2004; Sullivan, 2013).

Despite the significance of investigative journalism, there is a gap in the literature on identifying and understanding investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and the factors influencing it. The significance of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is evident, for example in 2012, *Al-Riyadh* newspapers revealed that corpses of unidentified individuals were left for up to a year in refrigeration units and allowed to rot. This investigation led to the issuance of a decree stating that corpses should not be kept for more than two months, after which they should be buried. The present study addresses the gap in the literature about investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and the factors influencing it.

1.4. Research questions

The following questions have guided this study:

1. How do Saudi journalists and editors-in-chief perceive investigative journalism?

2. What are the challenges that influence the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia?

3. To what extent do systemic factors influence gatekeeping in Saudi Arabia?

1.5. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to ascertain details and provide a comprehensive account of the systemic factors that impact on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

1.6. Study objectives

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine perceptions and experiences of investigative journalism among journalists and editors-in-chief in Saudi Arabia.

2. To explore the factors influencing the implementation of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

3. To develop a framework of gatekeeping for understanding the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

4. To make recommendations on how to improve investigative journalism practices in Saudi Arabia.

1.7. Theoretical framework

The study is based on the gatekeeping theory proposed by Lewin (1951) and later advanced by Shoemaker (1991). The theory is based on the assumption that there

are various forces that ease or prevent news from passing through gatekeeping procedures. It is also argued that gatekeeping is a collective work rather than an individual one. However, the process of gatekeeping is a social construction that is identified by other main forces which in turn interact and develop to control and shape media content. This is particularly significant in the context of Saudi media, which is influenced the political system and religious culture.

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) suggested various factors that influence the production of news in a hierarchal model, including individual differences, professional routines, organisational factors, social institutions and social systems. They stated, 'At the heart of this outlook is the interplay between structure and agency, between the actions people take and the conditions under which they act that are not of their own making' (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, pp. 10-11). Thus, investigating these variables and their effects is necessary to understanding the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

In this study, the levels of influence of systemic factors on investigative journalism are examined. Benson and Hallin (2007) and Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) claimed that systemic factors have political, cultural, legal and economic effects. These factors differ from one society to the other and are the forces that shape the media systems and journalistic practices in societies.

1.8. Methodology and research design

A research design is the basic plan or framework upon which the collected data is set and analysed; it is a general research plan (strategy) that helps researchers conduct their research and investigations according to the steps they must follow in their research. As such, a research design involves data collection activities and

analysis, enabling researchers to answer their questions and draw conclusions. Hence, the research design derives its objectives from research questions, as it allows researchers to collect data in line with the allotted location, time scale and ethical considerations (Oppenheim, 1992; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, & Wilson, 2012).

The basic design of mixed-methods research is either convergent, exploratory or sequential. Thus, any design that researchers adopt provides the framework for the mixed methods used. This combination of data allows researchers to obtain various perspectives of the problem, as it is being investigated from multiple angles. Quantitative data (the questionnaire) presents researchers with general data indicating trends; qualitative data (the interview) yields an in-depth analysis of the interviewees. Combining the data provides various perspectives that help researchers assess all types of data together to support or challenge their hypotheses (Creswell, 2015).

The current study examines the impact of systemic factors on investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia, whereby the opinions of journalists and editors-in-chief are sought. In that regard, the study has adopted a mixed-methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Each method compensates for the shortcomings of the other, and the combination of both methods makes the data more convincing and credible (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; C. Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Using both methods of data collection results in a better understanding of the issue being researched than using either form of data collection alone (Creswell, 2015). Questionnaires and interviews are effective methods for this type of research, as they enable the researcher to learn first-hand about the opinions of the people involved. The collected data provide a wide range of views about the impact of the Saudi systemic factors on investigative journalism. The Methodology chapter outlines

the methods of data collection and analysis utilising pragmatism philosophy, as it is appropriate for this study. Pragmatism explains the action taken, combining positivism and interpretivism (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, et al., 2012). Pragmatism is usually preferred when researchers need to use mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Keleman & Rumens, 2008). In this study the use of pragmatism is justified as it helps in understanding the research problem. The data collection techniques included questionnaires and interviews. The results of the questionnaire and interviews were analysed using thematic and statistical analyses.

1.9. Rationale for the Study

The researcher worked as a journalist and at the editorial desk for 15 years and has also taught Media Studies at Imam Mohammad ibn Saud University. From his work in journalism, the researcher noted disagreements about conducting investigative reports, as some of these reports were omitted before publication. Furthermore, there is a paucity in the number of investigative reports published, despite positive reactions to such investigations and their role in developing effective media content at a time when investigative journalism is encountering various challenges due to modern technology and its impact on journalism. In addition, investigative journalism plays a crucial role in tackling issues of public interest and unveiling corruption for the sake of reform, which is one of the most important roles of journalism, as Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) emphasised.

Although many studies have examined investigative journalism as an effective tool in developing journalistic content, and the practice of investigative journalism in the past decade has increased considerably (Kaplan, 2013; Sullivan, 2013), studies about investigative journalism have not considered its influence in the context of Saudi Arabia.

This reflects a gap in the knowledge about investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and why it has not attracted the attention of researchers, despite its significance and the role it plays. This leads to an enquiry about the factors that impact on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. By nature, investigative journalism expresses journalistic professional practice as well as journalistic independence (Coronel, 2009; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). Thus, the study of Saudi investigative journalism and the impact of systemic factors on it becomes exciting.

1.10.   Contribution to knowledge

This study makes several original contributions to research on investigative journalism and gatekeeping in the context of Saudi Arabia. After reviewing the literature and critical frameworks of investigative journalism, the researcher was not able to find studies that explored investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and the factors that influence its practice. Hence, this study fills this research gap. The study also provides an understanding of how systemic factors influence the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and renders a frame upon which it is practiced.

This study also makes a theoretical contribution to gatekeeping and the hierarchal levels of factors that influence it through a model of gatekeeping emerging from the impact of systemic factors in relation to investigative journalism. The model contributed in this study is derived from western models for gatekeeping with some modifications to suit the context of Saudi Arabia. The study identifies pre-investigation as a process of gatekeeping.

The current study contributes thorough insights into the views of Saudi editors-in-chief and journalists. Hence, the study serves as a primary source of reference for students, journalists and researchers on investigative journalism, particularly in the context of Saudi media.

To sum up, the study provides evidence for further research on investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia, its status, the factors that inhibit its practice and how these issues can be addressed. The study contributes a framework for of the process of gatekeeping and a hierarchal model for the factors influencing it. The study also contributes some practical recommendations for improving upon existing investigative journalism practices in Saudi Arabia.

1.11. Importance of the study

This study is important because at the time this research was conducted, Saudi Arabia was adjusting to a new government established in 2015. This government has launched campaigns for reform and attacking corruption. Princes, ministers and high-ranking officials charged with corruption were arrested and imprisoned, providing opportunities for investigative journalism to step in. This gives the current study a particular significance, as it is a pioneering study that investigates the potential impact of the reforms and whether it is possible to conduct investigative reports in this environment.

Another important point offered by this study is that it is the first study to include editors-in-chief and journalists from all Saudi newspapers. Hence, this study has the potential to present a general overview of the status of Saudi investigative journalism and the factors influencing it.

The study is also significant as it is the first work to combine the process of gatekeeping and the hierarchal levels of the factors that influence it in Saudi Arabia. This offers an account of how investigative journalism operates and the factors that influence gatekeeping.

A further important of this study is that it is conducted at a time when journalism is encountering challenges caused by advancements in information technology and its influence on the future of journalism. This raises a question of what Saudi journalism has done so far to improve journalistic content, of which investigative journalism is considered an important tool for effective media.

1.12. Definition of Key Concepts

Throughout this study, the following key concepts were used: Investigative journalism, gatekeeping and systemic factors.

1.12.1. Investigative Journalism

There are several definitions of investigative journalism with varying qualifications. Investigative journalism encompasses a detailed, original search for hidden truths that is normally done by studying public files and profiles and using networking to reveal a particular issue to the public and hold people accountable for their deeds (Kaplan, 2013). The more demanding definitions present investigative journalism as a means of resistance (Bauer, 2005).

According to the Dutch-Flemish organisation of investigative journalists, there are three types of investigative reporting. One focuses on revealing facts about irregularities, illegitimate actions, scandals or any immoral or unethical action against people or establishments. A second type examines governmental or organisational policies and practices. The last type of investigative journalism comprises reports

about tendencies of a political, social, cultural or economic nature (Coronel, 2009). Nevertheless, de Burgh (2008) encapsulated the definition of investigative journalism as 'going after what someone wants to hide' (p.15). Weinberg (1996) believed that the journalist takes the initiative to report about issues that are important to the public— which is the essence of investigative journalism. This is what makes investigative reporting different from standard reporting (de Burgh, 2008).

Bob Greene, a former assistant managing editor of *Newsday*, noted the three basic elements of investigative reporting: 'investigation be the work of the reporter, not the work of others on whom he is reporting; subject of the story involves something that is important for readers to know; and others are attempting to hide the truth of these matters from the people (Bolch & Miller, 1978).

These three elements — hidden information, public interest and original work — are consistently used in most definitions of investigative journalism (See: Aucoin, 2007; Bernt & Greenwald, 2000; Blevens, 1997). The current study makes use of this definition in discussing investigating journalism.

1.12.2. Gatekeeping

Gatekeeping as a process of constructing media messages was defined by Shoemaker (1991) as 'the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day' (p.1). It is also the 'overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed' (Shoemaker, Eichholz, Kim, & Wrigley, 2001, p. 233). Gatekeeping has undergone important modifications since it was proposed in studies related to mass communication in 1950. In 1947, Kurt Lewin coined the term 'gatekeeping' in relation to social studies. The first gatekeeping model in mass media and

communication was developed by White (1950) in his study of the role of a newspaper editor who acted as a gatekeeper to news items. Other studies followed and accounted for the influence of other levels of media messages that were not accounted for by White (See:Bass, 1969; Gieber, 1956; Halloran, Elliott, & Murdock, 1970; Westley & MacLean, 1957). Following that, Brown (1979) argued that 'the point at which David Manning White transposed Kurt Lewin's gatekeeper concept to communications situations, elements of the original concept have been ignored or interpreted in a manner that renders some of the findings questionable' (p. 595).

Later Shoemaker (1991) found Brown's argument to be necessary for the development of a well-established gatekeeping theory that accounts for various people and organisations and other social aspects in the construction of media messages. In the same year, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) developed a comprehensive account of gatekeeping theory in which they presented a method for how media messages are constructed based on five levels of forces that impact the way media messages are processed: the individual level, the organisational level, the journalistic routine, the institutional level and the social system level.

1.12.3. Systemic Factors

Systemic factors relate to the context under which journalists operate. These include social, cultural and ideological factors in addition to political, legal and economic factors. These factors play an important part in shaping media content (Bagdikian, 2004; Benson & Hallin, 2007; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011). Al-Rifai (2004) identified systemic factors by culture, politics, religion and censorship. These factors, as Amin (2002) believed, affect the performance of journalists and make them vulnerable to possible conflicts of interest and outright corruption.

1.13.   The structure of the study

This thesis is structured in nine chapters as follows:

Chapter One, Introduction to the Thesis: This chapter is an introductory chapter that presents the background of the study, its importance, aim, objectives, research question and contributions to the body of knowledge by filling the gap that exists in the context of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Two, Background on Saudi Arabia: This chapter provides a general background of Saudi Arabia and its governance system, religion, culture and society. The chapter also presents an overview of Saudi press, media policy, media law, the system of journalistic institutions and the Saudi Journalism Association to aid understanding of how the Saudi press works.

Chapter Three, Literature Review: The chapter examines available literature on investigative journalism, the concept of investigative journalism, its role, techniques and challenges, focusing on Saudi media and the potential effects of the factors that influence it.

Chapter Four, Theoretical Framework: This chapter discusses the theory underpinning this study, the gatekeeping theory. It discusses gatekeeping and its relationships with agenda-setting theory, framing theory and news values theory. The chapter also explains the levels of influence on gatekeeping, particularly systemic factors and how these shape media content.

Chapter Five: Study Design, Process and Methodology: This chapter discusses the methodology of the study, which is premised on the Onion Model of research. It includes identifying the research philosophy, research approach, methodological choice, research design, data collection techniques, research strategy, research

questions, study sample, validity and reliability, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter Six, Quantitative Data Analysis and Results: This chapter presents the quantitative findings generated from the questionnaires.

Chapter Seven, Qualitative Data Analysis and Results: The chapter presents and analyses the data collected via semi-structured interviews.

Chapter Eight, Discussion of the Research Findings: This chapter discusses the research findings and their implications and the individual parameters and variables studied compared to previous studies.

Chapter Nine, Conclusions and Recommendations: This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, contributions to the literature and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: SAUDI ARABIA

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a background to Saudi Arabia and its governance system, religious leaders, culture and society to aid in understanding how the Saudi press works. The media system in Saudi Arabia, as in other countries, is a construct that reflects the country's politics, society and culture (Barayan, 2002; Shaikh, 1989). After presenting the background of Saudi Arabia, this chapter presents the history and development of Saudi press. Then the chapter will present a background of Saudi media policy and discuss media laws, the system of journalistic institutions and the Saudi Journalism Association.

2.2. Background to Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has a population of approximately 31 million people spread throughout the kingdom's 2.15 million square kilometres. Saudi Arabia is the world's largest producer and exporter of petroleum, giving it significant economic and political influence and making it one of the richest countries in the world. Saudi Arabia is also home to the holiest places in Islam, which millions of Muslims from all over the world annually visit to perform pilgrimages. All able-bodied Muslims should perform a pilgrimage (*hajj)* to Makka and Madina, the two cities which contain the holiest Islamic sites, at least once in their lifetime (Baki, 2004). Consequently, the Saudi Government is in charge of making decisions which influence Muslims worldwide (Shaikh, 1989). Baki (2004) believes that the status of Saudi Arabia amongst Muslims globally is highly significant, as are its relations to countries throughout the world.

The government of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy, and the king is the head of the Council of Ministers. This political system was established in 1932 with the founding of the kingdom itself by King Abdelaziz Al Saud. Due to the significance of Saudi Arabia, King Abdelaziz enjoyed the support of the main Saudi tribes and religious leaders, who helped him become their political and religious leader. As noted, 'the reliance on Arab tribalism and Islam means that a Saudi king, besides being the head of state, is also viewed as the leader of the tribe, as well as the Imam or religious leader of the Kingdom's faithful' (Wilson, 1994, p. 36). Therefore, the Saudi king gains legitimacy from Arabic tradition and the protection of Islam and its holy places (Wilson, 1994). The king is expected to unify the country and maintain and protect Islam in accordance with the teachings of Allah (Najai, 1982). Since the death of King Abdelaziz in 1953, six of his sons have succeeded to the throne. The current king, Salman Ibn Abdelaziz, has ruled the kingdom since 2015.

Since coming to power, King Salman has made many changes in the country and the system of governance, including the promotion of the third generation of the royal family to rulers in waiting. Amongst these changes were the appointment of the king's son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince. The king also restructured the Saudi cabinet by merging some ministries, abolishing others and establishing new bodies. Furthermore, under King Salman, women have been allowed to run for office in municipal elections. The kingdom has adopted a vision for economic and development reform by 2030 and committed to reducing its dependence on oil.

2.3. Religious leaders

Ulema, or Islamic religious leaders, are defined as a 'religious and very conservative group, traditionally conceived of by the government as the guardians of Islamic orthodoxy in governmental-political decisions' (Najai, 1982, p. 34). Religious

leaders have long had a strong relationship with the Saudi ruling family. At the establishment of the first Saudi State in 1747, Mohammed Ibn Saud, 'the ruler of Dariya in Najd', welcomed the teaching and doctrine of Sheikh Mohammed Ibn Abdel Wahab (Alireza & Al-Munajjed, 2000). Since then, religious leaders have played an influential role in the Saudi government's national and international decision making. King Abdelaziz and his sons granted even wider authority and responsibilities to religious leaders and made them political and social partners. Governance in the kingdom rests on three pillars of tradition: the king, Council of Ministers and *Ulema* (Najai, 1982).

Saudi Arabia is a theocracy in which politics and religion are inseparable. The Saudi constitution is Islamic law (*Sharia*), and the ruling family must base its decisions, even political ones, on religious grounds (Wilson, 1994). Religious leaders have the responsibility to issue religious rulings, or *fatwas*, approving or disapproving of decisions made by the government, groups or even individuals. While the Islamic holy book (*Quran*) and tradition of the Prophet (*Sunna)* serve as the main legal references for Saudi Arabia, religious decisions (*fatwas)* are resorted to in cases of legal doubt concerning constitutional decisions (Najai, 1982).

Al-Kahtani (1999) contends that religious pressure is a major factor that influences how the Saudi press selects and reports news. For instance, the Grand *Mufti*, the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia, opposed Saudi media publishing a picture of Saudi women participating in the Jeddah Economic Forum. The Grand *Mufti* complained that the women were pictured with their faces uncovered in public, which violates Islamic rules. He warned that such an act could lead to further behaviour which undermines Islamic values in the name of the freedom of women (Arab Press Freedom Watch, 2004). Another example comes from the

campaigns against some religious leaders by *Alwatan* and *Okaz*, especially after the 9/11 attacks in the United States. Religious leaders and other extremists criticised these newspapers' campaigns and attacked and issued *fatwas* against their journalists and columnists. The Grand *Mufti* in Saudi Arabia also criticised the press and called for a boycott of *Alwatan* for insulting Islam (Arab Press Freedom Watch, 2004).

2.4. Saudi society and culture

Saudi society shares the same basic components: religion, language, cultural traits, and the importance of family to the social structure. The Saudi people believe that Islam is their religion and their way of life. Thus, Islam controls Saudi norms and principles (Shaikh, 1989). The Saudi people generally do not separate religious and social practice. Al-Saggaf and Williamson (2004) write that 'Islam plays a central role in defining the culture, and acts as a major force in determining the social norms, patterns, traditions, obligations, privileges and practices of society' (p.1).

The family plays a major role in the life of the Saudi people: 'the family is the basic social unit; it is viewed as the centre of all loyalty, obligations, and statures of its members' (Shaikh, 1989, p. 5). Thus, in addition to Islamic culture, Saudi society is dominated by family traditions and allegiances. The influence of the family is very strong as relatives are expected to abide by family traditions, practices, norms and rules regardless of cost (Najai, 1982). Al-Saggaf and Williamson (2004) explain that Muslims have the obligation to keep in constant contact with their relatives (*Arhaam*), be compassionate to them, visit them and offer them all that they need.

Gender segregation is a pervasive characteristic of Saudi society and greatly influences Saudi social life (Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004). Men and women do not mix unless they are of the same family or other close relatives. Even when women

work in schools, banks or shopping stores, those are strictly for women who do not mix with men there. Alireza and Al-Munajjed (2000) argue that the maintenance of gender segregation and same-sex company is a practice designed to keep the allure of women away from men and protect women's chastity, which is considered to determine family honour.

Saudi society is characterised by male domination of females and males' authority over the females in their family (Shaikh, 1989). Older males are at the top of the hierarchy of Saudi families, and women at the bottom (Doumato, 2000). For instance, Saudi women are not allowed to travel abroad without the consent of their male guardian. Such practices and views common in Saudi society and culture are major features of the culture of the Najid tribe, which is one of the largest in Saudi Arabia. Together, the religious ideology and tribal legacy of Saudi Arabia form the heart of the kingdom's distinctive way of looking at the value of family, honour and patriarchy (Doumato, 2000).

In the context of the media, Saudi society imposes many restrictions on publications and cultural products (Mellor, 2011). For instance, indecent images, flagrant kissing and alcoholic drinks may not appear in newspapers and other Saudi publications. Even television channels do not carry scenes with sexual connotations, indecency or nakedness or any programmes that contradict Islamic teachings. Social factors, particularly tribalism (Al-Shebeili, 2000), furthermore influence the selection of news broadcast or published by journalists. For instance, newspapers usually cautiously approach any topic which has familial or tribal connotations to avoid any conflict with tribes or families. An example would be the issue of cross tribal marriages, where one is recommended not to marry from a person who does not belong to a particular known tribe.

2.5. Saudi press

The history of the Saudi press dates to the period of Ottoman control, with such newspapers as *Hijaz* in the Western region, *Shams Al Haqiqa* in Makkah and *Al Eslah* in Jeddah. After the unification of the kingdom, Saudi newspapers were established to replace those which had been under the control of the Ottomans. However, print media were not introduced to the country until 1908, when the *Hijaz* newspaper was first printed, and the current format of Saudi dailies and newspapers did not appear until the 1950s (Al-Shamikh, 1981). Throughout this history, the Saudi government has played an important role in influencing media content and the official line for outlets through printing laws and regulations (Al-Shebeili, 2000).

The Saudi press has passed through two major historical stages: the individual press stage from 1924 to 1964 and the institutional press stage from 1964 through the present. In the first stage, newspapers were considered not financially driven businesses but family enterprises, published to promote family issues and Saudi pride. In the second stage, the press became a market-driven industry (Rugh, 2004).

2.5.1. Individual press

The individual stage lasted from 1924 to 1964 and saw the issue of approximately forty individual and family publications. In 1924, the government newspaper *Umm Al-Qura* was established to publish official news and decrees. Jeddah and Makkah in the Western *Hijaz* region saw many newspapers, such as *Al-Bilad* and *Al-Madina*, during the 1930s. Other newspapers, such as *Okaz* and *Al-Nadwa*, were in publication by 1960 (Rugh, 2004). The newspapers and magazines published during this period were basic and did not have clear-cut agendas nor journalistic standards and practices. Most news centred on the daily activities of the

king and his entourage (Al-Shebeili, 2000). Researchers, including Al-Shamikh (1981) and Al-Shebeili (2000), point out that only seven publications from the era of the individual press still exist.

1. *Umm Al-Qura*: This newspaper was established in 1924 to publish government news stories, regulations and announcements. *Umm Al-Qura* continues to serve as the government's official newspaper issued by the Ministry of Information.

2. *Sout Al-Hijaz*: This newspaper was established in 1932 in Makkah by Mohammed Nasef, a Saudi writer, and printed contributions from only a few Saudi writers. It was forced to shut down during World War II but resumed publication after the war under a new name, *Al-Bilad*, and is still published today

3. *Al-Madina*: This newspaper was established as a weekly newspaper in Madina in 1937 by author Othman Hafiz. It was suspended during WWII but was resumed after the war and became a daily newspaper.

4. *Al-Yamama*: This magazine was established in 1953 by Hamad Al-Jaser, a famous intellectual. It was the first publication in Riyadh to compete with the *Hijaz* newspaper.

5. *Al-Nadwa*: This newspaper was established as a weekly newspaper in Makkah in 1985 by writer Ahmed Al-Subaye. It was later converted into a daily newspaper.

6. *Al Jazirah*: This newspaper was established in 1960 in Riyadh by author Abdullah Ibn Khamis. It started as a monthly newspaper and became a daily newspaper.

7. *Okaz*: This publication was established as a weekly newspaper in Jeddah by Ahmed Al Attar in 1960. It became a daily paper two years later.

Al-Shebeili (2000) describes the main features of these newspapers and magazines that appeared in Saudi Arabia during the individual-owned press stage.

1. Individual newspapers lacked adequate financial and professional standards but could openly and courageously approach various topics and issues without strict government censorship.

2. Individual newspapers were established and owned by authors and intellectuals who wrote in academic and literary styles, used descriptive language and poetry and addressed literary topics and other news stories in addition to political and social analyses. The newspapers took stories from news agencies and transmitted them in their own styles.

3. The individual newspapers could not be developed well due to inadequate funding and a lack of professional journalistic standards for their sources and technical development and production. In 1964, the Saudi government closed the privately owned newspapers and issued new regulations to create newspapers owned by institutions rather than individuals.

2.5.2. Institutional press

The transfer to institutional ownership is outlined by Al-Shebeili (2000):

1. The newspapers could not generate enough revenue from advertising and distribution to sustain their activities.

2. Non-professionals and editors-in-chief owned most newspapers but did not always follow professional journalistic standards in writing and reporting.

3. The government was determined to develop a strong national press to attract and encourage Saudi readers and to use the press as a weapon against the government's regional political opposition, the secular regime of nationalist Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser. The Saudi government sought to develop the national press as a platform to counter secular ideological threats that emerged in the 1960s.

4. The establishment of the Ministry of Information headed by Jamil Al-Hejailan in 1963 was a turning point that continues to shape the Saudi press. As the Minister of Culture and Information, Al-Hejailan was an avid enthusiast who converted the individual press into the institutional press. He oversaw the replacement of individual press licences with institutionally licensed presses. The Ministry of Information granted exclusive press and publication licences to only nine companies and gave them annual subsidies for printing and publications, premises on which to build facilities, and exemption from customs duties. The government also helped these newspapers pay high fees for their advertisements and distribution of government-established materials. The following ten organisations received licences:

1. Makkah Establishment for Printing and Information was founded in 1964 in Makkah to publish the newspaper *Al-Nadwa*. In 2014, its name was changed to *Mecca*.

2. Al-Madina Press Establishment was founded in 1964 in Jeddah to publish the daily newspaper *Al-Madina*.

3. Islamic Dawa Establishment was established by Shaikh Mohammed Al Shaikh, mufti of the kingdom, in 1964 to cover Islamic affairs and publish the weekly magazine *Al-Dawa.*

4. Al-Yamama Press Establishment was founded in Riyadh in 1964. It published the weekly magazine *Al-Yamama*, the daily newspaper *Al-Riyadh* and English-language newspaper *Riyadh Daily*.

5. Okaz Organization for Press and Publication was established in Jeddah in 1965 to publish the daily newspaper *Okaz* and the English-language *Saudi Gazette*. *Okaz* also published a sport magazine called *Al-Nadi*.

6. Al-Jazirah Press, Printing and Publication Establishment was founded in Riyadh in 1964 to publish the daily newspaper *Al-Jazirah*.

7. Al-Bilad Press and Publication Establishment was founded in Jeddah in 1964 to publish the daily newspaper *Al-Bilad* and the weekly magazine *Aqra'a*.

8. Dar Al-Yawm Press and Publication Establishment was founded in 1965 in Dammam in the Eastern Region to publish the daily newspaper *Al-Yawm*.

9. Assir Press and Publication Establishment was granted a licence in 1978 in Abha in the Southern Region but did not begin operations until 1998. In 2000, it started publishing the newspaper *Al-Watan*.

10. Al-Sharqia Establishment for Printing, Press and Information was established in 2009 in Dammam in the Eastern Region to publish the newspaper *Al-Sharq*./

2.5.3. Newspapers operating outside the institutional press system

Although only ten organisations received licences under the Institutional Press, other newspapers and magazines existed. Some belonged to government bodies and people of authority who were allowed to set up press establishments:

1. The Saudi Research and Marketing Group was established in Jeddah in 1972 and, three years later, started to publish Arab News, the first Saudi Arab newspaper in English.

2. The Saudi Research and Marketing Group was allowed to publish the newspaper *ASharq Al-Awsat* in London and three major Saudi cities in 1978. The same group published the daily newspapers *Al-Eqtisadiah* and *Al-Riyadiah* and the weekly magazines *Al-Majalah* and *Seyidati*.

3. In 1999, the Ministry of Information permitted foreign newspapers and newspapers owned by Saudis and licensed outside the kingdom to be printed in the country. These outlets included the newspaper *Al-Hayat*, based in Beirut, owned by Saudi prince Khaled Ibn Sultan and printed inside Saudi Arabia.

Rugh (2004) argues that as a consequence of the Gulf War, Saudi Arabia has been encouraged to expand its international media outlets, particularly to the Arab countries and to deal with international issues. For instance, *Al-Hayat* newspaper has been acknowledged as one of the most effective Arab newspapers, and as influential as *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, founded by the son of the reigning king in 1977. But all newspapers have felt the need to cater for the interests of their owners and are bound by Saudi publishing laws. For instance, a journalist at *Al-Hayat* newspaper claimed that self-censorship is needed when dealing with issues pertaining to Saudi Arabia, because if self-censorship were not practised, a whole edition of the

newspaper could be banned in Saudi Arabia. This would make newspapers lose their advertising income and governmental support, and ultimately loss of their licence (Rugh, 2004). Nevertheless, the newspaper was banned several times in Saudi Arabia for criticising the government. Similarly, *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, which is known to be liberal and exercise a comparatively high level of independence, has still always abided by Saudi rules and regulations. An instance of this is the reluctance of the newspaper to announce the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein in 1990 until three days after, because that was the line the government had adopted then. Some so-called liberal Saudi newspapers, such as *Asharq Al-Awsat*, are published in London instead to avoid the anger of the religious groups and their criticism inside Saudi Arabia of the content these newspapers publish.

2.6. Media Policy

The Saudi media policy is a set of principles and aims upon which the Saudi media depends. This policy derives from Islamic creed, which is the religion of the Saudi State (Kareem, 2000).

The first media policy in Saudi Arabia was issued in 1982. This policy consists of 30 articles pertaining to cultural, intellectual, social, political and professional aspects of the Saudi media. Media policies identify the general frames and aims around which the Saudi media operate. They also endeavour to fulfil the needs and concerns of society, predominantly addressing its social, cultural and political requirements (Al-Shebeili, 2000; Kareem, 2000).

The articles of media policies focus on general guidelines for organising media practice. However, the most relevant to this study include Article 26 of the Saudi Media Policy, which states that freedom of expression is guaranteed, as one of

the pillars of Islamic and national values. Additionally, Article 25 calls for objectivity from the media in its practices, as well as in the presentation of the facts in an unbiased manner. Although these articles stress the freedom and objectivity of the press in dealing with issues of public concern, they remain loose and generic, leaving room for the media to be controlled and directed.

As Freedom (2015) stated, Saudi official media policy also has a provision for lauding the views and achievements of the government, as well as promoting Saudi unity. The Saudi government has a strong hold over the press as it censors all sources of media which in turn causes journalists to practise self-censorship over the material they produce, particularly by refraining from criticising the Royal family and religious leaders which would be in breach of the media policy.

2.7. Printing Laws

Between 1929 and 2000, the Saudi government issued five printing laws. The first printing law, issued in 1929, was endorsed by the Saudi Consultative Council (Shoura). According to Al-Shebeili (2000), the Saudi printing law derives from the Ottoman publication law applied in the Hijaz area before the unification of the Kingdom, though the Saudis made certain amendments. This law continued to be enforced until 1940, when the second printing law was adopted, which was more detailed and elaborate than the first. The second printing law contained 62 articles, whereas the first contained only 36 (Al-Shamikh, 1981). This development of the printing law attributed responsibility for articles both to the writer and the editor-in-chief of a publication. However, this aspect of the law was later modified, with responsibility for any material published attributed to an editor-in-chief. The second printing law continued for nearly twenty years, during which the General Directorate

for Broadcasting, Press and Publication was established in 1953, which was later renamed The Ministry of Information in 1963 (Al-Shamikh, 1981).

The third printing law was issued in 1958. Containing 57 articles, it had no marked differences from the previous law. However, during this period, the role of General Directorate for Broadcasting, Press and Publication developed to become the sole source of information and activities of the press in Saudi Arabia. In 1964, the Institutional Press Directive was issued to focus on newspaper ownership, cancel individual press licences and give sole responsibility to license press organisations to the Ministry of Information (Al-Shebeili, 2000).

The fourth printing law, issued in 1982, contained 46 articles and included the following amendments:

1. The assertion that freedom of expression is a pillar within Islamic law and the constitution of the state.
2. The cancellation of previous restraints and censorship imposed on newspapers before printing. Newspapers used to have to send a draft copy of a newspaper to the General Directorate for Broadcasting, Press and Publication to approve it.
3. A shift in the responsibility of published material in the newspaper to the editor-in-chief.

The fourth law outlined seven topics that newspapers were not allowed to cover:

1. Any material that contradicts Islamic law and Arabic culture.
2. Any material or issues non-compliant with state security and principles.
3. Confidential information, except given the consent of a relevant authority.

4. Any reports that deal with information related to the Saudi military and armed forces.

5. Any laws, regulations, treaties, contracts or other official statements before the government announces them.

6. All material thought to be detrimental to heads of states or diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia, or material that may harm the relationship of Saudi Arabia with other countries.

7. Any insult or defamation directed at individuals.

The fifth printing law, which is still currently effective, was issued in 2000 and contains 49 articles. Eleven of the articles are concerned with the national press, while the others focus on general terms for organising the printing and publication of local and foreign books. This printing law allows for the establishment of journalist associations and the printing of foreign newspapers within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The articles of the fifth printing law most relevant to this study include the following:

Article Three concerns the call to disseminate Islamic moral standards and guidance, encouraging good and right behaviour, as well as the spread of knowledge and Arab culture.

Article Eight stresses that freedom of expression is guaranteed in all publications, but should adhere to the provisions of Shari'ah law.

Article Nine states that, in order to be approved, printed material should adhere to the following:

1. Not violate Shari'ah law.

2. Not jeopardise the security of the country or its public order or serve foreign interests at the expense of national interests.

3. Not incite feuds and dissent among people.

4. Not lead to the violation of an individual's dignity and freedom or defame an individual's trade rights and reputation.

5. Not encourage crime or incite hatred.

6. Not lead to damaging the Kingdom's economy or health.

7. Not reveal personal facts of an individual unless the consent of the individual is obtained or granted by a relevant authority.

8. Encourage constructive criticism and promote the welfare of people.

Article Twenty-Four holds that local papers will not be censored except in very special cases stated by the President of the Council of Ministers.

Article Thirty-One states that the publication of a paper will not be banned save for special cases approved by the President of the Council of Ministers.

Article Thirty-Three dictates that the editor-in-chief of a newspaper or anyone acting on his behalf will be responsible for the material published in the newspaper. In addition to the responsibility of the editor-in-chief or whoever acts on his behalf, the writer will also be responsible for the text he or she has written and is being published.

Article Thirty-Five states that any paper which publishes incorrect news or attributes to someone an incorrect statement has the responsibility to rectify mistakes and publish free of charge the corrected version immediately upon the request of the party concerned. The paper has the responsibility of publishing the correction in the same place in the newspaper or in a more prominent position in the paper where the

incorrect and corrected versions can be placed together. The affected people can claim compensation if any harm befall them as a result of the incorrect news.

Article Thirty-Six states that the Ministry of Information has the right to remove any element of a newspaper without compensating the publisher if the content of the paper goes against the teachings of Shari'ah.

Article Thirty-Eight of the Saudi printing law stipulates that a fine of up to fifty-thousand Saudi riyals will be applied to anyone who breaks any of the provisions of the law, provided that doing so does not prejudice any harsher punishment provided for by other law. The law also stipulates that a place or establishment in violation of the law will be closed for up to two months, or at times permanent closure of an establishment will be considered. The decision as to the punishment will be made by the minister concerned based on a proposal made by a committee, as mentioned in Article Thirty-Seven of the same law.

The fifth printing law includes certain discrepancies as to what is permissible for publication and what is not, as the language used is very broad and is flexible to interpretation. For instance, according to Article Eight, which states that for all publications in adherence with Islamic Shari'ah and constitutional rules, freedom of expression is guaranteed; however, freedom of expression is not clearly defined. Moreover, there are many different interpretations of the Islamic rules. Hence, in line with this article, journalists and editors find it hard to accurately identify what can be published and what cannot.

Article Twenty-Four of the printing law stipulates that local newspapers should not be censored unless the Council of Ministers deems it an extraordinary circumstance. Censorship of the national press has been exercised the same since

before the publication of the fifth printing law. Furthermore, the lack of a clear definition of censorship in this article may allude to the fact that there were no prior restraints on the publication of newspapers. Rather, censorship on all newspapers takes place post-publication.

Another instance is Article Nine, which stipulates that newspapers must accept constructive criticism for public interest and welfare. While this means objective criticism, this can be interpreted in many different ways, as there is no clear-cut definition of objective criticism for public interest, which leaves this definition up to those who decide on what is good for public interest. However, this Article has been amended in view of "Arab Spring" in 2012. Article Nine as amended added that it is strictly forbidden to publish any material that might lead to blemishing the reputation of the Grand Mufti (the highest religious leaders in Saudi Arabia), in addition to known religious leaders, and governmental authorities. The most recognised addition to the Article was related to any action that might harm public interest. This addition is so flexible as it makes the governmental authority concerned very empowered to censor all publication and take whatever action it deems convenient to restrict freedom of expression claiming that it harms public interest. Thus, any action can be regarded as having the potential of harming public interest.

Similarly, Article Thirty-Six of the fifth law grants the Ministry of Information the authority to withdraw any article in a newspaper without compensation in cases where the newspaper violates or goes against Islamic Law. The amendment of this article in 2012 added that the Ministry of Information can withdraw any material from publication in case it contains any of the materials that have already forbidden from publication in Article Nine. However, again, this article does not specify what should be deemed a violation of Islamic rules or harming public

interest, or defaming public and religious figures, leaving things up to interpretations. Furthermore, this article goes against Article Thirty-One, which grants the Ministry of Information the right to stop the publication of any article in a local paper without prior consent of the Council of Ministers.

There is also a discrepancy between banning and withdrawing an article without compensation, which appears to be the same action. Banning could involve more than one issue, whereas withdrawing may refer to only one specific issue. In addition, Article Thirty-One contradicts Article Thirty-Eight, which grants the Ministry of Information the right to punish anyone or any institution which violates the Printing Law with a fine of up to 10.000 pounds, closure of an establishment for up to two months, or the permanent closure of an institution.

Article Thirty-Eight of the Printing Law was amended in 2012 to encompass increasing the fine to 100.000 pounds and twice as much when an offence that goes against Printing Law is committed, and the person who commits such an offence is to be prohibited from publishing or participating in any newspaper or channel. Further penalties include temporary or permanent closure of any mass media or publishing place. There was a difference between paper publications and digital publications, the amended law stated that paper publication should be closed on the basis of a Prime Minister's decision, whereas digital publications are closed on the recommendation of the Minister of Information. Additionally, it stated that an apology should be published in the same paper and the same place in case there was any violation of the right of the people mentioned in the amended Article nine of Printing Law. The amended Article Thirty-Eight stipulated that any infringement of Islamic principles or causing any harm to the welfare of the country, the king is the authority who judges in this case and takes the appropriate measures or sentencing for public welfare.

According to Article Thirty-Three, the editor-in-chief of a publication is responsible for all materials published in a newspaper (though this does not mean that a writer is not responsible for what he or she writes), yet this contradicts the freedom of expression, printing and publication, outlined in Article Eight. Freedom of expression cannot be achieved when an editor-in-chief is made responsible for the opinions of writers. Nevertheless, the article grants the editor-in-chief the tasks of censoring and controlling what should be set for publication, and as such, it makes them act on behalf of the Ministry of Information.

Such ambiguities and discrepancies in the printing law has permitted the Ministry of Information to interpret the articles as it wishes, as most articles are generic and expressed in ways that allow for multiple interpretations. Such interpretability gives the Ministry of Information the flexibility to suspend the publication of any article for reasons not necessarily clear in the law. It follows that the law is designed to fulfil the objectives of the Ministry of Information, enabling it to control the information in national newspapers.

The law allows the Ministry of Information the freedom to identify the topics that conform to Islamic laws and those that do not, as well as those that work against the public interest. Freedom (2008) states that the Basic Law does not necessarily provide for press freedom, and that certain provisions of the law give the authorities the power to prevent any act that might go against its directives. The national press is obliged to follow the guidelines of the Ministry of Information, which are ambiguous in terms of what papers can ultimately publish.

The fifth printing law was issued in 2000, and is yet to have a provision for global developments in the field of information and communications technology. The

fifth printing law does not take into account satellite channels or the internet, both of which were adopted in Saudi Arabia in 1999. Furthermore, despite the fact that the Saudi market is open to foreign investors, the latter cannot invest in the Saudi media industry, as the Ministry of Information controls investment in Saudi media, with either the Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority (SAGIA) or the Ministry of Trade controlling all other investments. In addition, the Ministry of Information has refused to issue new licences for new national newspapers, and owns all national TV and radio channels, with no individuals or companies allowed to invest in them.

These circumstances have led Saudi investors to establish newspapers and TV channels in other Arab and European countries, as they are not allowed to establish them in their home country. Saudi investors own TV channels such as MBC, Alarabiya, ART, Rotana and Orbit. Though they are located in other Arab or European countries, these channels are directed at Saudi viewers. Furthermore, certain newspapers and magazines that are not licensed by the Ministry of Information to operate in Saudi Arabia have obtained licences from other foreign countries. For example, the *Al-Riyady* newspaper is printed in Bahrain, but it is distributed as a daily newspaper in Saudi Arabia. Press freedom within Saudi Arabia is still lagging behind the rest of the world, with no significant reforms having taken place despite the development of the internet, satellite channels, and electronic and digital media at large.

It could be argued that such laws are still in need of more transparency and objectivity making use of the experiences of other countries which are renowned for their good media practices. This is because media laws in Saudi Arabia are still unclear, have many weaknesses, and need reforming and even clear phrasing in order to avoid current ambiguity and flexibility of these laws. For instance, the current laws

are not very clear about the margin of freedom ascribed to the media. The current laws also do not state clearly the assurances that journalists should have in their media practices. It is clear that such laws have focused on the regulatory aspects of media practice more than the professional ones. Moreover, it is realised that the Ministry of Information is the sole arbiter in matters related to violations of freedom of expression in media. Al-Askar (2005) believes that when matters are only referred to the Ministry, this means that it is less objective as this makes the Ministry the judge and the jury.

2.8. Anti-Cyber Crime Law

In 2007 the Anti-Cyber Crime Law was issued in Saudi Arabia containing 16 articles. Article Two stated that combating cyber-crimes is done by identifying such crimes and determining their punishments to ensure: enhancement of information security, protection of rights pertaining to the legitimate use of computers and information networks, protection of public interest, morals, and common values, and protection of national economy.

Article Three relates to the punishment of the people who commit one of the following cyber-crimes: imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand riyals (£100.000) or to either punishment for: spying on, interception or reception of data transmitted through an information network or a computer without legitimate authorisation; unlawful access to computers with the intention to threaten or blackmail any person to compel him to take or refrain from taking an action, be it lawful or unlawful; unlawful access to a web site, or hacking a web site with the intention to change its design, destroy or modify it, or occupy its URL; invasion of privacy through the misuse of camera equipped mobile

phones and the like; and defamation and infliction of damage upon others through the use of various information technology devices.

Article Six states that any person who commits one of the following cyber-crimes shall be subject to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years and a fine not exceeding three million riyals (£600.000) or to either punishment: production, preparation, transmission, or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals, and privacy, through the information network or computers; the construction or publicising of a web site on the information network or computer to promote or facilitate human trafficking; the preparation, publication, and promotion of material for pornographic or gambling sites which violates public morals; the construction or publicising of a web site on the information network or computer to trade in, distribute, demonstrate method of use or facilitate dealing in narcotic and psychotropic drugs.

2.9. The System of Journalistic Institutions

The current system of journalistic institutions was inaugurated in 2001 as a replacement for the old system, which was set up in 1964. The new system consists of thirty articles, the most important being Article 3, which states that only Saudi citizens can hold a licence for establishing a press institution, provided that the shareholders number no less than thirty Saudi investors. The new system stressed the structure of these institutions and the development of Saudi newspapers to make them more professional. Article 20 of the new system, meanwhile, stipulates that the Ministry of Information is no longer qualified to sack the editors-in-chief of any newspaper, even they failed to carry out their jobs appropriately. This privilege was left to the journalistic institution itself. Nevertheless, the ministry should approve the nomination of any editor-in-chief. Moreover, the ministry has indeed interfered in the

sacking of the editor-in chief of *Al-Riyadh* newspaper, and advised the newspaper to sack its editor-in-chief.

2.10.   The Saudi Journalism Association (SJA)

This association was established in 2003 with the aim of enhancing the standard of journalism as a profession and protecting the rights and interests of journalists, as well as reinforcing freedom of expression and laying down the charter to which journalists are committed. In 2004, the first board of directors was elected, and have been running the association for 13 years. As such, the editors-in-chief who are approved by the government have been running the association, and there is no room for others to compete with them or win the nomination, as it is generally the case that journalists tend not to stand against their editors-in-chief in the election for running the association. It follows that this association is not playing an independent role. Al-Sarami (2015) argues that the board of directors of the association do not have a significant role to play, and have not succeeded in protecting the interests of journalists when there has been any violation to their rights.

2.11.   Conclusion

As the study concerns the Saudi society, this chapter has provided a background to Saudi Arabia and its governance system, religious leaders, and culture. The chapter has also presented the history and development of Saudi press, which has gone through several stages: individual and institutional, as well as the newspapers operating outside the institutional press. Following that the chapter discussed Saudi media policy, with special focus on media laws. The chapter has also moved on to discuss the system of journalistic institutions and Saudi Journalism Association.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is a review of existing literature on investigative journalism. It is argued that 'Investigative journalism has never taken off in the Arab world as it has in the West... government officials in this region don't look favourably on the idea…journalists face a barbed maze fraught with intimidation…' (Martin, 2010, p. 85). Investigative journalism thus faces many challenges worldwide, including political restrictions and inadequate funding. In the context of some Arab countries, state and government control has always hindered investigative reporting. The recent Arab Spring turmoil in several Arab countries is said to have led to some improvement in the freedom of the press, particularly due to online platforms (Bebawi, 2016). In contrast, Hamdy (2013) asserted that the cultural upheavals that have taken place have not produced more incisive investigative journalism, which, if true, does not bode well for the future of freedom in Arab countries. This chapter therefore, provides a deeper understanding of investigative journalism by presenting a review of the pertinent literature, providing evidence on this journalistic practice and discussing its role and challenges, particularly in relation to the systemic environment in Saudi Arabia.

3.2. Overview of Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism is defined differently by researchers and journalism specialists. However, those agree that the definition of investigative journalism encompasses reporting about detailed original search for hidden truth, which is normally done by referring to public files and profiles in addition to the use of networking in order to reveal to the public and make powerful institutions accountable

for their deeds (Kaplan, 2013). According to the Dutch-Flemish organisation of investigative journalists, there are three types of investigative reporting. The first focusses on revealing facts about irregularities, illegitimate actions, scandals or any immoral, or unethical action against people or establishments. Also, there is a type of investigative journalism that examines governmental or organisational policies and practices. The last type of investigative journalism relates to the description of the trends that have political, cultural or economic significance, as well as social trends (Coronel, 2009). Nevertheless, de Burgh (2008) encapsulates the definition of investigative journalism in 'going after what someone wants to hide' (p.15).

Bob Greene, former assistant managing editor of *Newsday*, notes that the three basic elements of investigative reporting are:

- that the investigation be the work of the reporter, not the work of others;

- that the subject of the story involves something that is important for his or her readers to know; and

- that others are attempting to hide the truth of these matters from the people' (Bolch & Miller, 1978).

The three themes above: the information that is hidden, public interest, and originality of work are constantly used in the definitions of investigative journalism (Abdenour, 2015; Aucoin, 2007; Bernt & Greenwald, 2000; Blevens, 1997). These themes of investigative journalism have been used in this study in assessing the status of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, as Ettema and Glasser (1998) argued, the duty of investigative journalist is to "look beyond what is conventionally acceptable, behind the interpretations of events provided for us by authorities and the authoritative" (p. 3). However, as Coronel (2009) explains, it is

wrong to consider leak journalism as investigative journalism. Leaks can be used to trigger an investigative report, but it necessitates exploring, verifying and crystallisation; otherwise leaks remain lagging behind any validity and truth.

In investigative reporting various sources of information, people and documents, are utilised to give full report about an issue that is being investigated. The late Phillip Knightley, a renowned investigative journalist, believed that "investigative reporting involves long, boring hours in libraries, looking things up, tracing people, studying court reports, attending legal conferences, typing up memos and listening to outlandish conspiracy theories" (Mair & Keeble, 2011, p. 19). Investigative reporting usually takes more time to conduct than standard reporting. Weinberg (1996) believes that the journalist takes the initiative of reporting about issues that are important to the public—which is the essence of investigative journalism. This is what makes investigative reporting different from standard reporting (de Burgh, 2008).

Consequently, investigative journalism has qualities that make it stand out from other forms of journalism. Investigative journalism is mainly concerned with the investigation of a particular issue or topic that interests the public. It is an original and proactive process rather than an event. It provides further information that was not previously made known to the public (Ansell, 2010; Hunter, 2012). Fee Jr (2005) believe that the similarities and differences between investigative journalism and conventional journalism are encompassed in the fact that investigative journalism seeks to uncover corruption among people holding positions of power in order to make the institutions respond to the demands of the people through the establishment of a reciprocal relationship, which leads to reforms. Conversely, conventional

journalism aims to publish press reports to restore contact between the community and decision makers and to rekindle the community's interest in public affairs.

Investigative reporting is nearly as old as journalism itself. The earliest known investigative reporting goes back to the first American colonial newspaper published in 1690 (Feldstein, 2006). The first issue of *Publick Occurrences* exposed the exploitation of the human rights of French prisoners of war. The British government of the time shut down the newspaper, and its first issue was also its last. However, in 1735, printer John Peter Zenger ccused New York's colonial governor of corruption, and Zenger was subsequently arrested. His lawyer gave a speech defending the rights of journalists that became their creed for two and a half centuries. Zenger's defence attorney stated that journalism had 'the liberty of exposing and opposing arbitrary power…by speaking and writing truth' (Alexander & Katz, 1963, p. 99). This led to the acceptance of unveiling public atrocities and questionable policies as a task of journalism. Thus, exposing the mistakes made by leaders, powerful people and institutions became part of the job of investigative reporters (Aucoin, 2003). As such, investigative journalism has significantly influenced public policies and opinions, to the discomfort of those in power. Theodore Roosevelt called this type of work 'muckraking' due to investigations into his behaviour while in office. 'This term would become a badge of honour' for those committed to 'investigative reporting, adversarial journalism, advocacy reporting, public service journalism, and exposé reporting' (Feldstein, 2006, p. 2).

Woodward and Bernstein offered another example of investigative reporting when they revealed the Watergate Scandal between 1972 and 1976, reporting what is perhaps the most famous story in American politics. Feldstein (2014) described and analysed the fall of US President Richard Nixon by virtue of the media and

investigative journalism. Woodward and Bernstein uncovered evidence related to the burglary at the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate Building, which implicated the most powerful administration in the world, ultimately leading to the resignation of President Nixon.

In some Arab countries, investigative journalism is not new; in fact, it has been practised by Arab journalists for some time, although non-methodically and only in the context of individual investigations. The first reported instance of investigative journalism occurred in the middle of the twentieth century and concerned the provision of outdated and damaged weapons to the Egyptian Army in 1948, which was reported by Ihssan Abdul Qaddous, a renowned Egyptian journalist, and published in the weekly magazine *Rose al-Yousef* in June 1950. As a consequence of this reporting, an immense public outcry demanded investigation of the matter, and the outcome was drastic change in the Egyptian decision-making structure (Abdulbaqi, 2013; Bebawi, 2016).

The implementation of the concept of investigative journalism in the West differs from its implementation in the Arab countries. Investigative journalism as it is implemented in the Arab countries is still not clearly defined.

> A common mistake in Arab journalistic usage is that "features" and "investigative" articles are often used synonymously. "*Tahqeeq*" (investigation) is mostly used to describe a feature, which covers the human-interest angle of stories. Whereas "*tahqeeq istiqsa'ee*" (investigative report) is the term acceptable by media professionals to explain the form of journalism covered by this manual (*Manual for Arab Journalists*, 2007, p. 8).

That is why in the less developed countries, investigative journalism is not clearly defined, as most leaks are regarded as investigative reports, while in fact they are not. Thus, mere reporting about crimes and corruption, which is listed under investigative

journalism, should not be considered so (Bebawi, 2016; Kaplan, 2013; Poler Kovačić, 2009). This confusion and absence of a precise definition of investigative journalism in some Arab countries reflects its weaker tradition and inability to match the level of investigative journalism of some advanced countries.

Investigative journalism grew remarkably in the first decade of the twenty-first century and was greatly influenced by the existence of specialised agencies, including the Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) (Rabiea, 2013). ARIJ is the first Arab network of investigative journalism established in Amman, Jordan in 2005. This network helps journalists from Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, and Tunisia in their investigations, giving them training, and financing their investigative projects. The network was established because of joint efforts between Danish journalists and Arab ones. It was first financed by the Danish parliament, as part of the International Monetary Support (IMS). The technical and professional support of the network was provided by the Danish Association of Investigative Journalism. Other Sponsors later joined in providing financial support to ARIJ including UNESCO, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, and the Netherland Embassy in Amman. Membership for the network is open, and journalists can fill a form online as a first step to become a member. The Network has published its Manuel for Arab Investigative Journalism in 2009 (Arij, 2009). Armao and Johnson (2014) argue that ARIJ has established a platform for journalist unions and media associations to come together and work against any restrictive measures imposed upon journalists, and support journalistic freedom, self-censorship as opposed to strict censorship. Consequently, the publishing of investigative reports increased markedly. Nevertheless, ARIJ is still encountering many challenges for its sustainability, as it is continually in need of new sources of revenues and new markets.

Currently, there are many investigative reporting units in some Arab countries, including one maintained by the Cairo newspaper *Al-Watan* and one at the Saudi newspaper *Al-Hayat*, which is published in London (Bebawi, 2016; Rabiea, 2013). The influence of the Arab Spring on investigative journalism has been paramount and various. The Arab Spring, which was seen to be enabled by the existence of social media, has given more freedom to journalists to conduct investigative reporting in some countries, such as Tunisia and Jordan. It created a platform for journalists to practise investigative journalism and report about issues that were considered taboo, or kept away from the public (Hamdy, 2013). Mass media was thoroughly involved in the coverage of the incidents and atrocities that took place in most Arab countries. Yet the Arab Spring also led to curbs on investigative journalism in other Arab countries, such as Egypt and Syria (Bebawi, 2016).

Additionally, the turbulent political and economic situation in the Arab countries since the Arab Spring has made the practice of investigative reporting precarious. The report of freedom of the press in 2014 shows that the freedom of the press in many Arab countries is declining because of the backlashes that have taken place since the Arab Spring and the dwindling political power in those countries. The Arab Spring did bring about some transformations as in Tunisia. However, the insecurity, for instance, in Libya, posed a threat to press freedom in that country as many journalists were kidnapped, and attacked by groups and militias, notably the assassination of Aljazeera television presenter in Benghazi (Freedom, 2014).

The turmoil in the political environment in the countries that witnessed the Arab Spring led to violations of the freedom of press, risk to journalists, and increased censorship. There has also been occasions in which journalists were accused of presenting the public with material that violates the norms of society and religion

(Hamdy, 2013). However, Arab people are still hopeful that in the long-term direct access to communication platforms, such as social media, on which they can voice opinions will eventually make stringent state censorship less effective.

3.3. The role of investigative journalism

Investigative journalism is the act of uncovering information about issues of interest to the public that have remained hidden, including corruption and malpractice on the part of government figures, businesses and institutions. Investigative reporters seek to uncover facts and bring to light issues that are new and/or hidden from the public (Aucoin, 2003; Bebawi, 2016; Coronel, 2009; de Burgh, 2008; Ettema & Glasser, 1998; Kaplan, 2013). The role of investigative reporting includes serving as a tool to promote and enhance deliberation by informing the public about issues so that they can be debated (Lanosga, Willnat, Weaver, & Houston, 2017; Patterson & Seib, 2005). Coronel (2009) argues that investigative reporting differs from paparazzi journalism, because it does not focus on private lives but on subjects of public interest. It functions as a watchdog that checks on the abuses of power amongst those who have the power and wealth. Investigative journalists go after wrongdoings in society in order to set them right. It does not involve personal interests and benefits. It is compared to uncovering the secrets in society and presenting the public with hidden facts to expose them. Investigative journalists report on issues as corruption in government offices, criminal deeds as well as abuse of power and abuse of human rights. Ettema and Glasser (1998) consider investigative journalists as 'custodians of conscience' who have the responsibility of uncovering flaws in society and in governmental institutions.

As such, investigative journalism has the potential to uncover society's mistakes, expose corruption and crime, free the innocent, jail the guilty and change

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the laws of the land. It provides the public with the information necessary to know, as opposed to dubious information being circulated by other sources (Gearing, 2014; O'Neill, 2010). Investigative journalism focuses on the relationship between decision makers and public interest. An investigative journalist exemplifies the connection between the press and democracy, despite the different social and political contexts that are prevalent. Ideally, the role of investigative journalism should be to provide the facts without manipulation. Investigative journalists present facts and information without any falsifications, push political leaders to confront social problems, and provide an opportunity for citizens to express their opinions to help create social systems that are more open, transparent, and capable of addressing social responsibilities (Wang, 2010). However, this is in principle not pragmatic, because media operates under particular agendas, whether social, political, or economic. Coronel (2009) argues that the agenda of sources of information should be considered as they do not in fact always volunteer information. They have to gain something from telling journalists about what they want to convey to them and do not necessarily tell the truth. Thus, journalists have the challenge of knowing what is true and what is not. Journalists also have to distinguish between whether sources of information are simply serving their interests or also the interests of the public. Investigative reporting reveals scandals, and shames the individuals involved. So as well as the classic application of objectivity, precision, credibility, trustworthiness and neutrality, investigative journalists are drawn into more subjective areas of work when analysis of sources and making moral judgements of right and wrong.

Additionally, investigative journalist can be accused of scandalmongering, and not just by those whose wrongdoings are being exposed. Classic investigations can interfere in the private lives of others and overstep the normal bounds of ethical

reporting. Some investigative reports inflate the story to make it worth investigation. However, in order to make it worthy of investigation, the story must go beyond personal misbehaviour into a wrongdoing that affects the public interest and damages the public or a particular group of people (Coronel, 2009). An instance of this is the Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton's scandal that was provoked by the Republicans to undermine the authority of the American President at that time (Edmundson, 2005).

Kohut (2001) is of the opinion that Americans increasingly think that media criticism prevents and discourages political leaders from doing what they believe to be right. This is because ordinary Americans, according to Kohut, believe that investigative journalism is motivated its own interests rather than desire to protect the public interest. Investigative journalism should be a powerful bulwark not just against governmental agencies but also against the greed of media corporations, as Kohut argues.

Investigative reporting is valued as part of the checks and balances in any democratic society. It has succeeded in holding power to account and has brought some individuals to justice. Investigative journalism supports democratic accountability (Carson, 2014; Pule, 2009). However, this does not apply in the context of Saudi Arabia, as the political system is not democratically based and there are not multi-political parties to support or go against.

Most studies of investigative journalism have found that it acts as a tool for uncovering hidden information about issues of interest to the public (see for example, Abdenour, 2015; Aucoin, 2007; Blevens, 1997). The extent to which investigative reporters can operate is sometimes dictated by the degree of freedom they are granted. This means that the role of investigative journalists differs based on the systemic

environment in which they operate. For example, a study of investigative journalism conducted by Stetka and Örnebring (2013) in nine countries, including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, noted that investigative journalism in these countries contributed to debates about changing the countries' economies, although it was stronger in the countries with stable media markets (i.e. Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic). It should be noted that media market stability is at its lowest in most of the countries of the Middle Eastern, partly due to government control over media, lack of democracy, and current unrest. The Press Freedom index (2013) states that even after the Arab Spring, media freedom is still fragile and threatened. This is because many Egyptian and Tunisian journalists are still subject to threats, physical attacks, and persecution. Moreover, in Libya, journalists are forced to exercise a high level of self-censorship as a result of the unstable environment there.

The role of investigative journalism in some Arab countries is lessened by the instability of most of these countries and the close relationship between their media and their governments. Hamdy (2013) goes as far as to claim that due to the status quo of the region, many Arab journalists value personal and job security more than cutting-edge reporting. Investigative journalism has the potential of playing a major role in advocating democracy in Arab countries through informing the public of what they should know; media is not supposed to be a privilege, but rather should be in the hands of the masses. All people have an equal right to know facts pertaining to their lives and livelihood (Bebawi, 2016). Furthermore, the interference of the political system and government financing of many newspapers, as well as ideological and party affiliations, deter the press from performing its role in detecting

indiscretions and its supervisory role over the different institutions of society for the welfare of people (Rabiea, 2013).

Investigative journalism can potentially play a major role in the career of any journalist; however, fear of damaging one's reputation as a journalist and lack of funding led journalists and editors to curb their ambitions. Journalists who are empowered to voice their views without fear of reprimand must find a balance between challenge and reward (Hollings, 2014). Investigative work is demanding as standards of accuracy, fact checking, ethics, and the fundamentals of real investigative practices, must be genuine and strictly followed (Phillips, 2010). Other qualities needed for journalists are: persistence, having the desire to explore issues, having his /her own opinion, being single minded, being very influenced and provoked by wrongdoing, as well as being flexible and having no issue with acting differently to others (Hollings, 2014; Poler Kovačić, 2009).

At the heart of investigative journalism is the desire to pursue liberty and support democracy. Spotlighting specific abuses of particular policies or programmes, can provide policy-makers with the opportunity to take corrective actions without challenging or ending their authority (Feldstein, 2006). But Aucoin (2003) summed up the role of investigative journalism as having the potential to end political careers, put criminals in jail, free innocent prisoners, provoke new laws and other reforms and inspire social change.

3.4. Investigative Journalism Techniques

Investigative journalism applies various techniques, based on the nature of the topic investigated and the hypothesis and question driving the investigation. It is a systematic inquiry that takes place over a period of time. It typically uses the most

advanced technology and computer networking, as well as data analysis and visual images in the investigation. The techniques used by investigative reporters can challenge normal ethical boundaries, and exceed normal limits where inquiries are justified by editors and regulators as necessary in the public interest. Methods that would normally be deemed unethical, such as using hidden cameras and microphones and the reporter posing as someone else or going undercover, are a common feature of investigative reporting (Aucoin, 2007; Ongowo, 2011; Poler Kovačić, 2009). The reporters do this to discover wrongdoing, corruption, inappropriate practices, and abuses in order to reveal such things to the public. Reporters are given clearance to use such techniques where some element of subterfuge is the only way of uncovering the truth and collecting information about the story investigated. Their plea is that the public has the right to know about corruption, which thus allows an exception to the normal ethical boundaries (Abdulbaqi, 2013).

Investigative journalism has been conceptualised as a triangle: secrets, salience and storytelling. If any side of this triangle is removed, increased, or decreased at the expense of the other parts, then the credibility of the investigative report is diminished (Marsh, 2013). Gilligan (2011) believes if reporters engaged in investigative journalism always had to perfectly uphold the ethical codes of journalism, not much would actually be investigated. Ongowo (2011) considers investigative journalism does a noble job when it uncovers the issues that those in power have tried to hide from the public.

Nevertheless, Aucoin (2007) argued that using methods that would normally be unethical to uncover truth can cause public unease. It has been reported that most Americans approve of the techniques that are used by investigative reporters, but they are against paying sources of information financial sums as doing so might influence

the credibility of the information given (Fielder & Weaver, 1982). Other tools that are used by investigative reporting include secret filming and impersonation. While these tools are necessary for investigative reporting, they are very controversial. They go against the ethical values of society, but they are used as a last resort to uncover the truth that is mainly in the public interest. Hence, investigative journalism is utilized when journalists have collected evidence that wrongdoings have been committed. The tools for the investigation are used to catch the person investigated to uncover the truth and reveal it to the public (Marsh, 2013).

There is a discrepancy between the support investigative journalism receives and the investigative techniques that are used by reporters (Willnata & Weaver, 1998). This view is seconded by A. D. Kaplan (2008), who concluded that 67.3% of American investigative reporters are not in favour of using subterfuge or any other ethically-questionable techniques in their investigations even if not doing so leads to missing out on some aspects of the story. That is why most investigative reporters are cautious when it comes to using investigative techniques. A. D. Kaplan (2008) believes that using deception can spoil the credibility of an investigative story. Belsey and Chadwick (1992) are of the opinion that journalists have the task of investigating and reporting honestly and accurately. However, some investigations in the interest of the public can only be revealed undercover, as in the instance of a journalist adopting a pseudonym and attempting to lure the corrupt person to do a deal in order to uncover the corruption that is taking place. Once the corruption of the person has been proven, the privacy of the corrupt person is no longer protected.

The plea of investigative journalists is 'the ends really justify the means' (Lambeth, 1992, p. 126). Nevertheless, there is still a call for investigative journalists to adhere to the standard ethics of journalism even when the public interest is at stake.

In the context of Arab journalism, Hamdy (2013) thinks there is a tendency towards the adoption of entertainment-oriented journalism, in which scandals about celebrities are uncovered; however, controversial investigative techniques are seldom used for issues of public interest. Abdulbaqi (2013) stated that publishing investigative reports about abuses will draw the attention of people to perceived crimes and hence they would judge them accordingly. Rabiea (2013) believes that journalists should always remain a source of credibility and that their integrity should not be tarnished. Therefore, when a journalist goes undercover, this might undermine the reputation of both the journalist and the newspaper.

Going undercover involves some sort of deception; therefore, the journalist should do some risk assessment to see whether going undercover is worth having to justify resorting to 'deception'. Nevertheless, if the journalist was investigating a crime or a criminal act, going undercover can implicate him, and sometimes it is very difficult to defend such an act. For instance, in the investigation of the murder of the Lebanese Prime Minister, Tawfeek Alhariri, one of the correspondents of Aljadeed Channel in Lebanon, entered an apartment through the window, although he later claimed he got permission from the owner of the apartment and the guard of the building. The reporter had availed himself of some of the documents for his investigative report. The Lebanese judicial authority imprisoned him for a few months, charging him with entering an apartment illegally (Rabiea, 2013).

The manner in which a reporter collects information for an investigation is based on the subject of the investigation and the legal, cultural, and social conditions that govern the investigation. For instance, in order to conduct an investigation, French journalists sometimes find ways to illegally access the official documents since French law forbids access to governmental documents (Aucoin, 2007). Hence,

journalists find themselves obliged to depend on leaks and unofficial or unnamed sources to reveal the truth. The same also happens in Latin American countries, some Arab countries, and other countries worldwide where journalists do not have the legal right to access governmental documents. Journalists thus find it difficult to expose the corruption of the government or other top influential and/or military people. The secrecy of the official documents obliges reporters to use leaked documents, interviews, observation, and tracing (Aucoin, 2007; Poler Kovačić, 2009).

Conversely, investigative journalists in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, and the Scandinavian countries have only relatively recently been granted a more acceptable level of access to public documents. This access is protected by freedom of information laws. In these countries, which are renowned for their free press, investigative techniques tend to use documents, direct interviews and direct observation, among other techniques, to help in the investigations (Aucoin, 2007).

The duty of the media in serving as a public guardian necessitates conducting investigative reports about cases of corruptions, disorder, dishonesty and abuses. Thus, it is in the public interest that journalistic investigations are conducted to make the information that has been gathered accessible to the public. In doing so, journalists should be guarded by the freedom of information law in their respective country. It is unlikely for the media to perform its role effectively when journalists are being shackled as they cannot do their duties as watchdogs without having some access to governmental documents and officials. In fact, journalists need access to budgetary details, policy documents, various correspondences, and other sources of information. If journalists are not allowed such access to the sources of information, then they will be obliged to depend on 'leaked' information and secondary documents, including rumours. In this case, journalists will be more at risk of defamation and other legal

threats. Consequently, in the absence of legal access to information, governments control the official information and only publish what they see fit at the expense of truth. This is often what happens when the freedom of information laws are not implemented as intended (*Manual for Arab Journalists, 2007*).

One of the techniques used by investigative journalism involves shield laws, as reporters sometimes use anonymous sources who prefer not to reveal their identities to the public. Shield laws provide some protection for journalists in those situations and thus encourage investigative reporting. Otherwise, when reporters agree to give anonymity to the people who do not want to reveal their identities, the journalists risk being prosecuted or even jailed for refusing to reveal their source. (Poler Kovačić, 2009; Wirth, 1995).

It follows that the use of investigative reporting techniques differs from one country to the next based on the regulations and laws enacted in every country regarding the freedom of press, the freedom of information, and the protection of journalists. Consequently, investigative journalism encounters many challenges, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.5. The challenges facing investigative journalism

Investigative journalism flourishes with freedom of the press; in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Scandinavian countries and Australia, investigative journalism is more common than in countries with stringent press censorship. In the less-democratic countries or in unstable regimes, including Russia, some Middle Eastern and Eastern European countries and countries in the Far East and Africa, investigative journalism suffers significantly or may not

exist at all (Aucoin, 2003; Lublinski et al., 2016; Martin, 2010; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013).

These observed differences reflect the four theories of the press developed by Siebert et al in the 1950s. These were authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist. The authoritarian media environment is utilized by dictatorship governments, and quasi democratic ones where media is under the control of the authorities (Siebert, Peterson, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). The authoritarian theory, that emerged in England around16th and 17th century and later was practised worldwide, has as its principle the notion that the press has the role of serving the states and their governments. It follows that the governments enjoy the right of using the media, whether private or public to further their interests. "The Authoritarian theory of press control ….. is a theory under which the press, as an institution is controlled in its functions and operation by organized society through another institution - government." (Siebert et al., 1956, p. 10). Governments control the media through patents, licensing, and censorship. That is why the media are not in a position to criticise the government and the political system, nor the governments who affiliate with them (Siebert et al., 1956).

Thus, the role of the press is restricted to reporting the news that the government sanctions without necessarily offering justification or analysis, unless it matches the line of governmental policies. Hence, media presents these policies as facts, which should be accepted. The press therefore conveys the voice of the government to the public, and not the other way round. Any opposition to government agendas is suppressed. This means that the press has the task of influencing the public in the way that suits the government agenda, which negates the role of the press in raising the awareness of people or questioning the actions of the government (Siebert

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et al., 1956). Consequently, the authoritarian theory gives the press the role of propagating governments' views, stances and policies. There is hardly any significant role to the public to play in the policies of the governments and opposition is not allowed, as the government is the one who dictates the agenda of the press.

The broad media theory helps to explain why the challenges facing investigative journalism vary by culture and are influenced by politics, financing, time constraints, the commitment of media owners and journalists and the legal restrictions imposed by governments (Baker, 2005; Abdenour, 2015; Bebawi, 2016; de Burgh, 2008; Gómez, 2012; Poler Kovačić, 2009). The authoritarian characteristics of much Arab media are heightened when it comes to examining the particular challenges faced by investigative journalism. These challenges make the work of journalists very difficult and thus investigative journalism often loses some of its influence. There are also inherent restraints in the practice of investigative journalism as well as the restraints that are imposed due to outside factors (Bauer, 2005). The restraints inherent in investigative journalism are related to the work in which investigative journalists are involved. These restraints are imposed by the media, which obliges investigative journalists to abide by ethical codes during their investigations (Lambeth, 1992). Investigative journalism also takes a long time to complete and is expensive. Thus, investigative reporters need to devote the time and money needed to accomplish the investigation. Some investigations may be dropped due to the lack of such resources (Bauer, 2005; Mair & Keeble, 2011).

Hume and Abbot (2017), Kaplan (2013) argued that it is not easy to fund investigative journalism as it is dangerous and had the potential of incriminating the fund raisers because it is normally concerned with investigating corruption, mostly of the elite and powerful people and it is also time consuming. As investigative

journalism is likely to attack and resist powerful people and organisations, journalists face many pressures and attempts to silence and prevent them from publishing their stories. (Bauer, 2005). There are also incidents of torture and assaults against journalists. In fact, 'Reporters and photographers risk bullets, beatings-up, imprisonment, sometimes torture, to bring news to a nation's breakfast table' (Watson, 1998, p. 158). Jurrat et al. (2017) and OECD (2018) argue that the struggle of reporters differs on the basis of the circumstances they are working under and that violence against reporters is growing, particularly due to digital media. It is reported that the majority of the reporters who were killed had been investigating political issues, abuse of power and corruption. Such incidents may lead reporters to avoid investigating in order not to cause harm to themselves, their colleagues and families, or to their newspapers.

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2017 stated that 368 journalists lost their lives since 2012 doing their jobs. One in every five of those were killed while investigating stories of corruption and mal-practice. It has been reported that journalists received death threats and even killed for doing investigating issues related to corruption. Nevertheless, it is said that the journalists who are working independently or those who are working in big cities and for big media corporations feel safer than others (OECD, 2018). For example, the publishing of the Panama Papers that was done by Daphne Galizia, a journalist from Malta, led to her death on October16, 2017. This killing of the journalist near her home in a car bomb has caused the outrage of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) (*TheGuardian*, 2017). Another example is that of the murder of Slovak investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his partner Martina Kušnírová on February 25, 2018. The Slovakian police admitted that the murder of the couple was instigated by

Kuciak's investigative report of corruption (OECD, 2018). Despite its importance, investigative journalism is very dangerous as it uncovers the corruption and trespasses of those people who have the power to harm journalists.

Another type of outside restraints on investigative journalism comes from the culture in which investigative journalism is conducted and published. This can be a serious source for restraints imposed on the work of investigative journalists and influence it greatly. Culture imposes ethical norms on journalists and makes them abide by such norms. As such, investigative journalism has endeavoured to counter strategies to resist or weaken internal and external restraints. There are numerous examples which indicate that the formation of an organisation to voice the opinions and worries of journalists and talk on their behalf has placed journalists in a better position and made them stronger than before. An organisation for journalists is more powerful than any individual journalist and thus is more likely to resist the exertion of influence from other organisations or powerful people who might be the subject of the investigation (Bauer, 2005; Poler Kovačić, 2009).

Raphael et al. (2004) listed the challenges limiting the work of investigative journalists in the United States. First, the managers of mass media tend not to report an incident if doing so would pose a risk to the proprietors' interests. Second, advertisers can improperly influence media managers' decisions about what gets reported even though editorial independence is officially safeguarded in advertising contracts. Third, investigative reporting tends to cost more than other types of reporting. Fourth, in newly established organisations, the degree of commitment to modernisation and creativity limits journalists' abilities to cover all aspects of a story. Fifth, the dependence at times of news media on public relations as a main source of information limits the reporting of various types of news. Finally, investigative

journalism is frequently limited by the anticipation of legal challenges and their associated costs if individuals or organisations sue media owners and journalists as a result of their reporting.

All these challenges have shown to significantly influence media content. Media ownership has influenced the content of news coverage and shaped the way party-affiliated news is covered, and the press has manipulated and controlled the public (A. D. Kaplan, 2008). Business controls the press through controlling ownership of the newspapers, corporations control the owners of newspapers, advertising subsidies, and direct bribery (A. D. Kaplan, 2008). On the other hand, there are 'myriad crossed interests represented by lobbyists, communication agencies, lawyers, politicians and, of course, some media teams who defend, in many cases, clearly conflicting positions, soon come into play' (Santamaría, 2010, p. 516). In instances of political parties sponsoring journalism, they may impede media functioning to protect the interests of their party. Difficulties prevent party-affiliated investigations, as these negatively affect the public since they are based on a negative pattern of media ownership. Lack of resources, funding and time can significantly impede the work of journalists. The media can overcome these limitations by cooperating with international organisations, institutions and community groups (Bebawi, 2016; Gómez, 2012; Lublinski et al., 2016; Ntibinyane, 2018; Pule, 2009; Singh, 2012). Ntibinyane (2018) stated that non-profit investigative journalism organisations are increasingly being created, as nowadays there are over 160 of them worldwide.

In less democratic societies, investigative journalism faces additional challenges in the form of censorship, which may lead to reporters being intimidated, demoted, incarcerated or even threatened with death (Martin, 2010; Aucoin, 2003). It

has been reported that in Russia, Mexico, and some Latin American, Eastern European, Middle Eastern and African countries, there are daily threats to the lives of investigative reporters; in fact, many of the reporters who have risked their lives have been killed.

Investigative journalism faces many legal, political, and economic obstacles. In many countries, the lack of laws that protect the public limits investigative reporting. There are instances in which the privacy of journalists is not protected by the law of the land and journalists do not have 'the right to reply'. In some Latin American countries, for example, 'gag laws' are imposed to deter journalists from delving deep into their investigations for fear of persecution and heavy penalties (Waisbord, 2001). Journalists also fear being insulted or their reputation being defamed, which makes them shy away from investigative reporting. With regard to the political hindrance, politicians generally tend to view investigative journalism as a cause for nuisance rather than a trait of democracy. Hence, it is common for politicians to exercise pressures on investigative reporters and accuse them of wrongdoings. Blasi (1977) believes that there should be some forms of 'checks' over the abuses of official power, and investigative journalism is the ideal form for freedom of expression and hence should be protected. Politicians can suppress investigative reports by allying themselves with publishers and editors to intimidate investigative journalists. Where media sources depend on government finances, they are under pressure to follow the line that is adopted by the government. This shows that economic constraints can be a major factor that influences investigative journalism (Waisbord, 2001).

Jurrat et al. (2017); Lublinski et al. (2016) and Fleeson (2000) claim that the most common challenges to investigative reporting in both developing and developed

countries is the lack of information, the lack of access to documents, and the fear of reporters being targeted, threatened, and having their safety jeopardised. There are also some challenges related to media owners who are against publishing investigative reports that have the potential of causing some sort of conflict. Other challenges to investigative reporting include the feeling of loneliness, fearing failure, persecution, and losing one's job. Lastly, the challenge of the absence of the investigative tradition in certain countries is another major obstacle.

Investigative reporting is influenced by the official sources, laws and/or political action. This makes the work of investigative reporters very difficult. Additionally, when journalists are not granted the right to keep their sources secret, then their work suffers as a result of the possibility that journalists and their informants might be discouraged from reporting (Bauer, 2005; Hollings, 2010). Such obstacles are more prominent in the context of the majority of the less democratic countries. Martin (2010) believes that governments subsidise even the privately owned newspapers to an extent that if those newspapers published material that went against the government, they would lose government subsidies or even lose their licences altogether. An instance of this is the situation facing some newspapers in certain Arab countries. Above all, as Al-Zahrani (2015) stated, the political authority in the Arab countries, despite the various systems of governance in such countries, still control the media. Even private media, which does not depend on the government for subsidies, is still strongly controlled by the political power there.

Knorr and Rostova (2013) claimed that investigative journalists in Russia fear for their own safety. Journalists in Russia have been murdered, and their murders have not been investigated to find those responsible. Instead, these murders have been largely ignored. Russia's central government has both a firm grip on the country's

media and expansive censorship powers. According to Aucoin (2003), 'In some countries, notably Russia and its former republics, criminal elements used violence to suppress reporting about government corruption and organized crime' (p. 590).

Similarly, in Pakistan, investigative journalism is controlled by laws and constitutional regulations that serve mostly to prevent public criticism. Because the country is governed by a military regime, the Pakistani media encounter threats, violence and economic pressure. Successive military governments have spoken of the importance of freedom of the media, but they have not implemented it (Siraj, 2009). Sher Baz Khan argues that in their encountering the threat of the war on terrorism, investigative journalists in Pakistan are on the deathbed. Because journalists are being kidnappings, intimidated, harassed, and even killed. Such violence directed against investigative reporters has culminated in the killing of Saleem Shahzad, an investigative reporter from Islamabad, Pakistan in May 2011. Such a murder has frightened journalists and even made them practice self-censorship to a great degree (Mair & Keeble, 2011).

Studies of investigative journalism in both Russia and Pakistan have found that in both countries investigative journalism plays an insignificant role as the media is controlled by the government and the military regime, respectively. Waisbord (2001) observed as follows:

Under authoritarian regimes, the absence of constitutional freedoms eliminates the basic conditions that IJ needs to exist and thrive. Democracies, instead, usher in better conditions by reinstating constitutional rule and putting an end to the pervasive, suffocating atmosphere that usually exists during military dictatorships (p. 383).

It should be noted that such threats also exist in more developed countries, including the United States, where, for instance, the reporter Don Bolles was killed in 1976 for his investigative reporting on organised crime. In addition, in Ireland, the reporter Veronica Guerin was killed in 1996 for her investigative reporting on drug lords in Dublin (Aucoin, 2003). However, such threats to investigative journalists are less frequent in more democratic countries, where the degree of journalistic freedom is greater.

The same challenges or similar ones exist in other countries. For instance, in Nigeria, the challenges encountered by investigative journalists include fear of death, poor remuneration, ownership influence, corruption and constant harassment by the government (Anyadike, 2013). Other challenges to investigative journalism include security challenges posed by the presence of militias and armed gangs and clashes among political forces. In addition, news organisations present administrative challenges, lack of journalistic requirements presents professional challenges and lack of laws guaranteeing the right to access information presents legal challenges. Challenges are also posed by economic, social and tribal affiliations and the influence of political parties on journalistic work, as is the case in Iraq (F. H. Kareem, 2013). These challenges are the outcome of the turbulent situation and conflict among militias and sects in Iraq. Such challenges tend not to exist in countries with more stable regimes.

Martin (2010) claims that challenges to investigative journalism exist in most Arab countries:

In Arab countries, journalists face a barbed maze fraught with intimidation, demotion, incarceration and sometimes even death. The most common way that Arab governments stifle investigative reporting is by applying financial

pressure. Arab states are intimately involved in the economic well-being of many Arab news organizations, so they apply pressure in several ways, most notably through ownership or advertising. (p. 85)

For instance, Egyptian law has a negative effect on the press and is considered an impediment to investigative journalism as it does not protect investigative reporters. Other factors that decrease media independence include the interference of political capital in the form of advertising in government newspapers and the financing of many private newspapers that have ideological and party affiliations. These factors deter the press from detecting indiscretions and from performing its 'watchdog' role over the society's institutions (Rabiea, 2013). In addition, investigative reporters in Egypt face many risks, including physical attacks, threatening letters and telephone calls (Abdulbaqi, 2013). This might be due to the influence of oppression, greed, and violence, which not enough people have stood up to yet. The more individuals that do not allow themselves to be silenced, the more power all people will have to stand up to injustice (Knight, 2000).

According to Bebawi (2016), the challenges to investigative journalism in Arab countries since the Arab Spring are related to the fact that investigative reporting is still under state government control. Social pressure also exerts influence. Although investigative reporting has the duty to inform the public of the truth about changes that are occurring, Arab society is often either sceptical of the changes or not comfortable with them. Journalists can thus find themselves trapped between state control and societal mistrust. However, the culture of journalism in the Arab countries is changing due to people's increasing demands for wider access to information.

In most Arab countries, requesting access to public information under severe censorship deters the work of investigative reporters. This is because the lack of an

investigative reporting tradition in Arab countries makes journalists unable to hold top officials accountable or even to serve as a watchdog over them. In those countries, the plea that 'national security' might be at risk justifies banning and restricting news and not making it accessible to the public. They also indirectly inform journalists not to investigate issues that might put national interest at risk. Hence, it is recommended that journalists should be aware of the national constitution and laws they must abide by and should know their rights well. Journalists also should be aware of the freedom of information act in the country where they live, as this helps journalists to conduct their investigative reports under the protection of the law (*Manual for Arab Journalists*, 2007). However, as Berkowitz (2007) argues, that in the less pluralistic societies there is some form of homogeneity in their political affiliation, religion, and education, as people there tend to distance themselves from conflicts, particularly that of the social nature.

In Saudi Arabia, although the press is privately owned, newspapers have to be licensed and the vast majority remain subsidised by the government and are subject to strict censorship under various media rules and policies (BBC, 2015; El Gody, 2007; Rugh, 2004). Even the private press remains loyal to the government as it has the power of the constitution and can influence the press through both legal and financial means and incentives (Rugh, 2004). Government interference the media in Saudi Arabia may lead investigative stories to lack support. This may make the work of investigative journalists difficult under government domination of the media.

Al-Jameeah (2009) referred to internal and external factors that are associated with the media content. The internal factors include media ownership, financing, the political line media institutions adopt, and the qualifications of journalists. The external factors include the political and economic systems, the

culture of the society and its media laws and regulations. Such factors have an impact on the nature of the media content. This means that investigative journalism has an impact on the culture and attitudes of the systems to which it relates. This can be interpreted in the light of the systemic environment and what it imposes on the practice of investigative journalism.

The practice of investigative journalism is strongly associated with the media frame within which media functions, including the political ideology, news sources, and the precise nature of journalistic practices (Scheufele, 1999). This shows that investigative journalism is the product of its media context, and it is influenced by its trends and tendencies. Despite the significance of investigative journalism, for the reasons discussed above, it has not attracted the attention of Saudi academics and researchers. It is hard to find studies that explore investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia in detail. Thus, investigative journalism and the challenges in Saudi Arabia is still an uncharted territory.

3.6. Media Context of Saudi Arabia

By media context it is meant the all the issues that are related to the 'legal and regulatory environment in which media operates; the degree of partisan control over news content; political influences on reporting and access to information; the ability of the public to access diverse sources of information; violations of press freedom... and economic pressures on content and the dissemination of news' (Freedom, 2014, p. 2). However, the quality of the news disseminated shows the actions of the government and the policies adopted by the press in going with or against the boundaries which are set as well as the impact of other factors, non-state actors, who play a part in the dissemination of media content. This is because the culture of society plays a part in shaping the context in which media operates

(Alhomoud, 2013). As such, media is influenced by the groups in society and the culture of its individuals (Habermas, Lennox, & Lennox, 1974).

The media in any society influences its people as the need for social interaction necessitates that they conform to a set of rules and behaviours. Thus, media is affected by the code of conduct that covers the social, political and religious factors in any society (Hanitzsch, 2007; Hinshelwood, 2009). In a democratic society, freedom of the press is greater and the practice of investigative journalism is freer (Bebawi, 2016; Aucoin, 2003). Under democratic regimes, investigative journalism flourishes as it finds the protection it requires for investigative reporters to act freely. However, freedom is not enough on its own; it necessitates the availability of legal, political, and economic conditions which can guarantee protection and independence for investigative journalism (Waisbord, 2001). Conversely, in an undemocratic society, investigative journalism suffers from lack of freedom of the press. According to Amin (2002), 'Freedom as a value in Arab media culture is a function … affecting the perceptions and attitudes of Arab journalists' (p. 126).

It follows that the freedom of press goes against government censorship, gag laws, or violence against reporters for publishing investigative reports. As such, achieving freedom of press requires the availability of laws and regulations that allow reporters to act freely and keep the government and lobbies on guard (Waisbord, 2001). This indicates the significance of giving more freedom to Arab media, which has been shackled by strict laws and other agencies that restrict the freedom of press. Sakr (2003) observed that censorship is not only restricted to the content of media, but also extends to media ownership regulations and the restrictions imposed on journalism as a profession, including media printing, distribution and practices imposed on journalists to prevent them from accessing information.

In some Arab societies, as Al-Rifai (2004) believes, freedom of expression is influenced by the culture, politics, religion and censorship. In addition, these factors affect the performance of journalists and make them vulnerable to possible conflicts of interest and outright corruption (Amin, 2002). Many factors, including politics, ethical bias, religious affiliation and proprietary editorial influence, pressure on journalists to yield to the general consensus at the expense of their professional standards and may make them compromise their objectivity (Cisneros, 2008; Levenson, 2004).

Culture, politics as well as social and economic factors play a role in making one environment different from the other, as every society is different. However, there are various circumstances that control investigative journalism, but these circumstances differ from one country to the other. Some Arab countries, including Saudi Arabia, have their political, social and economic circumstances, which influence how investigative journalism operates. Nevertheless, the changes in the circumstances of some Arab states resulting from 'Arab Spring' have influenced Arab society. These changes have made people more reactive to their environment. Hence, people have participated in monitoring, covering, and assessing the news and events. In many cases mass media resort to investigative reporting in order to follow up on knowledge the public has acquired from external and social media sources.

Investigative journalism is known to reflect the circumstances of its host country and the media system there. In the Middle East, media has been prevented from becoming a tool for advancing the interests of the public; instead, most of the time, it has become the mouthpiece of the authorities to the extent that the public has lost hope of the media ever holding the authorities accountable for their actions (Bebawi, 2016). It is for that reason that the Arab press is considered a 'Loyalist

Press' (Rugh, 2004). For instance, the King of Saudi Arabia has the legislative and executive power to control the country. This means that the King has a strong hold over media, as the government can interfere with media content through restricting it from reporting various issues of political nature. Al-Shamiry (1992) argues that the government of Saudi Arabia limits the freedom of press and uses strong censorship to sustain the *status quo*, and the stability of the country. Rugh (2004) believes that the Saudi press is restricted from reporting issues of crucial foreign policies, among others.

The Saudi 'Basic Law' (the Constitution) stipulates clear goals for the media, which mainly focus on educating the populace and driving national unity:

> Mass media and all other vehicles of expression shall employ civil and polite language, contribute towards the education of the nation and strengthen unity. It is prohibited to commit acts leading to disorder and division, affecting the security of the state and its public relations, or undermining human dignity and rights (Bureau of Experts at the Council ofMinisters, 1992).

On this basis, the Saudi press remains independent if it does not interfere in anything that the government considers against the 'general welfare', as this might undermine its authority. Thus, anything the government deems as having the potential of causing turbulence and friction between it and the citizens, or in fact anything that might influence people's duties towards their country, religion, or the community at large allows the government to interfere (Awad, 2010; Rugh, 2004). Rugh (2004) stated that Saudi newspapers were not likely to publish any material that criticised the religion of Islam or the royal family. For instance, one of the editors of the newspaper *Al-Madina* in Saudi Arabia was sacked in March 2002 for publishing a report in which he criticised Islamic judges and called them 'corrupt'. The Ministry of Information also has the power to close newspapers, which makes newspapers aware

of not crossing the line. The government is thus able to censor the daily content of the newspapers both directly and indirectly: 'A phone call from the Ministry of Information is usually enough to persuade an editor to emphasize one story or down-play another' (Rugh, 2004, p. 72).

The government must certify the appointment of editors-in-chief of national newspapers as well as it has the power of influencing the editorial policies of these newspapers, through granting or upholding the finances allocated to these newspapers. Furthermore, until now most of the broadcast media, TV and radio are owned and controlled by the government. The government is the main advertiser in broadcast media, although there are other minor advertisers (Barayan, 2002). The government also has the power to terminate the contract of editors or any member of staff working for broadcast media in case those went against the governmental guidelines. The Director General of Al-Ikhbaria TV channel, Mohammed Al-Tonesi, was dismissed on account of a telephone call from a viewer on a live debate because he criticised the government. Additionally, the government monitors and censors the content of the Internet pages, and the public is warned against accessing the pages and websites owing to their political content. Therefore, it can be said that since the government controls the media to this extent, it is unlikely that the media will improve considerably, unless the government loosens its grip over the media.

This leaves little latitude for the national press to pursue stories and publish articles that have critical or investigative value since doing so would be deemed as undermining national unity. Indeed, these goals can be interpreted in ways that highly restrict the activities of journalists (Mellor, 2011; Rugh, 2004). The Saudi Ministry of Information has jurisdiction over offences and violations of freedom of opinion, which has the effect of reducing the objectivity of journalism in this area,

exaggerating the roles of the editors-in-chief of certain Saudi newspapers and restricting the freedom of journalists, writers and readers to express their views. Hence, there is a tendency for journalists in Saudi Arabia to be cautious (Al-Askar, 2005). This caution motivates most journalists to exercise a high degree of self-censorship when criticising the government and prominent religious figures (Alfahad, 2015). Al-Shamari (1992) argued that the censorship that is imposed by the Ministry of Information on newspapers makes journalists self-censor their reports. Nevertheless, the past decade or so has witnessed moves towards allowing some degree of criticism within the press, particularly from journalists favoured by the ruling elite (Alfahad, 2015).

Therefore, the Saudi environment exercises pressure on journalists and editors-in-chief and makes them conform to it, that is by taking side with the government and adhering to the status quo. It is for this reason that Rugh (2004) stated that the Saudi government does not need to employ censorship a great deal as the press is already sensitive to any issue that goes against the line the government adopts. The Saudi press is self-regulated to conform to the political stance of the country and its systemic environment. Journalists practice self-censorship out of fear of or punishment by the Editor-in-Chief, the Ministry of Information, or other political, religious or social groups (Khazen, 1999). Rugh (2004) believes that the Saudi press is loyal to the government, and since there are not very clear print laws that are strictly adhered to, journalists are forced to practice self-censorship. 'The most common mechanism ensuring newspapers' loyalty to the basic policies of the regime and to its top leadership is anticipatory self-censorship based on sensitivity to the political environment' (p.82). Sakr (2003) argues that self-censorship is the most difficult type of censorship to be understood. Amin (2002) claims that the censorship

practiced by the Arab press has led to the creation of 'censorial culture'. This is because journalists accept censorship and are always cautious about it and fear its consequences. The freedom of press and the freedom of journalists in most Arab countries are threatened because of the culture of censorship that prevails in the Arab countries, mostly due to the political culture and the environment that is usually dominated by a single political party, or leader.

In the context of Saudi Arabia, the government makes and amends the law and controls it. The law which governs the media has some ambiguities. For example, the last Printing Law (2000) still contains the terms 'Not to be in infringement of the necessities of Sharia' and 'Not to risk the country's security'. Such laws permit the government to censor the media content. Additionally, Saudi media laws ignore giving protection to journalists, which makes journalists at risk if they went beyond what the government allows them to explore.

Kheraigi (1990) and Alghamdy (2011) explained why journalists tend not to oppose the government line regarding press freedom: it is understood that neither the government nor religious leaders advocate press freedom. On the contrary, they oppose it and think of it as a symptom of anarchy and chaos. Consequently, journalists do not generally oppose the government on freedom of the press for fear of being persecuted (Kheraigi, 1990). Above all, it is common knowledge that there is no law protecting freedom of expression in the Saudi Constitution. In fact, freedom of expression applies only to printing law, but there are no specifications or grounds for protecting it (Awad, 2010). Even the Printing and Publishing Law, as Al-Shamiry (1992) believes, legally stipulates controlling and restricting access to information, and this is a travesty to the freedom of press.

Furthermore, calling for press freedom is considered a foreign idea as Al-Bisher (1994) argues that press freedom, freedom of expression are topics that are derived from western culture hence the press should not be concerned with them. In Saudi Arabia, these are issues that are termed 'sensitive' which should not be adopted in the Saudi society. Al-Bisher (1994) contends that freedom of press is interpreted as a means for creating confusion which might lead to disrespect of the government and its religious system.

Nevertheless, freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia has fluctuated due to the country's political environment. Although freedom of expression improved after 2003, political topics in the press continued to be tightened, social and cultural issues were eased. The advent of the Arab spring in 2011 and beyond has led to more control on all facets of life. Freedom (2012) states that:

> There are no formal safeguards guaranteeing freedom of speech; controversial debates are mostly limited to social and cultural questions. Regime institutions can also exert considerable informal pressure on local media. Foreign correspondents are on occasion expelled when their reporting gets too critical, and journalists and editors are on occasion dismissed or prohibited from writing. Control through the Ministries of Information and Interior has been tightened since early 2011. (p. 6)

Furthermore, religious leaders significantly interfere with the work of journalists, particularly when the work touches on issues related to their beliefs and religious ideas (Awad, 2010). The influence exercised by the religious leaders on newspapers stems from their influence on the government. Hence religious leaders play a fundamental role in controlling the freedom of press, especially with regard to religious issues. This is because if any material that goes against the opinions of religious leaders is published in newspapers, those leaders will issue what is known as

fatwas (verdicts) in which the journalists who publish the material are considered blasphemous, and the newspaper which published the report will then be sanctioned (Al-Shamiry, 1992). The pressure exercised by religious leaders is considered a major reason for Saudi Arabia's low ranking in terms of its freedom of press (Freedom, 2006).

In 2011, Saudi media law stipulated that any defaming of political leaders, such as the elites in society and religious leaders in the press would be deemed punishable by the law. Also, it was revealed that people could discuss issues of public concern, such as those pertaining to women as well as the reform to the education system, yet there were margins that journalists could not cross, as barriers remained in place. Additionally, any criticism of the political system or of any member of the Royal family remains forbidden.

Media law amendments in April 2011 made insults of regime elites (including religious leaders) a punishable offence. Although space exists to publicly discuss socio-cultural questions like educational reform and women's issues, the political red lines in public discourse are as clearly drawn as ever. Criticism of the royal family or individual royals remains taboo, as do calls for substantial change to the political system (Freedom, 2012).

The Saudi press has always been unable to play its proper role as a watchdog; instead, it has played the role of 'cheerleader' for the government (Al-Kahtani, 1999; Kheraigi, 1990). For all these reasons, Saudi Arabia has been classified as lacking freedom of the press (Freedom, 2006). The relationship between the government and the media is a complex and controversial one in Saudi Arabia. The media is asked to stick to the policies drawn by the government, but at the same

time, media owners, being close to the ruling family, can flaunt the laws. They are the people who finance Saudi media through their advertising and subsidies. Thus, Saudi media cannot risk going against their financiers (Hallin & Mancini, 2011).

Although it has made several political and economic reforms regarding political freedom, the Saudi government has not done enough as there are no clear-cut laws and regulations protecting the freedom of the press. The restrictions on freedom of the press make it easy for influential groups, particularly the government and religious leaders, to interfere with journalists' work. In addition, the lack of a democratic political culture in Saudi Arabia makes the interference of authorities in the national press appear legitimate (Awad, 2010).

There is a strong relationship between culture and media; however, in Saudi Arabia this relationship is distinguished by the nature of the Saudi systemic environment. The culture of the Saudi society profoundly shapes the existence of the political system adopted by the government. Habermas et al. (1974) are of the opinion that the communication between the people and the government through the media is strongly related to the political stance of the groups of the society and the culture of the country. Hence, the political culture necessitates and dictates the decisions in relation to the topics that should be discussed and explored in the media. However, in the context of Saudi Arabia, Alhomoud (2013) noted that Saudi culture is changing rapidly, whereas its political and bureaucratic processes continue to linger and rarely advance.

The scope of investigative journalism appears to be highly restricted in Saudi Arabia compared to other Arab countries and countries throughout the rest of the world. However, while there is a number of studies detailing various changes in Saudi media landscape, including works by Awad (2010), Rugh (2004) and Al Maghlooth

(2013), the study of investigative journalism and its relation to the systemic factors is hard to find. The current study fills this gap and provides a comprehensive account of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and the effects of the systemic factors on its practice.

3.7. Conclusions

This chapter has discussed investigative journalism concept, its role and techniques as well the challenges facing it. It argues that the practice of investigative journalism differs in accordance with its media environment and the factors that influence it. It is not surprising that investigative journalism flourishes in more-democratic countries, but it nevertheless faces many challenges that curtail its role, including the effects of economy, ownership and time pressure. While, the effects of the political, cultural and religious factors of society are deemed to be more significant in less-democratic countries. The discussion presented in this chapter is followed by an account of the theory that explores the factors that influence the practice of journalism, which leads to an understanding of the impact of these factors.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Introduction

News media follow a particular structure derived from the political, cultural, legislative and economic factors of society (McQuail, 2013). This is applicable in the context of the present study, which employs the framework of gatekeeping theory and the factors that influence it. This study explores the influence of Saudi systemic factors on gatekeepers in the context of their practice of investigative journalism. Berkowitz (2007) insists that investigative journalism reflects the tension between different news influences, such as professional values, community values, as well as business demands. These have been suggested by Shoemaker and Vos (2009) and Shoemaker and Reese (2014) in a model to show the mechanism in which individual differences, professional routines, organisational factors, social institutions, as well as social systems influence the production of news. The model is based on the interplay between "the actions people take and the conditions under which they act that are not of their own making" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, pp. 10-11). This model is useful in the explanation of gatekeeping and the factors that influence it compared to those of the Saudi gatekeeping process.

4.2. Gatekeeping theory

Gatekeeping as a process of constructing media messages is defined by Shoemaker (1991) as 'the process of culling and crafting countless bits of information into the limited number of messages that reach people each day' (p.1). It is also the 'overall process through which the social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed' (Shoemaker et al., 2001, p. 233).

According to Lasorsa (2002), there is a relationship between gatekeeping theory and other communication theories such as agenda-setting theory and framing theory. According to agenda-setting theory, information is selected on the basis of what the media opts to highlight and stress. Similarly, the essence of gatekeeping theory is deciding which issues the media wants to select or discard. Framing theory is an extension of gatekeeping theory as it serves the function of gathering news and stories tailored to suit the frame of a particular story. Thus, the processing of news items and stories is conducted on the basis of what can be accepted or rejected with regard to fitting a particular frame. In agenda-setting theory, the significance of the story to the public is paramount to the editor, and this theory is mainly concerned with issues that interest the public. Contrary to gatekeeping theory and agenda-setting theory, in framing theory, issues are examined, assessed, and reported on. Weaver, McCombs, and Shaw (2004) note that the concept of framing is an extension of agenda setting as it focuses on the presentation of information to the public. Heath and Bryant (2013) explain that framing is the method by which media gatekeepers classify and present the stories that are covered as well as the public's reaction to them. However, Durham (1998) notes that media framing theory posits that the prevailing political system in a community guides media practices.

In news values theory, journalists tend to emphasise, exclude and elaborate on the methods of story presentation, in line with the routines and news values frame, as part of the selection process. Such frames pertain to public views about a particular story. This theory tends to classify news in accordance with the value of a news item, such as its proximity, importance, impact, timeliness and oddity, as well as the way in which issues are reported in accordance with their values and currency, as opposed to the interaction among the values (Hendrickson & Tankard Jr, 1997). Thus, news

selection theories tend to differ in terms of the differences in the ways in which reporters select the news. However, these theories are related to gatekeeping theory as the latter is based on the selection of newsworthy stories. Moreover, as Denton and Woodward (1998) argue, both gatekeeping theory and agenda-setting theory are about story selection. Nevertheless, while agenda-setting theory highlights some issues at the expense of others, gatekeeping theory is concerned with the main basis upon which these issues are decided and the time and space allocated to them in the media. Gatekeeping decisions involve the timing relating to reporting a story, its content and the gatekeeper's judgement about it. Gatekeeping theory provides the basis for understanding the method relating to the creation of stories and how they are framed. According to gatekeeping theory, news frames tend to influence the selection of stories (Fahmy, Kelly, & Kim, 2007).

Newsworthiness or news values theory is also related to gatekeeping theory. It is acknowledged that the personal values of journalists can be a determinant of gatekeeping decision-making as well as in selecting particular news items and in determining their timing and placement. Additionally, the personal values, perceptions, interests, viewpoints and beliefs of journalists and editors tend to influence gatekeeping with regard to the process of selecting the stories and news items that are allowed (W. J. Willis & Willis, 1991). Denton and Woodward (1998) maintain that the value of news items and stories are determinants of gatekeeping decisions. In the process of gatekeeping, news, for instance, about heads of states and other prominent leaders assumes priority as these news items are deemed to be more valuable to editors than other types of news stories.

However, gatekeeping has undergone important modifications since it was proposed in studies related to mass communication in 1950. It was in 1947 that Kurt

Lewin initiated the term 'gatekeeping' in relation to social studies. Gatekeepers allow the processing of news which is channelled and processed through 'gates' maintained by gatekeepers. It is the decision of gatekeepers as to which news items to publish or reject (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). The first gatekeeping model in mass media and communication was developed by White (1950) in his study of the role of a newspaper editor who acted as a gatekeeper to news items. White (1950) notes that aspects of the editor's personality informed the decisions that he made (Kim, 2002). The same editor explained to White the basis upon which some of the news items were rejected. White (1950) claimed that the rejection of the selected items was 'highly subjective' (p. 386). He explained that nearly one-third of the news items or stories were rejected solely on the decision taken by the editor with regard to the worthiness of those items and stories. However, White's model of gatekeeping is limited in that it does not recognise the fact that multiple gatekeepers are likely to have varying role conceptions or positions in collecting, shaping and disseminating information and stories (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Following from the above study, White (1950) introduced the terms 'gatekeeping' and 'newsworthiness' to the field of media studies and proposed that when news stories are communicated, they go through one gatekeeper after another. At each stage, each gatekeeper allows or disallows news messages through his/her gate so that the items either go to the next gate to be edited or omitted. Finally, stories are passed onto the main gatekeeper who, ultimately, makes the decision about whether or not to allow publication (Lewin, 1951). The study that was conducted by White was followed by other studies which considered the influence of the levels of media messages that were not accounted for by White (See:Bass, 1969; Gieber, 1956; Halloran et al., 1970; Westley & MacLean, 1957).

Westley and MacLean (1957) added another dimension to the model by introducing the notion of multiple gatekeepers who are all involved in controlling the processing of information. According to Westley and MacLean (1957) judgment of news is related to gatekeepers' decisions. Gieber (1956) considers media organisation as one, and all workers collectively are one gatekeeper. In the study of 16 news editors, Gieber concludes that the attitudes of individuals are less important than the organisational constraints imposed upon them. This is because according to Westley and MacLean (1957), communication workers as individuals are less important; they are passive as they are controlled by the values of their editor and organisation (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Additionally, as Bass (1969) argues, there are two types of gatekeepers – news collectors and news processors – and that the focus should be on news gathering rather than on news processing because, unless news is collected, there can be nothing to process. News gatherers are known to collect information from various channels, turning it into a news format. These gatekeepers principally include writers, bureau chiefs, reporters and editors. The other type of gatekeepers are news processors; they work with the news gatherers' version, produce it in its final version and present it to the public. News processors are either editors, copyreaders or translators. Thus, Bass has widened the study of gatekeepers from one gatekeeper, as per White, to a multiplicity of gatekeepers (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). Furthermore, Halloran et al. (1970) are of the view that, as a process, gatekeeping does not start in the office, i.e. by news processors, but on the street, i.e. by news gatherers. Chibnall (2013) believes that journalists as sources of information are very important in gatekeeping. This is because the decision regarding the information they present has already been filtered through their gatekeeping before it is presented to editors.

However, Brown (1979) argues that 'the point at which David Manning White transposed Kurt Lewin's gatekeeper concept to communications situations, elements of the original concept have been ignored or interpreted in a manner that renders some of the findings questionable' (p.595). Later Shoemaker (1991) found what Brown argued to be necessary for the development of a well-established gatekeeping theory that allows for accounting for the various different people and organisations and other social aspects in the construction of media messages. In the same year, 1991, Shoemaker and Reese came up with a comprehensive account of the gatekeeping theory in which they presented a method of how media messages are constructed, based on five levels of forces that impact on the way media messages are processed: the individual level, the organisational level, the journalistic routine, the institutional level, and the social system level.

Shoemaker and Vos (2009) argue that there are competing forces influencing how news items pass through a channel; positive forces push items through gates, while negative forces block them. In most cases, both forces are at work whenever a newsworthy event occurs. The channel comprises several gates at various locations, and positive forces help move the news event through these gates. Where negative forces prevail, news events are less likely to pass through the gate. Conversely, strong positive forces move events through the channel expeditiously. Following that the "hierarchy of influences" model, was introduced to explain the complex processes of media at present and the impact of the five levels of forces on media, particularly at a time when media is increasingly becoming independent (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). However, the current study seeks to examine the influence of the systemic factors on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. Benson and Hallin (2007) and Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) referred to the fact that the systemic factors

include political, cultural, legal and economic. These factors and their influence vary in accordance with the context of the state.

4.3. Gatekeeping Levels

The selection and processing of news stories are complex due to a number of factors that vary from one society to another. These factors determine whether news stories are published or rejected. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) believe that in the selection of news, gatekeepers are not free, as they have to abide by the routines and constraints of communication that pertains to a specific organisation and beyond. This study adopts these five gatekeeping levels, which are implemented by western gatekeepers, in order to develop a thorough understanding of gatekeeping process and then compare it to how Saudi gatekeeping operates.

4.3.1. The individual level

The first level of influence on gatekeeping is that of the individual or the personal judgement of gatekeepers, which is based on factors that tend to influence them, such as their education, attitudes, values and beliefs as well as their personal orientation (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). News is selected on the basis of gatekeepers' professional judgment (D. A. Berkowitz, 1997). Hence, as White (1950) proposes, gatekeepers' self-confidence, age, gender, education, religion, income and social class are determinants of their decision to select or deselect news items. Additionally, news selection decisions tend to be influenced by gatekeepers' biases, journalistic beliefs, attitudes and expectations.

The professional judgment of gatekeepers makes them aware of the decisions they make regarding the messages they select. Gatekeepers' professional duties and moral stances affect media content, while their personal values and beliefs have an

indirect influence on the content of the media presented (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The personal image and reputation of journalists, as Gans (1979) argues, are key aspects in journalists' decisions to publish stories or in declining to publish them as they see fit. For instance, as Applegate (1996) states, journalists do their best to promote themselves and enhance their reputation. They choose stories that promote themselves and their values. It can be argued that Saudi journalists seek to enhance their reputation by reporting on stories that benefit them and their professional careers.

News selection occurs as a result of certain criteria, including relatedness, frequency, transparency and significance (Galtung & Ruge, 1973). Thus, the intended audience is the major factor in determining newsworthiness (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 2007). Journalists, under the guidance of an editor, also tend to select or deselect a story based on its fairness, objectivity and ability to present a balanced view of the arguments between people who support a specific perspective and those who oppose it. Additionally, the ethics of the press play a major role in selecting which stories will be published, as is the case with gatekeepers who are of the opinion that the press is there to protect public welfare. This means that the press functions as a watchdog for the public and not as an agency for protecting and promoting governmental interests. Although watchdogs apply to democratic countries, in totalitarian societies, such as Saudi Arabia, the government has a firm grip on the media. Al-Kahtani (1999) believes that the Saudi press has always been unable to play a proper role as a watchdog; instead, it has played the role of 'cheerleader' of the government.
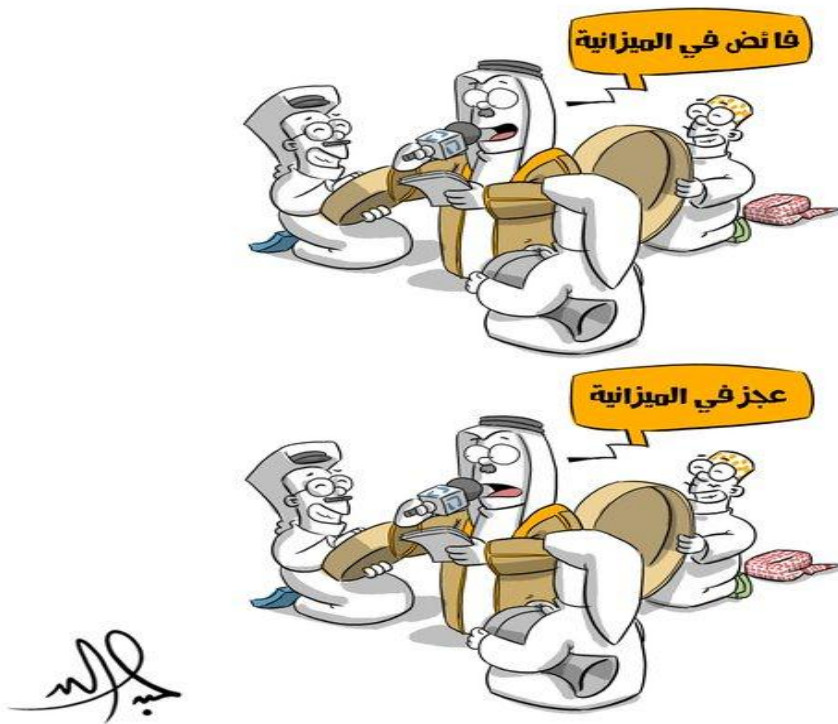
Figure 4.1*: Cartoon by Abdullah Jaber showing media celebrating budget gains in 2015 and also celebrating budget loss in 2016.*

Caricature 1 represents the view that media always stands with the government: the announcement of the 2015 budget, showing surplus has been praised by the media. However, the announcement of 2016 budget has also been praised by the media, although the budget showed some deficit. It should be mentioned, as the Cartoonist stated, that it is left to the individual gatekeeper, as some gatekeepers allow the cartoons that other gatekeepers rejected. This reflects the significant role the individual gatekeeper plays in the processing of news stories or material to be published. Nevertheless, Jaber, the artist who drew the above cartoon, was asked by the Ministry of Information to step down, and the cartoon was not published in any newspaper. Jaber asserted on his account on Twitter that *Mecca* Newspaper refused to publish the cartoon, that is why he published it on his personal account on Twitter.

This means that journalists are finding in social media a gateway to express their ideas, as if for instance, Twitter has become a platform upon which journalists voice their opinions.

However, the main values of journalists are not easily identified. The values of professional journalism differ on the basis of location and politics and according to questions relating to a story's importance and the reasoning behind reporting such stories (De Bruin, 2000). Mellor (2005) argues that in the Arab media, values relating to professional journalism are non-existent. 'The Western notion of objectivity as presenting two sides or opinions rather than one is not particularly hailed in the Arab news media, as they might be accused of conspiracy with the enemy' (Mellor, 2005, p. 87). This is because the media in most Arab countries are subjugated to governmental intervention. Thus, newspapers tend not to go against the line adopted by the government. Investigative journalism endeavours to uncover corruption and what some corrupt people attempt to hide, so, although journalists would consider this to be in the public interest, investigating such issues in the context of Saudi Arabia may be interpreted as being against the welfare of the public, and also its economy and its national security and hence against the law. The limitations are made even greater by the ambiguity of the regulating laws, which are subject to individual interpretations by the Ministry of Information. Journalists are bound to be held accountable for reporting on such issues; consequently they tend to keep away from investigating issues in question.

Furthermore, issues relating to objectivity, fairness and presenting the views of different sides of a news story can sometimes assist gatekeepers with allowing or rejecting a particular story. Additionally, there is difference among gatekeepers: some advocate that the media plays the role of a watchdog for the public, while others

advocate the role of the media in echoing the line adopted by the government. Khazen (1999) realises that Arab news is about 'deny the news, or praise the ruler', to an extent it is a common saying amongst Arab people that news cannot be believed unless the government denies it.

4.3.2. The organisational level

Gatekeeping decisions are made in accordance with editorial policy which whether explicit or not determines what is included or excluded in a publication. Whilst the editor takes responsibility for the overall gatekeeping process, he/she can also be subject to internal as well as external pressures. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) reported that correspondence between the *New York Times* publisher and editor revealed that the publisher clearly intervened regularly with the content of the news. This indicates that the policy of the publisher may find its way to the newspaper via the editor without the knowledge of the reporter of the news. This is an intervention. It follows that news items and stories are published by organisations as a result of the decisions made by organisations and journalists as well as other factors (Kim, 2002). However, the main pressure exerted on any media organisation comes from the organisation's policies and agenda. Each media organisation has its own agenda with regard to what it covers and how news is covered or discarded (Tuchman, 1978).

It is apparent that journalists are fused into their organisations and the policies of these organisations. Thus, in general, they deal with stories that are sanctioned by their organisation and evade stories that are prohibited by their organisations, irrespective of the merits of the stories (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Al-Jameeah (2009) argues that Saudi newspapers follow the policies of their organisations and those journalists should adhere to the policies of the media institution they work for. He sees editorial policies as a major factor impacting on the

line that journalists adopt. The impact of the editorial policies of newspapers is more on the process of the information rather than the information itself. This shows the impact of the gatekeepers on the newspapers in allowing the material for publication and committing journalists to abide by the editorial policies. This ultimately would lead journalists to do without their personal and individual stances.

Thus, in their decisions, lower level gatekeepers have to abide by the guidelines and agenda set by their editor and news organisation. For instance, in the case of media organisations that are supported by the government, it is unlikely that gatekeepers will go against decisions that challenge the government's concerns. As Martin (2010) explains that Arab journalists are intimidated, demoted or threatened if they write material that directly and severely goes against the policies of the government. This is one way in which Arab investigative journalists are not allowed to express their opinions freely most of the time.

Also, media organisations are increasingly profit-based and owned by entrepreneurs or large organisations. They have the power to handle news distribution and the dissemination of information in the form of a product that is circulated across markets; they also compete with other media agencies and have the revenue and advertisers to reach their target audience (Eliasoph, 1988). While Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that it is not always possible to generate profit from stories published in newspapers, these stories are considered in terms of their influence on readers and the advertising revenues they can generate because 'the commercial mass media makes their money by delivering audiences to advertisers' (p. 149).

The news items and stories selected by gatekeepers in commercially-driven media organisations may consider the economic implications of the selection of news

items to be published in order to generate the intended revenues (Bennett, 2004). Abdenour (2015) argues that besides consuming a lot of time and effort, investigative journalism is expensive too. Investigative reporting can also have very high legal costs. Additionally, investigative reporting may anger advertisers and sponsors which culminates in loss of revenues. For example, Khazen (1999) points out:

> The most prevalent form of censorship is self-censorship. Sitting at my desk, I feel at times that I am not so much covering the news as covering it up. Editors know the dos and the don'ts of their trade, so when I am shown a story, it is often to shift responsibility from the editor concerned to me, should the paper get banned the next day. … If we are banned in Saudi Arabia, we stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars in advertising revenue. Consequently, we are more careful with Saudi news; it is a matter of economics, even of survival. (p. 79)

However, in the case of Saudi Arabia, funding may play a lesser role in driving gatekeepers to select news to be published. Despite the fact that Saudi newspapers are institutionalised or privately owned, they tend not to be economically driven (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Al-Kahtani, 1999; Al-Shebeili, 2000). The reason behind this, as Martin (2010) believes, lies in the fact that the majority of Arab governments curb media through the financial pressure they exert on them. Most governments are the main advertisers in the media, and their advertisements generate media revenues. In turn, the media is being pressured not to go against the governments in case they lose their main economic revenues. This means that if newspapers run investigative journalism in a way that criticises the government, they risk losing the financial support from the government. Consequently, when newspapers lose the financial support of the government and the advertisers, they cannot run investigative reporting as this requires funds that newspapers cannot afford. As such, newspapers keep away from running investigative reporting that would lose them financial support.

4.3.3. Journalistic routine level

Journalistic routine is a significant factor in deciding which news items and stories will be published. The practice of journalistic routine adopted by organisations and gatekeepers has been based on news items or stories, including: 'accuracy, the appropriate length, good visuals, human interest, novelty, negativity, conflict and violence, loss of lives, and the story's timeliness' (Kim, 2002, p. 431). Consequently, gatekeepers remain grounded in their routines and the line adopted by their organisations, suggesting that gatekeepers' decisions are the result of the routine processes that editors perform. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) describe the routines of the news worker as having accepted often unwritten, unspoken rules that are dictated by the culture and environment of the media organisation itself.

Decisions concerning which news items to publish are based on the routine work of gatekeepers who should satisfy the editorial hierarchy of the newspaper and its priorities (Bennett, 2004). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) state that 'media routines, although helping fit the flow of information into manageable physical limits, impose their own special logic on the product that results' (p. 119). However, in heavily-regulated environments news editors tend to favour stories that have previously been covered or dealt with as these have precedent. This is also the case for publishing news concerning a government's statements and public events; it is routine for editors to allow such statements and news items (Gans, 1979). Shoemaker and Reese (1996) believe that gatekeepers' routine has a role to play in influencing news selection in line with the policies of their organisations. Bennett (2004) is of the opinion that the selection of news becomes routine work for gatekeepers who follow the policies and priorities of their organisations. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) explain that news routines are heavily dependent on the routine of the organisation and its management

and they change as a response to them. Abdenour (2015) argues that in order to conduct investigative reports, it is vital that the management of the organisation supports such investigation. This means that the priorities of the organisation outweigh the routine in the investigations conducted.

4.3.4. The social system level

Factors pertaining to society and culture tend to influence gatekeepers' decisions regarding news items and stories. Gatekeepers are aware that 'none of these factors—the individual, the routine, the organization, or the social institution—can escape the fact that it is tied to and draws its sustenance from the social system' (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 116). Society builds a story that might not reflect the reality of a problem or event, and the news is constructed on the basis of a social view of reality (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Laitin (1986) adds an element of hegemony that is culturally-based and that gatekeepers feel obliged to uphold, such as when influential groups in society use culture as a weapon to achieve their targets: 'political entrepreneurs recognize that through appeals to culture they can easily attract a mass following' (p. 11). The influence of culture on gatekeepers can be seen through the adoption of meanings derived from their cultural surroundings. Such meanings have cultural values and beliefs, which present gatekeepers with opportunities to allow or constrain ideas or issues (Geertz, 1973). However, Cohen (1976) presents a different argument that gatekeepers are themselves responsible for the choices they make. The argument is that 'The constraints that culture exerts on the individual come ultimately not from the culture itself, but from the collectivity of the group' (p. 85). It follows that gatekeepers feel compelled to abide by cultural rules because of the influence of certain groups in society. This could be due to direct pressure from particular interest

groups or part of a wider desire to reflect the attitudes and concerns of a target audience.

Culture and society have a greater impact on gatekeeping, as proposed by Lange (1984) in his study on the relationship between published news and the extent of a country's development. The study notes that less developed countries have more local news than developed countries and vice versa. This might be due to cultural and economic factors within these countries and their process of selecting news items to be published. This is because gatekeepers may be constrained to block issues that go against culture and society to be published.

Journalists thus tend to adhere to the social and cultural norms as well as the religious values of the people of their country. For instance, in Arab countries, stories on topics that are considered to be prohibited, such as alcohol and sex, should not be published, and even international newspapers and magazines that advertise sex and alcohol, for instance, are either forbidden or their pages that advertise such issues are torn by the censorship at the Ministry of Information. Mellor (2005) states that Arab journalists should uphold their countries' heritage and unity. For instance, Saudi journalists are required to promote Islamic values and practices. Al-Shebeili (2000) notes that Saudi newspapers do not cover issues such as homosexuality or gambling as these are religiously and socially unacceptable. For instance, Hussain Shobokshi, a columnist for *Asharq Al-Awsat*, received death threats because he wrote an article calling for Saudi women to be allowed to drive (Awad, 2010). Society and culture therefore play an influential role in decisions concerning the selection of news for the media. Rugh (2004) argues that the Saudi media engages in self-censorship as references to religion and taboos are routinely removed. Amin (2002) maintains that journalists practice self-censorship because they are held responsible for maintaining

the stability of their country, suggesting that censorship is enforced in most Arab countries. Thus, most Arab gatekeepers tend to censor any content that goes against their country's social and cultural beliefs (Amin, 2002).

4.3.5. The social and institutional level

There is a relatively strong relationship between the government and the media despite the fact that many factions of society, including the public, media owners, advertisers, pressure groups and others, endeavour to control the media. The government and most of these groups try to interfere with media content and the messages that they propagate. In totalitarian societies, governments control media through censorship and also through their control due to forging an effective relationship with the media on the basis that the media keeps away from choosing to investigate issues that might embarrass the government.

Some Arab media is always in favour of not using the media to provoke public opinion; instead, journalists work to maintain the status quo in their countries (Mellor, 2005). This shows that the Arab media is controlled by the governments and that journalists are asked to abide by the line adopted by governments. However, over the past ten years, Arab journalists have adopted new ways of practising journalism after decades of being mere mouthpieces of their respective governments (Awad, 2010). Many journalists are inspired by the bold work of Al Jazeera journalists and are eager to explore a wider range of subjects *(Al-Hayat,* 2011). For instance, in his programme, *Top Secret*, Yosri Fouda explained issues that deal with investigative reporting of the sensitive nature, such as the conspiracy in the explosion of the Egyptian Aircraft. As such, there appeared a number of newspapers that practiced a more aggressive form of journalism in several countries in the region (Alfahad, 2015).

Even journalists working for government-controlled media were calling for more independence so that they could work more effectively (Awad, 2010).

Cook (1998) explains governments need the media to spread their messages to the public just as the media sometimes needs governments to facilitate their operations and circulation. Thus, the relationship between governments and the media can be seen as a primary factor influencing gatekeepers' selection of news items and stories to be published. Indeed, government is the media's dominant source of information. Consequently, the media is in constant need of governmental authorities to verify its news.

When the relationship between the media and the government becomes less effective, the media run the risk of being alienated from government sources (Cook, 1998). For instance, in 2015, the Kuwaiti government did not allow the Saudi newspaper, *Al-Hayat*, to be distributed in Kuwait because of an article in the newspaper by Daoud Al-Sharyan discussing the dispute over oil between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti government considered the article offensive (*The-New-Arab*, 2011). Thus, the media operates under tight government control. This is apparent in the context of Saudi Arabia as the Ministry of Information censors national newspapers. The Saudi government has maintained the right of publishing licenses to the newspapers. Khazen (1999) argues that the Saudi government has the right to confiscate publications and prohibit their distribution if it feels that the newspaper's policy goes against governmental policies or if the government feels that the newspaper's policy favours a foreign regime.

As such, Saudi gatekeepers take into account the line adopted by the government when censoring news and they use that to decide whether to publish or

reject stories. Moreover, since the appointment of editors-in-chief depends on the approval of the Ministry of Information, it is highly likely that gatekeepers face pressure when selecting or ignoring news items and stories. As a result, social and institutional level is very effective in the practice of investigative journalism, as journalists are committed to the policies of their institutions, which in turn are subjected to government control.

4.4. Saudi Gatekeepers

Saudi newspapers are controlled by the printing law, which was modified in 2011. This law does not allow newspaper to propagate any criticism of religion, the royal family or the government. The law also forbids the editors-in-chief of all newspaper from publishing such material (Al Maghlooth, 2013; Awad, 2010). Such factors restrict gatekeepers and limit their objectivity and professional standards. Studies have indicated that the Saudi media is still under the influence of factors such as culture and politics, in addition to economic, professional and work routine factors (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Alnassar, 2010).

Saudi newspapers have suffered due to severe censorship. Whether censorship is governmental, social, institutionalised or self-imposed, it is still practised today despite the fact that Saudi audiences have access to multiple sources of information. However, as Sakr (2003) observes, censorship does not only pertain to media content; it involves media ownership regulations, journalistic restrictions as well as media laws, distribution and practices imposed on journalists to limit their access to particular types of information let alone their ability to impart that information to their audience.

Al-Shamari (1992) argues that the government controls the content of the press and provides financial support to national newspapers faced with adversity. It is an offence to practice any journalistic activities without a prior licence from the Ministry of Information. The ministry is also in charge of appointing or approving the appointment of editors-in-chief and issues guidelines and instructions to newspapers to guide them in what they should publish and what they should abstain from publishing. If newspapers do not follow the instructions of the ministry, they are liable to sanctions. Furthermore, with regard to government censorship, it should be mentioned that the Saudi media is subject to the country's Press and Publication Law. The last law, issued in 2003, continued to have some redlines, which the press would not dare criticise, such as criticising the ruling family, religious practices or the foreign policies of the state.

For instance, Article 9 of the Printing and Publication Law stipulates that for the welfare of the people, restrictions should be placed upon the media to prevent it from tackling public order offences, encouraging criminal acts, damaging the economy, breaching public security, working for a foreign country against the public interest or inciting fanaticism. Article 9 also states that the press should be prevented from revealing the secrets of criminal investigations. However, if a journalist reports on the bad quality of a company's product, for instance, this might be interpreted as being against the welfare of the country or as damaging to the economy. Consequently, journalists should be aware of the necessity of constructive criticism as opposed to destructive criticism. Following the Arab Spring, Article 9 was amended in 2012 to note that it is strictly forbidden to publish any material that might lead to tarnishing the Grand Mufti (the highest religious leaders in Saudi Arabia) as well as other known religious leaders and governmental authorities.

Another type of censorship, institutionalised censorship, is represented by editorial censorship whereby editors-in-chief censor the material to be published as instructed by the Ministry of Information. They do so in order to avoid being fired (Al-Shebeili, 2000). Moreover, the ministry has jurisdiction over offences and violations of freedom of expression, which, in turn, reduces the ability of journalists to objectively express their views. Thus, Saudi journalists tend to be cautious, i.e. they tend to self-censor themselves (Al-Askar, 2005). Given the national laws, level of Government scrutiny and strict penalties, some editors-in-chief impose their own strict rules to limit the freedom bestowed on journalists. Such editors are cautious when dealing with controversial issues as they are wary of unsolicited censorship from particular groups in society (Al-Askar, 2005).

Al Maghlooth (2013) argues that social gatekeeping has always influenced the Saudi press as editors tend to avoid sensitive topics in order not to provoke anger from society and pressure groups. Social gatekeeping has always had an influence on the Saudi media, as editors tend to avoid dealing with sensitive issues that might cause anger to a group of society, such as: mixing men and women in the workplace, schools and universities. An instance of social gatekeeping is when *Al-Riyadh* newspaper used photoshop to cover the flesh of a female singer (Al Maghlooth, 2013). This is because Saudi newspapers do not tend to publish pictures of females that go against the conservative values and tradition of the conservative Saudi society.

Another form of censorship is social censorship, which is practised through pressure groups, such as religious leaders. Shoemaker and Vos (2009) maintain that pressure groups function as gatekeepers: 'news gatekeepers are now understood not only to include news gatherers, sources and news processors but also public relations practitioners and other representatives of interest groups who want to shape mass

media content' (p. 20). This type of censorship significantly interferes with the work of journalists, as is the case when any social issue is interpreted in light of Islamic practices and social pressure groups approve or disapprove of it (Awad, 2010). This influence stems from the power that these groups are given by the government and society. As such, they play a major role in restricting press freedoms, particularly in religious matters. Religious leaders can issue fatwas (religious verdicts) when published material contradicts their teachings. Journalists are accused of being blasphemous if they publish any material that contradicts the religious teachings of offended groups (Al-Shamari, 1992).

Al Maghlooth (2013) and Al-Jameeah (2009) argue that although not all Saudi people are religious, religious leaders play an influential role in dictating their practices to society and in seeking to impose their values upon it. This is because these groups have had government support, which has enabled them to influence education to an extent that people's show of religious content is much welcomed. This explains why religion is of paramount importance in less democratic societies. For example, recently, some religious groups appeared to influence the way in which the electronic paper, *Sabq*, is run:

> It tended to select bearded men to work in the newsroom, reflecting the ascendancy of religious personnel at the newspaper. The success of *Sabq* in this context appears to have led other Saudi e-newspapers to adopt similar policies in order to win public trust in the market. (Al Maghlooth, 2013, p. 251)

Al-Jameeah (2006) states that religious groups try to act as censors, claiming that they are doing so voluntarily; as such, they set themselves up to think on behalf of others on the basis of their social and religious duties. These people may defame the reputation of journalists and ascribe to them qualities they do not possess. For

example, in 2011, some of those people attacked the Minister of Information and caused turbulence at a book fair in Riyadh because they claimed that the ministry was imitating a Western style (*taghreeb*). They also attacked a journalist and tried to snatch his camera (*Al-Riyadh*, 2011).

In response to the types of censorship and penalties previously discussed, journalists tend to exercise a high degree of self-censorship due to the ban on criticising the government and prominent religious figures (Alfahad, 2015). Al-Shamiry (1992) argues that the censorship imposed by the Ministry of Information on newspapers makes journalists self-censor their reports. Rugh (2004) comments on censorship in Saudi Arabia by noting that the language used in a publication indicates self-censorship and avoidance of the taboos that all journalists should adhere to if they want their materials to be published by the media. Furthermore, all organisations dealing with news distribution should be licensed, and authorities can fire or punish journalists if the former are unhappy with the work of the latter. Any printed material that is considered to be against the law of the land is collected and destroyed.

In 1999 Jihad Khazen, the former editor-in-chief of the *Al-hayat* daily newspaper admitted that throughout his long career in the press working in Beirut, Jeddah and London, he was asked on many occasions to avoid publishing particular news stories, but he was never asked what to publish. Khazen reveals, 'I have been asked not to publish something more times than I care to remember' (p. 78). This is because, as Khazen (1999) argues, in Arab countries, media laws are not standard as every Arab country has issues that are considered sensitive to them. For instance, in Egypt, the issue of the Muslim Brotherhood is very sensitive, as it is in Syria, whereas in Algeria, the issue of Islamic fundamentalism is a sensitive one, as that of the Polisario in Morocco, but there are many sensitive issues in Saudi Arabia, such as

those relating to religion, the military and women. For instance, any criticism to religious leaders is not allowed.

Consequently, journalists who try to exploit governments' sensitive issues put themselves at risk: they are treated as treacherous and are accused of treason. Thus, there are instances in which journalists have lost their lives for dealing with issues that governments consider sensitive. Therefore, before publishing sensitive stories in some Arab countries, there are many issues to be taken into account, such as whether or not the newspapers will be allowed into those countries (Khazen, 1999).

This explains the absence of coverage of many topics by journalists. Rugh (2004) argues that 'The most common mechanism ensuring newspapers' loyalty to the basic policies of the regime and to its top leadership is anticipatory self-censorship based on sensitivity to the political environment' (p. 82). Self-censorship is the most difficult and worse type of censorship to be understood (Sakr, 2003).

On this basis, and despite the practice of self-censorship in the *Al-hayat* newspaper, it was prohibited from publication in Saudi Arabia on many occasions (Khazen, 1999). The above discussion demonstrates the nature of media control and censorship in Saudi Arabia. This control is complex due to the political and cultural context of laws and regulations. It makes the task of gatekeepers a difficult one as gatekeepers are confused about what sort of information to allow and what to deny as well as how to sort the information they have.

However, the rapid development of information sharing technologies has tremendously transformed how news is created and circulated (Al Maghlooth, 2013). There is increased interest in how these developments affect gatekeeping in relation to media issues, but there remains a dearth of academic material in this area (Baek,

2007). A number of scholars have argued that modern technologies have undermined the efficacy of gatekeeping in media circles (Al Maghlooth, 2013). Others like Baek (2007) feel that new technologies have also transformed the mechanisms of gatekeeping. Obateru (2017) argued that computer technology and the Internet have changed the way in which news are reported. This has resulted in gatekeepers themselves obtaining their information from the Internet and other electronic sources, as such gatekeepers are no longer in control of the news and online publications which might not be verified. This has challenged professional journalism. More studies are needed in this area to explain how investigative journalism has been impacted in this new climate of gatekeeping.

Al Maghlooth (2013) argues that technology is now being used as the new gatekeeper, with the digital era seeing the power of gatekeeping being transferred from the few to the many. Some of the emerging gatekeeping tools include search engines, ratings, readers' comments and blocking. But the impact of social media in Saudi Arabia is heavily limited by the cyber-crime rules discussed earlier and this is one reason why to date these new forms of gatekeeping have generally been less disruptive of mainstream media practice than in Western media organisations.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the concept and development of gatekeeping theory, its relationship with agenda-setting theory, framing theory and news values theory. The chapter has also explained the levels of gatekeeping, with focus on Saudi gatekeepers, in the light of the systemic environment and journalism practices in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, the discussion of Saudi media has indicated that political and cultural factors impacting media content and role. Consequently, the research adopted the gatekeeping theory to provide a framework for understanding how news

is processed through gatekeeping. The study has examined the factors that have more influence on the practice of investigative journalism. It discerns how systemic factors impact on gatekeeping. The study has also reviewed the factors that have an impact on the content of media although some of these factors are more important than others as previous studies have shown.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY DESIGN, PROCESS, AND METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction

Research methodology is the method that researchers use to collect data in order to answer their research questions. Researchers devote a considerable amount of time and effort to choosing their research methodologies. The research design and conduct is used in line with the research strategies; however, each study has a specific type of design and strategy. This study's methodology is based on a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), which is conducted through a questionnaire and interviews. This study investigates how Saudi Arabia's investigative journalism operates, and the impact of the systemic factors on investigative journalism, as expressed through the opinions of journalists and editors-in-chief.

This chapter presents the research methodology, dealing with the study's aims and objectives. The previous chapters have discussed investigative journalism's background, the factors influencing investigative journalism, Saudi media context, and the Gatekeeping Theory. This chapter focuses on the research design, as well as the data collection methods and analysis. It begins by discussing the rationales for this study's methodological research, research philosophy, research strategy, research questions, personally administered research questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, sampling methods, pilot study, data collection analysis, and ethical considerations.

5.2. Research Process

This study has adopted the Onion Model developed by (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012) who recommended using this model to explain the conduct of social research. The model helps researchers to conduct studies and be systematic in following the stages of their research. It is divided into six layers: the research philosophy, approach, research strategy, methodology, time horizon, and techniques and procedures. The structure of this model seems to be appropriate for the conduct of the present research. It helps in the selection of the research tools that should be utilised in the conduct of the research.
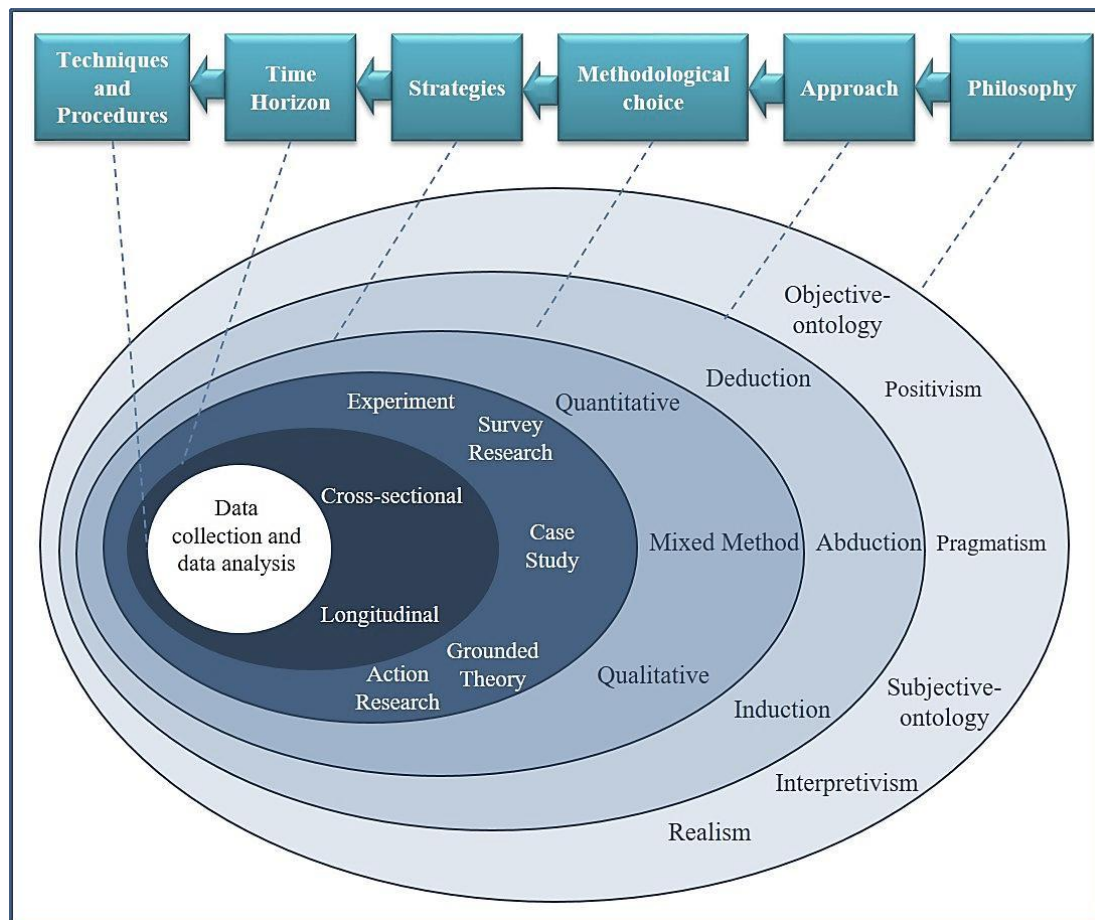
Figure 5.1: *The Research Onion Model (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012)*

5.3. Research Philosophy

The research philosophy reflects the method for developing the knowledge used in the research. It is important that researchers define their philosophies, including their approaches to research, data collection, and analysis techniques (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, et al., 2012). Philosophical approaches vary in types, such as: ontology, which concerns reality being either objective or subjective; epistemology, which concerns pragmatism, realism, interpretivism, and positivism; and axiology, which concerns how valuable the research is judged to be. The above philosophies are chosen based on the research's purpose (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). In order to identify the research philosophy, we need to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of reality? This is the ontological question concerning the nature and form of reality;

2. What is the relationship between the knower and the known? This is the epistemological question;

3. How can we come to know it? This is the methodological question (Pickard, 2013, p. 6).

The significance of the research philosophy stems from it supporting successful research design and the choosing of a workable research design that is in line with the survey used (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 2002). As such, research philosophy includes the ontology, epistemology, and axiology defining the research's methodology, along with the steps and layers used in conducting the research.

5.3.1. Ontology

'Ontology is the nature of reality' (Pickard, 2013, p. 6). It refers to when the researcher makes assumptions about and questions the way the world operates, as well as the researcher's commitment to a particular assessment (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Ontology can be in the form of either objectivism or subjectivism.

5.3.1.1. Objectivism

Objectivism is the representation of actual reality. It is 'an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors' (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018, p. 27). Consequently, objectivism stresses realism, which is the expression of external reality felt by common people in accordance with a predetermined structure (Sexton, 2003). Objectivism is preferable in a positivist approach, as it relates to interpreting and testing theories (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

5.3.1.2. Subjectivism

Subjectivism refers to social events and activities, including users' interactions with events, processes, and phenomena. Subjectivism is about understanding situations and phenomena, as well as their influence. It is used in interpretivist research, and it focuses on the ideal applications of various different reality types, as seen by individuals (Sexton, 2003).

5.3.2. Epistemology

Epistemology—or the means of knowing reality—refers to the common knowledge and information agreed upon in any field of research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). This relates to the information sources available to researchers against knowledge limitation (Dudovskiy, 2011). Epistemology can be looked at

differently regarding its various types: positivism, interpretivism, realism, and pragmatism.

5.3.2.1. Positivism

The positivist philosophy is objective, and it is completely dependent on external environment issues. This is because there is no set value on such issues, and the data is not subjective, i.e. it does not reflect personal experience (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, et al., 2012). Hussey and Hussey (1997) argue that positivistic philosophy is traditional, quantitative, or pragmatic, as opposed to phenomenological philosophy, which is subjective or qualitative. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) believe that positivism should be used in research with logical reasoning and objectivity at the expense of subjectivity or researchers' views of participants being influenced by their experience or attitudes.

5.3.2.2. Interpretivism

The interpretivist philosophy focuses on the details of the issue at play, where researchers are dissatisfied with the positivist approach due to the worldwide changes happening in all fields of knowledge (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991). Dey (2003) and Pickard (2013) argue that interpretivism presents an understanding of people's actions and interprets said actions in their particular setting.

5.3.2.3. Realism

Realism is made up of both philosophies mentioned above, as realism deals with the factual events, not necessarily personal ideas and experience. As such, the realistic approach is determined by the question trying to be answered (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, et al., 2012).

5.3.2.4. Pragmatism

Pragmatism explains the action taken, combining positivism and interpretivism (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Pragmatism is usually preferred when researchers need to use mixed methods (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). Nevertheless, new philosophies combining questions for mixed methods exist and are frequently being developed; however, they differ in their relevance to the field being researched (Creswell, 2015).

5.3.3. Axiology

Axiology is defined as a branch of philosophy used to judge value. Axiology deals with how the research is processed at each stage, as well as how the researcher values the research and how this influences the results' accuracy (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). When researchers judge value, they pragmatically and subjectively judge the participants. Therefore, this philosophy might not be appropriate for this research's positivist approach, as the objective type of ontology represented in the positivist approach has no bearing on the obtained data's value.

The philosophy is selected based partly on the research's nature. The present study is set to investigate the influence of the Saudi systemic environment on investigative journalism. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) argue that researchers can decide their philosophical assumption based on their views of the relationship between knowledge and its development process.

This study has built on the researcher's experience as a journalist working in newsrooms and as a reporter. Since this research is about the systemic environment's influence on investigative journalism, the researcher studied the literature and the Gatekeeping Theory in particular as the theory best suited to the context of Saudi

newspapers. The study has also identified the link between the factors influencing investigative journalism and gatekeeping in the Saudi context. The research uses perspectives based on different cultures and political systems to assess the current status of Saudi Arabia's investigative journalism in relation to the factors that influence gatekeeping.

From the above discussion, the study has opted to use the Pragmatism approach as the philosophy of research methodology, as it combines the qualitative and quantitative methods of research and the use of it is justified in mixed methods research (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Kelemen & Rumens, 2008). In this study, pragmatism as a philosophy has helped in the understanding and identification of the status of investigative journalism and its practice, as well as the factors influencing it.

5.4. Research Approach

The common research approach types are deduction, induction, and abduction (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Each of these approaches suit a particular philosophical type. For instance, deduction suits positivism, induction suits interpretivism, and abduction suits both deductive and inductive approaches.

5.4.1. Deduction

Deduction means 'moving from theory to data' (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012, p. 147). This happens in various stages. First, researchers set the idea and the factors that will help them to examine the concepts in order to form their theories. Researchers identify the factors involved in their studies based on these theories and the literature reviewed. Then, based on the results obtained, researchers examine their studies' variables. After this, they compare their results against the research theories and the factors involved. The next step is analysing the data

obtained. The results are accepted when they are consistent with the theory concepts, and vice versa (Blaikie, 2010).

Deduction is ideally implemented in quantitative research, as it tests the target theory when applied in structured questionnaires with a large sample (Gill & Johnson, 2010).
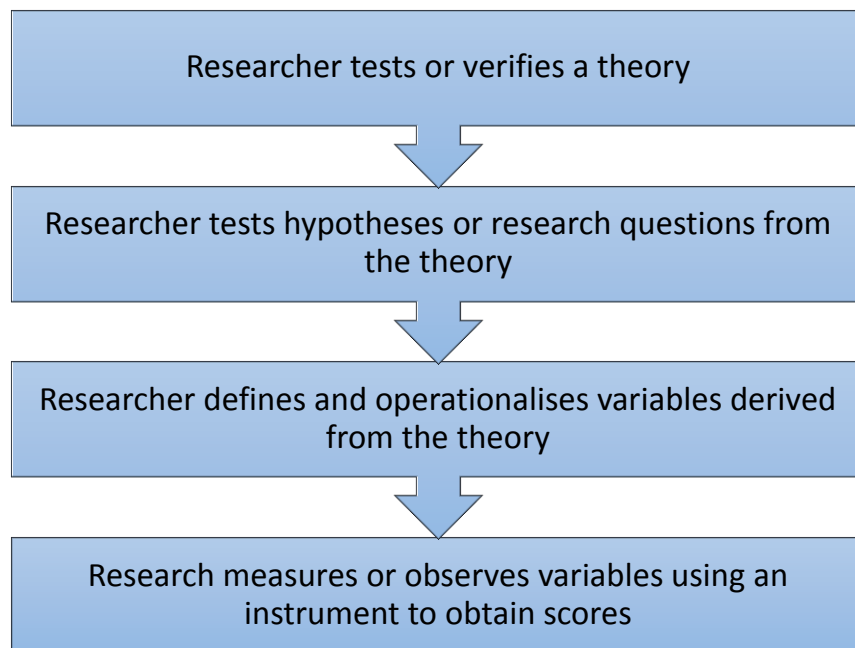
Figure 5.2: *The Deduction Approach (Creswell, 2011, p. 57).*

5.4.2. Induction

Induction means 'moving from data to theory' (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012, p. 147). This occurs by first collecting data about particular phenomena in order to generate a thorough understanding of the issue being investigated. This is followed by analysing the data, which culminates in theory formation (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Consequently, induction means moving from general ideas to specific ones, as is the case in qualitative research, which normally involves a limited number of respondents (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│      Researcher tests or verifies a theory   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher looks for broad patterns,        │
│  generalisations, or theories from the       │
│  theme or categories                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher analyses data in order to form   │
│  themes or categories                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher asks participants open-ended     │
│  questions and makes field notes             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ▲
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Researcher gathers information (e.g.         │
│  interviews and observations)                │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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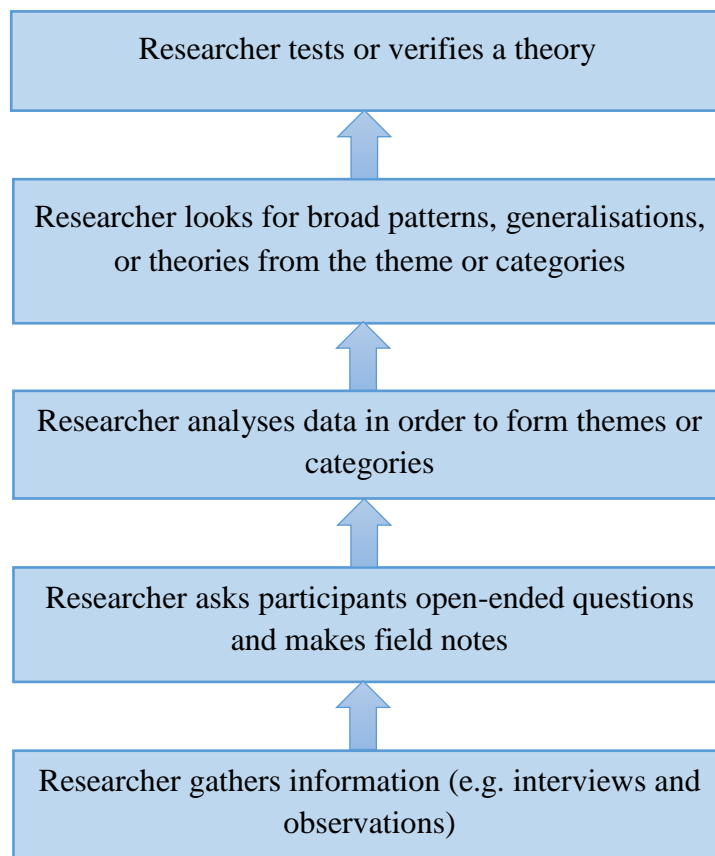
Figure 5.3: *The Induction Approach (Creswell, 2011, p. 63).*

5.4.3. Abduction

Abduction means moving back and forth in a study combining both induction and deduction approaches. As such, abduction is best utilised for using theories to test and observe phenomena. The results help researchers to set up a workable model or theory about the studied phenomena or events (Suddaby, 2006).

After reviewing the research approaches, this study has concluded that the inductive approach best suits the nature of this research, as it deals with data in order to test a theory. Bryman (2016) believes that there is logic behind establishing and testing a concept, as after conducting their research, researchers could achieve results that are similar to those published by others, or perhaps achieve apparent data after the data have been collected and analysed. Hence, using the inductive approach is suitable for studying and understanding investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia's

systemic environment. This is because using a research survey to test the practice of investigative journalism is ideal, since journalists may feel more comfortable with responding to an anonymous questionnaire than they would be with providing documents, case studies, and observations.

Researchers generate data from the literature they review, and they analyse this data in order to test a theory. Hence, the inductive, qualitative approach is preferable. This is because, in the case of qualitative research, as Bryman (2016) suggests, it is advisable that researchers use the inductive approach—moving from data to theory—in order to test a theory from the collected data. The inductive approach allows researchers to develop their findings from major themes taken from the data. J. W. Willis and Jost (2007) believe that with an inductive approach, researchers can explore different aspects of the issues being investigated, as well as analyse the data and its links to their research findings. The use of the inductive approach helped the researcher to explore various topics while at the same time developing the data analysis and linking finding of the study with the impact of the systemic environment on investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

5.5. The Choice of Research Methodology

Research methods can be divided into: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods. Every method is ideal for a particular type of research and objectives (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

5.5.1. Quantitative

Quantitative research is the study of the connection between research variables, and it is based on studying the relationship between the numerical data through using statistical techniques in the data analysis (Saunders, Lewis, &

Thornhill, 2012). Quantitative research's theoretical framework stems from the reviewed literature, as this directs researchers to develop their aims and objectives in line with their research questions (Dawson, 2013; Pickard, 2013). Hence, quantitative research is ideal for use with positivism and a deductive approach in testing research theories and concepts. Quantitative research can also be utilised in studying the inductive approach when establishing a concept or theory (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

5.5.2. Qualitative

Qualitative research is ideal for investigating respondents' behaviour, attitudes, and experiences via interviews, as this is one of the most common techniques used for qualitative data collection (Dawson, 2013). Interpretivism and the inductive approach are used in order to help researchers establish models or concepts (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

5.5.3. Mixed-Methods

The mixed-methods approach is used to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to develop a clear understanding of the investigated concepts. The mixed-methods approach uses more than one data collection technique, such as using both questionnaires and interviews (Creswell, 2011; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Creswell (2015) claims that when researchers use the mixed-methods approach, they need both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, as they seek to integrate both data types, taking into account the strength of each in helping them answer their research questions.

The mixed-methods approach has its advantages and disadvantages. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) the advantages are:

1. A mixed-methods approach balances a study's weaknesses, strengthening it with both types of data, as each supports the other.

2. Mixed methods provide more evidence and reinforce the research problem.

3. A mixed-methods approach helps researchers to explore and answer research questions requiring deep investigation, as one approach alone might not be adequate.

4. A mixed-methods approach links both methods of research, as well as bridging the gap between them.

5. A mixed-methods approach encourages using various views, as opposed to being restricted to one view based on one direction.

6. A mixed-methods approach allows researchers to gain a wealth of information that can clearly and practically explain the results and findings.

Conversely, the disadvantages of a mixed-methods approach, as described by Creswell and Clark (2011), are:

1. Using this approach requires knowledge of using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

2. Researchers should be skilful in data collection and analysis techniques in both approaches.

3. Researchers should have a grasp of the basic principles of quantitative research, including reliability, validity, the control sample, and generalisability. At the same time, researchers should also be aware of the main aspects of conducting qualitative research, including defining the phenomena being investigated and identifying the research questions.

4. A mixed-methods approach necessitates accurate time management for collecting and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data.

5. A mixed-methods approach requires adequate resources to support the research findings. Researchers should always have clear sight of their data collection sources and the analysis of both data types.

6. A mixed-methods approach is costly, and researchers should be aware that collecting and analysing both types of data could incur expenses for printing, recording, transcribing, and translating, as well as associated software costs.

The present study applies the mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore and understand the Saudi Arabian systemic environment's influence on investigative journalism. When both methods are used together, each method compensates for the other's shortcomings, making the data more convincing and credible (R. Marshall, 1999). Using both methods also provides a better understanding of the issue being investigated than using either method alone (Creswell, 2015). By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, the mixed-methods approach avoids the biases and shortcomings that come from using either method alone. Therefore, using a mixed-methods approach is recommended, as it produces data that is more useful to the researcher (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

Furthermore, using this approach allows the researcher to obtain two different sets of ideas derived from both closed-ended (quantitative) and open-ended questions (qualitative). Using the qualitative method adds details about the setting, location, and the personal experience context. In the mixed-methods approach, the interviewees' experiences are added to the statistical data and measures in order to

convey a full picture of the data (Creswell, 2015). By combining quantitative and qualitative data, the mixed-methods approach enables researchers to combine or collaborate using their data, allowing them to analyse richer data and to apply it on a wider scale. As such, through data combination, the mixed-methods approach helps researchers to come up with new ideas and modes of thinking (Rossman & Wilson, 1985).

Questionnaires and interviews are effective methods for this study, as they enable the researcher to learn the opinions of the people involved first-hand. By using such methods, the data collected provide a wide range of views about the Saudi Arabian systemic environment's influence on investigative journalism. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) claim that using semi-structured interviews alongside other data collection methods, such as questionnaires, allows researchers to study data triangulation. Through this, the quantitative data's statistical analysis can help researchers to summarise, compare, and contrast results in order to generalise relatively accurate findings. Hence, qualitative data can explain the relationships between the findings (Bryman, 2016). Combining both research methods reinforces our understanding of the issues being investigated.

5.6. Data Collection Techniques

This study conducted questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in order to explore the Saudi systemic environment's influence on investigative journalism. The questionnaires were conducted with Saudi journalists, while the interviews were conducted with editors-in-chief.

5.6.1. Questionnaires

This study used questionnaires to collect data from selected participants. Questionnaires are a common data collection method in both qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2012). In quantitative research, questionnaires are used to collect standardised data in a statistical form from a large number of people. Such questionnaires are typically in the form of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, or a mixture of both (Roulston, 2013). This study's questionnaires used multiple-choice questions. The data collected from this were interpreted using quantitative measurement tools and statistical tests in order to describe and analyse the examined variables. The questionnaire is structured, as the questions are all closed-ended.

There are several advantages to using questionnaires for academic research. First, they are relatively cheap to administer compared to other data collection methods. When administered online, the cost of data collection is considerably minimised (J. W. Willis & Jost, 2007). Second, questionnaires enable collecting data from a large number of participants. This enhances the data's quality by targeting a wide range of participants with relevant knowledge and experience on the subject. Third, questionnaires help in saving time spent on data collection, as they can be administered and scored quickly.

However, disadvantages associated with questionnaires include their relatively low response rates (Creswell, 2012). Many targeted participants do not complete or return questionnaires; therefore, a large number of questionnaires have to be administered in order to receive an adequate number of responses. In addition, when administered through the mail or online, there is a chance that participants' responses will be influenced by other people not related to the study (J. W. Willis &

Jost, 2007). This study's participants were urged to be alone when responding to the questionnaires, as well as to provide their own responses to the questions.

The questionnaire used in this study has been divided into the following sections:

1. Personal information, including the newspaper the respondent works at and the respondent's age, gender, level of education, salary, years of experience, and type of employment.

2. Overview, the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

3. The impact of the organisational factor on investigative journalism.

4. The influence of Saudi Arabia's political system on investigative journalism.

5. The impact of the cultural factor on investigative journalism.

5.6.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

This study employs semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection. This involves the opinions of Saudi Arabian editors-in-chief. The interview questions are specific and seek in-depth details, although follow-up questions have also been employed in order to acquire more information about the state and practice of investigative journalism, as well as the extent to which Saudi systemic factors affects investigative journalism in relation to its effect on gatekeeping.

The interview method has been defined as 'a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study… these questions usually ask participants for their thoughts, opinions, perspectives, or descriptions of specific experiences' (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004, p. 54). The interviews are intended to complement the questionnaires by providing data

to answer the research questions. The interviews provided a deeper understanding of the participants' knowledge and responses (Brinkmann, 2014), as well as an understanding of their world based on their perceptions and experiences (Roulston, 2013).

The semi-structured interviews of the study were administered using a set of prepared questions as a guide, ensuring that all important areas were covered. The researcher asked follow-up questions and sought clarification based on the respondents' answers. The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to answer the questions in the way that they understood best (Brinkmann, 2014). Some of the respondents gave further explanations of their answers with little hesitation.

There are several advantages to using interviews as a method of data collection:

- Interviews are considered a flexible way of collecting data, as they allow researchers to modify the interview questions in line with situation's context, particularly when using semi-structured or unstructured interviews. As such, researchers can collect additional data in order to achieve their studies' objectives. Researchers can change, add, or omit questions as required (Bryman, 2016).

- Interviews are considered a good method for researchers to be certain about the data they are collecting, as they are in direct contact with their interviewees. Furthermore, they allow researchers to explain the questions and to ensure that the interviewees fully understand the questions being asked (Oppenheim, 1992).

- Interviews allow researchers to obtain detailed answers to the questions they ask, therefore collecting more effective answers. Researchers can also ask their interviewees supplementary questions in order to obtain a deeper analysis of the points being investigated. In this way, researchers can benefit from the non-verbal communication that they have with their interviewees (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

- Interviews have a high rate of completion, as interviewees usually complete their interviews and answer most of the questions.

On the other hand, there are disadvantages associated with interviews. Amongst these disadvantages, as Hussey and Hussey (1997) argue, are:

- Interviews are time consuming and are an expensive data collection method, as they require a great deal of preparation with the interviewees and can only be administered individually. Thus, this is not a practical method for a large research sample.

- Interviews have the potential for bias, as face-to-face contact between interviewers and interviewees is likely to influence the questions' validity due to the interviewees' sensitivity, which could influence their responses and reactions.

5.7. Research Strategy

Research strategy is the method of answering the research question, as Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012, p. 173) explained. Strategy combines the research method, philosophy, data collection, and analysis in order to help researchers achieve their objectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The selection of the strategy of research depends on the philosophy, methods, and approach employed in answering

the research question. Strategy can also be attributed to the knowledge that researchers obtain in their literature reviews. Various strategy types can be used by researchers. According to (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012), these include: surveys, experiments, case studies, narrative inquiry, ethnography, archival research, action research, and grounded theory.

This study employs a research strategy based on an inductive approach, wherein the researcher seeks to identify patterns derived from the data. For this study, interview data were transcribed, coded and then categorised in groups that represent common factors identified among respondents. Data were used to compare the similarities and differences that exist within and between the collected data. After that, the study explained the relationships amongst the codes generated a frame for explaining the findings.

Surveys are a common method in quantitative studies. They involve collecting data from a representative sample of the population. Surveys are usually obtained through questionnaires that are administered to collect quantitative data for empirical analysis. Surveys are used to explain the relationships amongst variables. This enables the researcher to examine causative variables between different sets of data. The findings of the surveys can be generated and applied to the whole population, as it has the potential of representing them (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012).

5.8. Time Horizon

The study is either conducted on the basis of being longitudinal or cross sectional. Longitudinal study is conducted when the researcher has ample time to devote to the research and the study is conducted over a long period of time, such as

ethnographic studies (Babbie, 2013). Whereas, cross sectional studies are conducted at a point in time and it utilizes a "snap-shot" approach (Creswell, 2015). The present study is a cross sectional study in which the research was conducted at a point in time, due to the time limitation. The study uses both approaches to data collection at one point in time and mixing the qualitative and quantitative data as a strategy that has been adopted throughout this research.

5.9. Research Question

The aim of the study is to ascertain details and provide a comprehensive account of the systemic factors that impact on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. The researcher has opted to use the mixed method approach through the use of questionnaires and interviews to answer the research questions.

1. How do Saudi journalists and editors-in-chief perceive investigative journalism?
2. What are the challenges that influence the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia?
3. To what extent do systemic factors influence gatekeeping in Saudi Arabia?

5.10.   The Study Sample

The present study used several subjective data collection types for questionnaires and interviews. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) argue that sampling is an important procedure for data collection and analysis. Sampling allows researchers to use a limited number of respondents in order to generate data more quickly. The sample of respondents, as Dawson (2009) argues, has to do with the kind of research being performed. For a questionnaire, it is advisable that researchers contact a larger sample than they do for interviews. However, in both cases, the

sample should be manageable so as to allow the researcher to work on it freely and affordably. Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) claim that there is a five present margin of error for the study's sample.

The population of the study consists of journalists and editors-in-chief in all Saudi newspapers. Because this study aims to identify, understand, and explore the status of investigative journalism and the factors affecting its practice in Saudi Arabia.

5.10.1. Journalists

The journalists group included all field journalists working for Saudi newspapers. According to the Saudi Journalism Association's (SJA) 2016 statistics, there are 471 journalists working for Saudi newspapers: *Al-Riyadh*, *Al-Jazeera*, *Okaz*, *Al-Watan*, *Al-Youm*, *Al-Madina*, *Al-Sharq*, *Makkah*, *Al-Eqtisadiya*, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, *Al-Hayat*, *Arab News*, and the *Saudi Gazette.*

5.10.2. Editors-in-chief

This study has conducted 13 interviews with the editors-in-chief or their deputies in all Saudi newspapers who are responsible for implementing the policies of the newspapers and their publications, as stated by the Ministry of Information's printing laws and regulations.

5.11.   Validity and Reliability Evaluation

Validity and reliability are the criteria used by researchers to evaluate their findings' accuracy and to ensure their study's credibility. The measurements used by researchers have to be valid, reliable, and accurate. This means that the same answers should be obtained every time researchers repeat the same experiment, or when different researchers perform the same experiment at different times (Bryman, 2016). This study applied the mixed-methods approach—interviews and questionnaires—for

data collection. In order to ensure this study's validity and reliability, the researcher has adopted the following steps.

5.11.1. Validity

Validity relates to research integrity and the extent to which the achieved results are true to reality. A test's validity refers to the actual measure of what is really being measured, as stated by Hussey and Hussey (1997). Validity is influenced by the mistakes that are made in the research due to a poor sample, or else inaccurate or ambiguous data measuring (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Hence, accurate measurement tools have been made clear to all participants so as to avoid errors.

There are two main forms of validity: content (internal) and external. Content validity investigates whether the measures employed adequately measured the concept. The various form of content validity include: face validity, in which the instrument used measures what it aims to measure; criterion-based validity, which indicates whether the measure employed allows criterion prediction; concurrent validity, in which the measure is distinguished in a way that allows current variables' prediction; predictive validity, in which the measurer is used to predict future criterion; construct validity, which relates to the way that a concept is being theorised; convergent validity, which measures whether two instruments measuring the same concept correlate; and discriminate validity, which studies whether there is a low correlation with a variable that is unrelated to the concept being measured (Sekaran & Bougie, 2003).

External validity refers to the extent to which the results can be generalisable; that is, whether the results can be applied to other contexts and remain valid. External validity is based on selecting a sample that represents the investigated

population. This is due to the fact that results cannot be generalised unless the sample studied is representative of the population in question (Bryman, 2016).

The researcher has undertaken a number of steps in order to ensure the validity of the data collection methods. The entire population of the study was targeted as a sample for the semi-structured interviews. However, all the sample responded, just one apologised for not wanting to complete the interview. When the researcher targeted a representative sample for the questionnaire, the response rate was 53%.

The use of mixed methods of data collection has indicated that the data gathered are as real as they seem to be about; as Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) expressed it, the data tells the researchers what they think the data are telling them.

The study has adopted well-tested scales from the reviewed literature. This means that the scales employed meet the validity and reliability of the requirement of research. Researchers like Sekaran and Bougie (2003) stated that it is important for researchers to make use of measures and scales that are already developed and tested in order to achieve research validity and reliability.

With regard to the questionnaire's validity, the study has conducted a pilot study involving doctoral students, journalists, and academics in order to judge whether there was any ambiguity in the questions, as well as whether the content was clear and acceptable to the respondents. This established the questionnaire's validity.

The researcher administered the questionnaires by himself. He did this in case the respondents wanted to inquire about any of the questions. The researcher included his phone number and email address in the letter that was sent to the

respondents in case any of them desired further explanations. In fact, the researcher did receive some questions and explained to the respondents what they wanted to know.

With regard to semi-structured interviews' validity, an in-depth analysis of the questions asked was presented to doctoral students and academics in order to determine the questions' clarity and flexibility. The pilot interviews between the researcher and these interviewees allowed the researcher to establish the semi-structured interviews' validity. The researcher also ensured that the semi-structured interviews covered all of the points being investigated.

The researcher contacted the interviewees' offices and sent them information about the interview's purpose, in addition to the information that they need to know about the study. After receiving responses from the interviewees, their acceptance to be interviewed, and the times that were suitable for them, the researcher prepared thoroughly for the interviews. The researcher established trust between himself and his interviewees by providing full details about the study and convincing the interviewees that their responses would only be used for the purposes of the study, and that their information would be presented anonymously and confidentially. The researcher avoided any kind of bias, and taped the interviews with the interviewees being happy to be interviewed. The researcher being a journalist also helped to establish trust with the interviewees.

5.11.2. Reliability

Reliability is assessed based on whether the same results can be obtained if the same study is repeated by the same or other researchers. This consistency determines the reliability of the measures used in the study. Moreover, a measure used

in the study is reliable so long as it provides the same results after testing and re-testing the same items. The results' stability indicates whether the measure employed is reliable (Bryman, 2016).

The present study ensured that the measures used were reliable (86%). The data collection processes were administered based on trust with regards to the questionnaire, while the interviews were performed face-to-face or by phone with those who could not be available at the time of the fieldwork. The researcher used measures that are known to be reliable in social research. If the same measures were applied to the same study at different times, relatively identical or similar results would be obtained. This is an acceptable degree of reliability for researchers (R. Marshall, 1999). This study has stressed that the measures employed are bias free, and as Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) argue, reliability is primarily about avoiding bias. The researcher has avoided bias in the instruments used by asking the same questions to the respondents, building trust with them by following the same steps, and assuring them of their answers' confidentiality.

5.12.   Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed in order to satisfy the research's needs. Hence, various types of analyses were conducted so as to enable the researcher to meet the research's objectives and to answer the research questions. Part of the data analysis was based on statistical analysis, allowing the researcher to compare the results.

The researcher used thematic analysis for analysing the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews. The thematic analysis involved themes and factors derived from the study's literature review. These themes and factors helped the researcher to examine the influence of the Saudi systemic on investigative

journalism. The data were reviewed several times in order to enable the researcher familiarise himself with it. The researcher codified the data based on the themes that they tackle. He assigned the data codes and compare them across the data in order to point out similarities and differences, as well as the types of relationships that existed amongst the variables involved, as suggested by Petty, Thomson, and Stew (2012). Following this, the researcher wrote his reflections and ideas on the sections of the data to be analysed. The codes were then grouped in order to form specific themes, including the study's main issues. The outcome formed a map-like structure in which the themes and their relationships with each other were examined and discussed, as Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended in their discussion of thematic analysis. Furthermore, the research used NVIVO software to analyse the data. This software allowed the researcher to identify the factors related to the themes being studied, as well as to use figures to help him explain the themes highlighted in this study.

With regards to the quantitative data analysis, the researcher has used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysing the data obtained through the questionnaires administered to the study's population. The researcher studied the variables obtained, as well as the relationships/correlations uncovered amongst the results. The study also used Pearson's correlation coefficients variables. The correlations' significance amongst the factors studied were analysed and presented in charts and diagrams.

5.13. Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the fieldwork, the researcher prepared a written form asking for the participants' consent. Both the researcher and the participants signed this consent form. The form clearly explained the research's objective. The respondents were assured that their answers would be treated with strict

confidentiality (i.e. their answers were anonymous). General descriptions of the participants' job positions were used to identify the responses, guaranteeing anonymity; no participant was referred to by name or job title. These measures encouraged more participants to participate in the study and to answer freely. The researcher stressed that the answers would not be used except for the purposes of this research. Respondents were assured that no one would have access to the collected data, as it would always be saved in a secure place and treated with strict confidentiality.

5.14. Participants' Approval and Consent

The researcher introduced the research topic and its objectives to all respondents in order to provide respondents with a full idea about the research, as well as the nature of their participation in the study. The researcher also clarified to them their rights in taking part in the study or choosing to opt out of the study, as participation was completely voluntary. The information related to the study and the collected data's use was fully conveyed to the participants, and their consent was sought. Barnbaum (2001) warned against using covert research strategies, as this is an unethical way of acquiring data, and as such, it would be a breach of trust, which is unacceptable in academic research.

The participants' approval was required before they could take part in the study, as their knowledge about the study aided them in making up their minds and deciding whether to participate or opt out of the study (Gilbert & Stoneman, 2015). The researcher obtained the consent of all participants in this study. The information given to the researcher about the participants was kept securely and protected in line with the Data Protection Act. The information that was gathered about the participants

and their feedback were saved securely electronically—no one other than the researcher has access to the data, which are password protected.

It should be mentioned that prior to conducting the fieldwork, the researcher obtained the ethical approval of the University of Salford's Research Ethics Panel. This approval has stated the measures of conducting academic research at the University of Salford.

5.15.   Translating the Interview Questions and Questioners

The researcher translated the questionnaire and the interview questions into Arabic, the respondents' native language. This was done in order to guarantee that the questions would be precise and accurate. The translation was presented to Arab translation specialists, researchers and lecturers who majored in English. The questionnaire's and interview questions' translation into Arabic was done so as to ensure that the respondents and the interviewees were fully aware of the questions, as well as the survey's objectives. Translation is a significant method in social research of this nature, as it allows the interviewer and the respondents to understand the nature of the interview or questionnaire (Fontana & Frey, 1994). At a later stage, the researcher translated the interview scripts and questionnaire answers into English. Once more, the researcher presented the translation to the aforementioned specialists in order to ensure the translations' accuracy.

5.16.   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research methodology of this study. It utilised the pragmatism philosophy, as this was appropriate for studying the influence of the Saudi systemic factors on investigative journalism within the framework of objectivism. An inductive approach was adopted in order to move from the data

obtained in the study to testing the study's main theory. The mixed-methods approach was used in conducting this study, as the research gathered quantitative and qualitative results. The data collection techniques were conducted through surveys and interviews. The data were then be analysed through thematic and statistical analyses. The next two chapters present the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data generated in this study.

CHAPTER SIX: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of journalists regarding investigative journalism and the factors that they perceive to have the greatest impact on investigative reporting in Saudi Arabia. The chapter describes the methods of data collection, the data analysis, and presents the main results and findings of the study's questionnaire. A number of statistical tests were used to analyse the responses of the participating journalists, including descriptive statistical tests, graphical methods, measures of association, and statistical trend detection methods. This chapter also provides a statistical description of the whole sample developed using the collected demographic data. Issues such as reliability and validity are addressed, and it is discussed how bias may have affected the study and the measures that were taken to address this possibility.

Quantitative research measures the available data using descriptive statistics. An analysis of quantitative evidence can produce objective findings that can be used to support the hypotheses guiding the research process. The coding process transforms the raw data into numerical data from the results of questionnaires in order to facilitate analysis. This is followed by a calculation for each question using a statistical analysis program, such as SPSS. The data are presented in the form of tables, and detailed explanations of the figures are offered (i.e., descriptive analysis and frequencies have been used to draw the general profile of the respondents and answer the questions about the attitudes regarding investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia).

6.2. Statistical analysis procedures

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V. 19.0 and Microsoft Excel were used to analyse the statistical data. The respondents' scores were entered into a personal computer by the researcher. Both the SPSS and Excel software programs were used to generate descriptive information based on the frequency distribution and percentages immediately after completing the data entries. Since the study's sample was comprised of 227 respondents, each was given an identification number for reference, ranging from 001 to 227. These data are considered to be cross-sectional because the study sought to capture a one-time snapshot of the journalists' responses across all relevant newspapers.

All the questionnaire items were based on a five-item Likert scale (i.e., Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree); the highest grade was given 5 and the lowest grade was given 1. The scale's range was calculated as 5-1 = 4. Dividing this by the number of categories (5) produced 0.8, which was the length of each of the five scales' categories. Finally, each category's length was added to the lowest grade of the scale (1). Thus, the first category was calculated to range from 1 to 1.79. Adding the length of the highest limit for the category produced the second category, and so on, and the following criteria were defined to analyse the results.

Table 6.1: *Distribution according to the gradient of the categories in the scale used for the mean score.*

Response	From	To
Strongly Disagree	1.00	1.79
Disagree	1.80	2.59
Undecided	2.60	3.39
Agree	3.40	4.19
Strongly Agree	4.20	5.00

6.3. The study's sample

The study's population encompasses every full- and part-time Saudi journalist who works for any Saudi newspaper and is registered with the Saudi Journalists Institution. The questionnaires were distributed to the journalists electronically. All newspapers were given equal consideration regardless of the perceived quality of their coverage. A total of 471 questionnaires were distributed. The total number of respondents was 246, of which 227 (N=227) were considered valid. This represented 52.2% of the overall sample. Table 6.2 shows that most responses were collected from *Al-Riyadh* (N= 55, 24.2%), followed by *Okaz* (N= 28, 12.3%), *Aljazeera* (N= 22, 9.7%), and *Al-Watan* (N= 20, 8.8%). The remaining responses came from the other newspapers and ranged from N=18, 7.9% to N=2, 0.9%, which was the fewest number of responses collected.

Table6.2: *Distribution of the newspapers*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Al-Riyadh	55	24.2	25.6	25.6
Al-Jazeera	22	9.7	10.2	35.8
Okaz	28	12.3	13.0	48.8
Al-Watan	20	8.8	9.3	58.1
Al-Madina	10	4.4	4.7	62.8
Al-Youm	16	7.0	7.4	70.2
Makkah	12	5.3	5.6	75.8
Al-Eqtisadiya	18	7.9	8.4	84.2
Al-Sharq	6	2.6	2.8	87.0
Al-Hayat	18	7.9	8.4	95.3
Al-Sharq Al-Awsa	6	2.6	2.8	98.1
Arab News	2	0.9	0.9	99.1
Saudi Gazette	2	0.9	0.9	99.1
Missing	12	5.3	Missing	100.0
Total	227	100.0	100.0	

Figure 6.1: *Distribution of the newspapers*
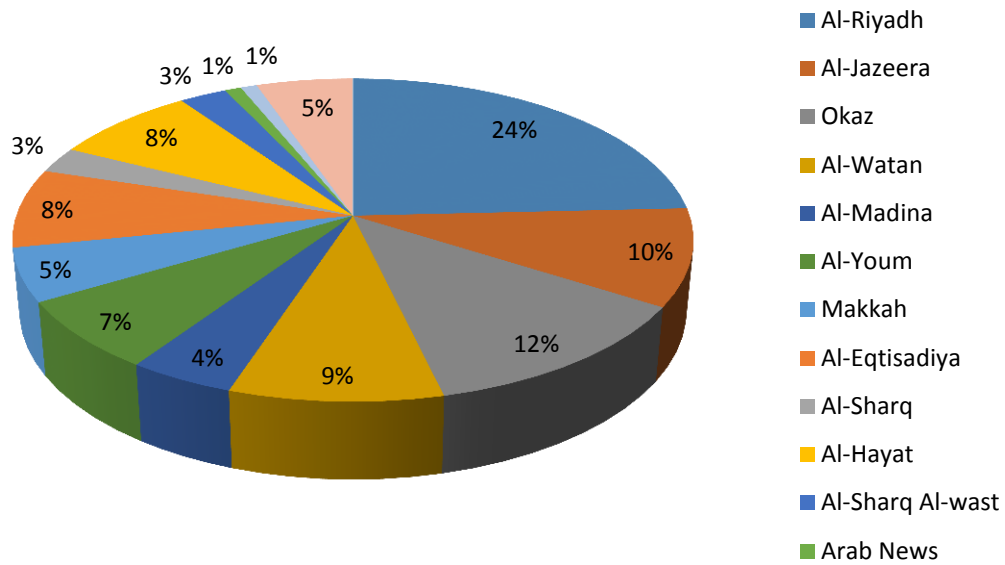
6.4. The description of the demographic variables

It was deemed important to gain a broader understanding of the participants beyond their immediate vocations in order to understand more fully how other factors could influence their perceptions of journalism in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the questionnaire collected the respondents' demographic information, including gender, age, level of education, type of work, income, and experience. Descriptive statistics were used to present the respondents' demographic profiles.

Table6.3: *Gender*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Missing value	4	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Male	193	85.0	86.5	86.5
	Female	30	13.2	13.5	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

The majority of the respondents were male (N= 193, 85%). Only 13.2% (N=30) were female. The reason for this unbalanced distribution is that the field of journalism has historically tended to be male-dominated because women were not allowed to work as journalists. For example, as detailed by Kurdi (2014), most conservative families object to women mixing with men and covering events that could potentially jeopardise their safety and integrity. Consequently, it is very difficult for women to write about and cover events from their homes.

In addition, prior to June 2018, it was difficult for women to get from one place to another without a private driver or a family member's vehicle. It is illegal for women to drive, and so many are unable attend press conferences and other press activities. Further contributing to the unbalanced distribution is the fact that, until recently, only male students were allowed to study media at Saudi universities. As Kurdi (2014) writes, 'one of the major issues related to Saudi female journalists is that almost none of them have a diploma in journalism because none of the universities for women offered a media studies programme, as this was considered an inappropriate career choice for women in Saudi Arabia' (p. 77).

Figure 6.2: *Gender*
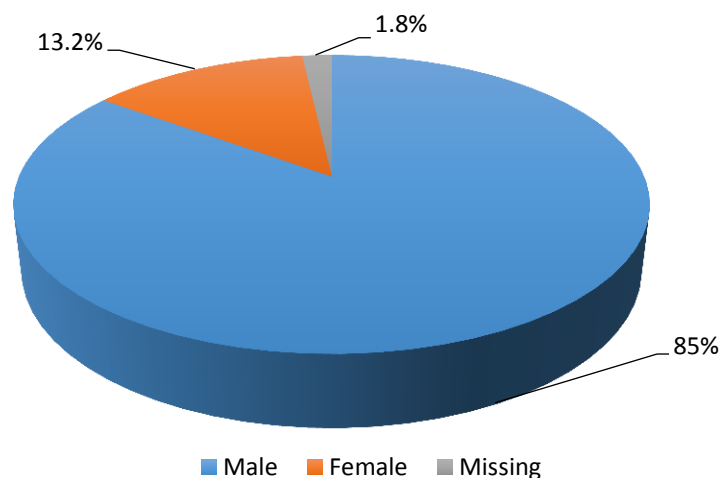
Table6.4: *Age groups*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	6	2.6	2.6	2.6
	25-34	50	22.0	22.0	24.7
	35-44	109	48.0	48.0	72.7
	45 and older	62	27.3	27.2	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 6.4, the participants fall into four age groups. However, three-quarters of the sample was 35 or older (N=171, 75.3%), whereas only a quarter was 34 or younger (N=56, 24.6%). This suggests that younger people are entering the field of journalism in fewer numbers. This might be attributed to the fact that traditional journalism is encountering challenges due to the technological development, particularly the impact of the Internet.

Figure 6.3: *Age groups*
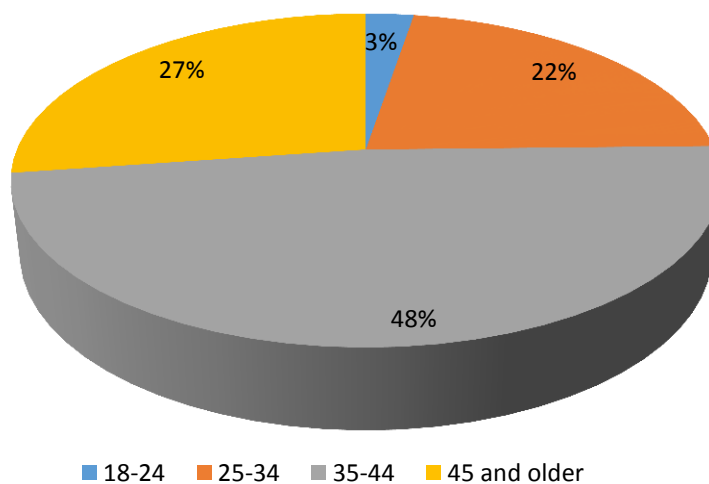
Table6.5: *Education level*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High school	4	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Diploma	24	10.5	10.6	12.3
	Bachelor's	130	57.3	57.3	69.6
	Higher diploma	8	3.5	3.5	73.1
	Master's	53	23.3	23.3	96.5
	Doctorate	8	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.5 shows that the majority of the respondents have a bachelor's degree or above (N=199, 87.6%). This indicates that the average education level of Saudi journalists is high.

Figure6.4: *Education level*
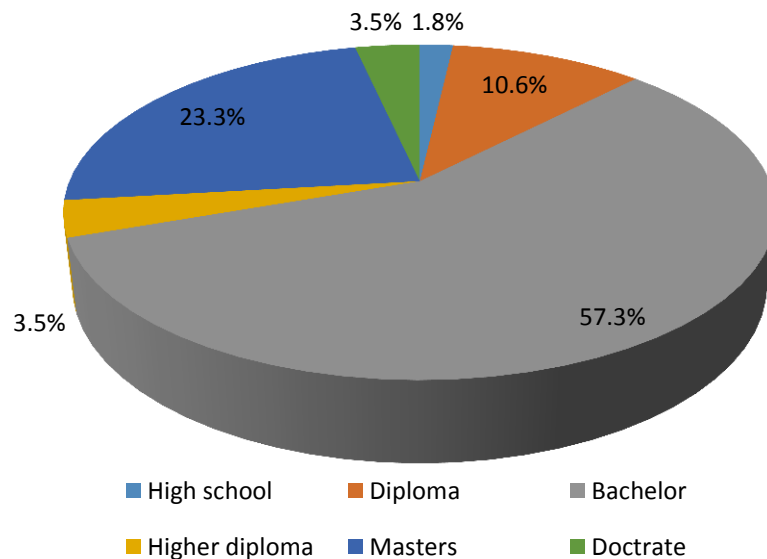
Table 6.6: *Specialisation*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Falid	Media	115	50.7	50.7	50.7
	Non-media	112	49.3	49.3	100.0
	Total	227	100	100	

Table 6.6 shows that the number of journalists with media qualifications (N= 115, 50.7%) and the number of journalists with non-media qualifications (N=112, 49.3%) are nearly equal. This suggests that specialisation in media is not necessarily essential to work in journalism (see Table 6.7).

Figure6.5: *Specialisation*

■ Media ■ Non media
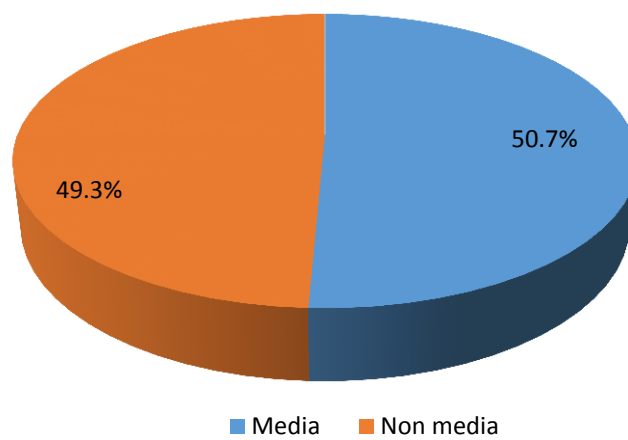
Table 6.7: *Type of work*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full-time	104	45.8	45.8	45.8
	Part-time	123	54.2	54.2	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

The sample's distribution by type of work indicates that the number of part-time journalists is slightly higher (N= 123, 54.2%) than the number of full-time journalists (N=104, 45.8%). This may be due to the fact that journalists do not have secure jobs because Saudi laws do not protect journalists against dismissal, and they are let go when newspapers endeavour to cut costs. In the absence of employment stability and an active journalists' association to protect their rights, more than half of the journalists work part-time and have other jobs (Kurdi, 2014). These other jobs are likely to introduce conflicts of interests into their journalistic work. As Al-Jameeah (2009) writes, there have been cases when journalists have not investigated issues that pertain to the interests of their outside employers.

Figure 6.6: *Type of work*

45.8%

54.2%

■ Full time   ■ Part time
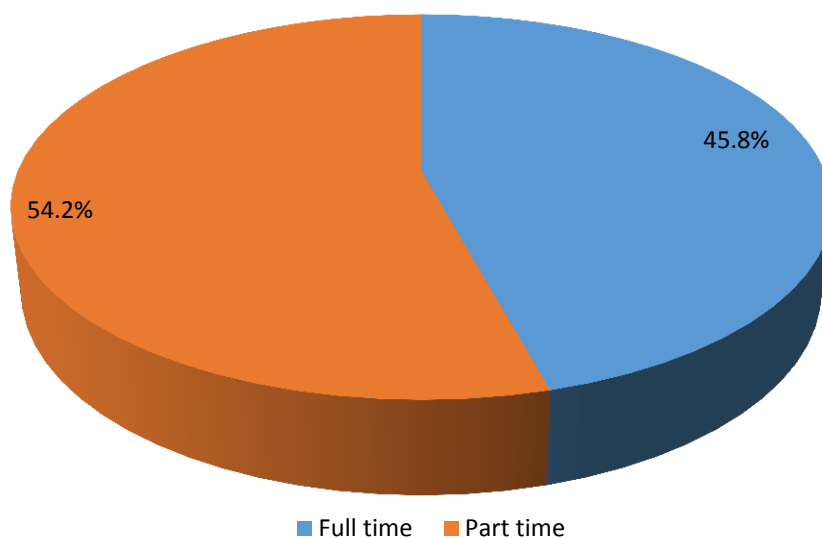
Table 6.8: *Years of experience*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 5 years	18	7.9	7.9	7.9
	5-9 years	26	11.5	11.5	19.4
	10-14 years	77	33.9	33.9	53.3
	15-19 years	50	22.0	22.0	75.3
	20 years or more	56	24.7	24.7	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.8 shows that 55.9% (N=127) of the respondents have between 10 and 19 years of journalistic experience. About a quarter (N=56, 24.9%) of the respondents have 20 years of experience or more. Only 19.4% have 9 or fewer years of experience. This is evidence that the number of younger people going into journalism in Saudi Arabia is in decline. The analysis of the respondents by age group showed that younger journalists are in decline and more respondents belonged to the age group of over 35.

Figure 6.7: *Years of experience*
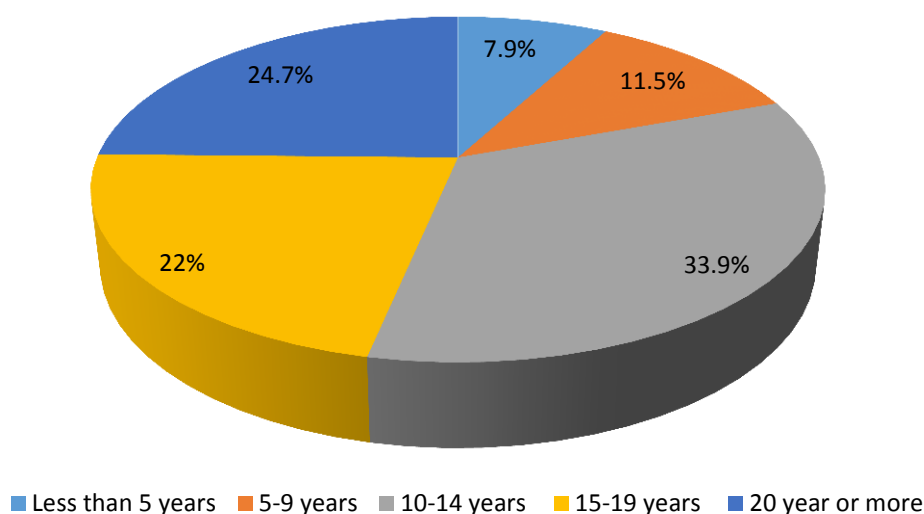
Table 6.9: *Monthly income*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than £ 1000	36	15.9	15.9	15.9
	£1000-£2000	35	15.4	15.4	31.3
	£2000-£3000	68	30.0	30.0	61.2
	£3000-£4000	50	22.0	22.0	83.3
	£4000 or more	38	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	227	100.0	100.0	

Table 6.9 divides the participants' monthly income into five groups. Over 61% of journalists earn low-to-average salaries (N= 139, £3000 and less). This is likely due to the fact that over 50% of the journalists work part-time. Nevertheless, the number of the journalists who earn more than £4000 is almost identical to the

number of journalists who earn less than £1000, each constituting about 16% of the sample.

Figure6.8: *Monthly income*

- Less than £1000
- £1000-£2000
- £2000-£3000
- £3000-£4000
- £4000 or more
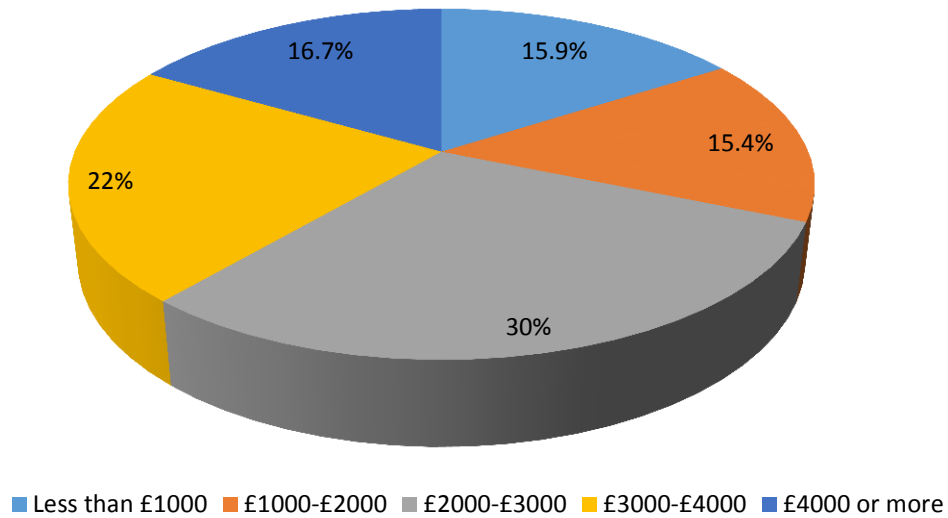
6.5. The questionnaire's reliability

The questionnaire's reliability measures the degree to which the repetition of the same test returns the same results. To ascertain the survey's reliability, Cronbach's alpha is used to address and provide a quantitative measure of the degree of internal consistency for the identified constructs (see Table 6.10). This measure ensures that the survey items measure the same construct and provides greater confidence that they do not overlap, which could lead to spurious causal associations. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire's items had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .86.

Table6.10: *Cronbach's alpha for the reliability of all items*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.86	32

6.6. The correlations of the dependent variables

The variables' correlation coefficient shows the relationship between two tested variables and reveals the extent to which one variable has a high value when measured against a high value of the other variable. The correlation coefficients have values ranging from -1 to +1. A negative value indicates that there is a weak relationship between the two variables, whereas a positive value indicates that there is a strong relationship between the two variables. The higher the correlation is between two factors, the more significant the value will be. Hence, in order to measure the correlation coefficient between the variables (i.e., the organisational factor, the political factor, and the cultural factor and their impacts on the practice of investigative journalism), the Pearson's correlation is used.

Table 6.11 shows that the practice of investigative journalism and the aforementioned factors are positively correlated: organisational factor (r= 0.203, p> 0.002), political factor (r= 0.317, p> 0.000), and cultural factor (r= 0.168, p> 0.01). This result means that, as the practice of investigative journalism becomes more common, these factors become more influential. These relationships are statistically significant at 0.05 or less. Furthermore, as shown in Table 6.11, there are significantly strong relationships between the political factor and the cultural factor (r= 0.516, p> 0.000) and the political factor and the organisational factor (r= 0.375, p> 0.000). There is also a strong correlation between the cultural factor and organisational factor (r= 0.245, p> 0.000). Ultimately, of all the factors, the political factor has the strongest relationship with the practice of investigative journalism and with the other factors.

Table6.11: *Pearson's correlations between the factors and the practice of investigative journalism*

		The practice of IJ	Organisational factor	Political factor	Cultural factor
Pearson's r					
	The practice of IJ				
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.203[**]	.317[**]	.168
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002	.000	.011
	N	227	227	227	227
Organisational factor	Correlation Coefficient	.203[**]	1.000	.375[**]	.245[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.	.000	.000
	N	227	227	227	227
Political factor	Correlation Coefficient	.317[**]	.375[**]	1.000	.516[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	227	227	227	227
Cultural factor	Correlation Coefficient	.168	.245[**]	.516[**]	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.000	.
	N	227	227	227	227

$**p<0.01$, $*p<0.05$

6.7. Descriptive analysis of the practice of investigative journalism

This section presents the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia as measured against eight statements that were intended to examine the practice of investigative journalism, the typical sources of information, and the types of issues that were investigated.

Table6.12: *Means and standard deviations of the participants' responses about the practice of investigative journalism*

Ser. No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	The degree of approval
1	I practice investigative reporting at the newspaper where I work.	3.84	1.02	0.07	Agree
2	I follow up on my report to ensure that the desired outcome has been implemented.	3.81	1.08	0.07	Agree
3	Hiding my identity makes it easier to collect important information related to a story that I am investigating.	3.11	1.40	0.09	Undecided
4	The Internet is the main source of information about any issue before it is investigated.	4.34	0.86	0.06	Strongly agree
5	I use only main sources of information to investigate an issue.	2.04	1.38	0.09	Disagree
6	Government wrongdoings tempt journalists the most to conduct investigative reporting	4.32	0.88	0.06	Strongly agree
7	Social issues are the most attractive to investigate.	4.43	0.82	0.05	Strongly agree
8	Private sector issues are less significant in my investigative reporting.	2.90	1.23	0.08	Undecided

The analysis of the means presented in Table 6.12 shows that the journalists tended to agree that they practiced investigative journalism. For example, respondents believed that they engaged in investigative reporting at their newspapers (M= 3.84, SD = 1.02). Additionally, they also tended to lean towards 'agree' about following up on their reports to ensure that the desired outcomes were implemented (M=3.81, SD=1.08). Why is this so? One possibility is that, since investigative journalism is in

peril in many newsrooms, there may be great pressures to achieve measurable results in order to persuade management to continue with the investigations. Also, facing far greater media competition in the present market, newspapers are seeking ways to distinguish themselves from websites, bloggers, and other newcomers. Assisting the enactment of reforms through investigative reporting is a distinction to which newspapers can still lay claim. Consequently, there may be incentives for newspapers to demonstrate, and publish, their stories' impacts. However, the participants leaned towards 'undecided' about hiding their identities to help them collect information relating to a story (M=3.11, SD= 1.40). Some critics maintained that this method was immoral and can result in negative consequences for the sources, the newspaper, and the journalist (A. D. Kaplan, 2008).

The examination of the means presented in Table 6.12 shows that the majority of the respondents tended to strongly agree that they used the Internet as a primary source to obtain information about the issues they were investigating (M=4.34, SD=0.86). However, they tended to disagree that they used only the main sources of information to investigate an issue such as primary documents and the people involved (M=2.04, SD= 1.38). The high percentage reflects the extent to which journalists have come to depend on new technology for acquiring information easily and quickly and for identifying the public's needs and interests. Nonetheless, among the disadvantages of using the Internet as a source of information are that incorrect information is widespread and a lot of information is not referenced and cannot be trusted. However it can draw journalists' attention to issues worthy of investigation.

The journalists tended to strongly agree that social issues were the most attractive issues to investigate (M=4.43, SD= 0.82). This was followed by issues

related to government wrongdoings (M= 4.32, SD= 0.88), while journalists tended to be undecided about the investigation of private sector issues (M= 2.90, SD= 1.23). This opinion could be due to the fact that advertisers wield substantial influence over the newspapers, and newspapers do not want to risk their main source of funding.

This study has shown that the majority of the journalists believe that they practiced investigative reporting; however, there are several factors that affect their practice. This leads to the next research question: 'What challenges influence the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia?'

Most of the literature on gatekeeping examines how gatekeepers' impact the processing of news and reports. As discussed in Chapter Four (pp. 81-85), Shoemaker and Vos (2009) believe that gatekeepers are not free when processing news and stories because they must abide by the routines and constraints of the communications that pertain to their specific context. Gatekeeping can be viewed as a communication framework that can be investigated along five factors: individual, journalistic routine, organisation, politics, and culture. In this study, the gatekeeping theory is utilized to examine the factors that wield the most influence over the journalists' investigative reporting.

6.8. Factors that influence investigative journalism

This section examines the factors that impact investigative journalism, though journalistic routine and organisation have been combined.

6.8.1. Descriptive analysis of the impact of the organisational factor

Table 6.13 summarises the journalists' perceptions about the organisational factor's influence on their practice of investigative journalism. An analysis of the means shows that, on the whole, the respondents tended to agree or were undecided

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(M=3.58, SD=0.81). The item that measures the influence of the newspaper editorial policy indicated that the journalists were undecided about its impact (M= 3.02, SD=1.40). Similarly, editors-in-chief tended not to provide guidance to investigative reporters (M= 3.27, SD= 1.25). Since it is unlikely that journalists would know about the dynamics of the newspaper's editorial policy, and since editors-in-chief tended not to provide guidance, the choice of 'undecided' could suggest that the newspapers do not have explicit editorial policies or that the journalists are not aware of those policies. The qualitative data will likely provide more details about this issue.

The examination of the means shows that the journalists tended to agree that they are pressed for time to finish their investigations (M= 3.96, SD=1.01). The item that measured the influence of the newspapers' owners on investigative journalism indicated that journalists were undecided about the extent of their impact (M=3.03, SD=135). This suggests that the owners do not exert obvious influence on the practice of investigative journalism. From the responses to Items 5-8, it can be seen that journalists mostly agree about the influence of advertisers, the dearth of financial support, and the lack of training. Newspapers tend not to investigate issues that are related to their advertisers (M=3.58, SD= 1.29), there is not enough financial support for the practice of investigative reporting (M=4.12, SD= 1.03), and the lack of training has led to a shortage of good investigative reporters and the poor quality of current investigative reporting (M=3.93, SD= 1.21). The absence of motivation and incentives has resulted in decreases in the practice of investigative reporting (M=3.74, SD= 1.19). This suggests that the organisation's influence is strongest with regard to financial support and training because newspapers tend to favour revenues over professionalism, which negatively impacts the practice of investigative journalism.

Table6.13: *Means and standard deviations of the participants' responses about the impact of the organisational factor*

Ser No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	The degree of approval
1	The newspaper's editorial policy does not encourage the practice of investigative reporting	3.02	1.40	0.09	Undecided
2	There is a lack of guidance from the editors-in-chief in investigative reporting	3.27	1.25	0.08	Undecided
3	I am pressed for time to finish my investigation.	3.96	1.01	0.07	Agree
4	Investigative reporting is influenced by the newspaper's owners	3.03	1.35	0.09	Undecided
5	The newspaper tends not to investigate issues related to its advertisers	3.58	1.29	0.09	Agree
6	Financial support is not enough to allow the practice of investigative reporting.	4.12	1.03	0.07	Agree
7	Lack of training has led to the scarcity and poor quality of practicing investigative reporting	3.93	1.21	0.08	Agree
8	Lack of motivations and incentives has led to shortages in the practice of investigative reporting	3.74	1.19	0.08	Agree
	Total	3.58	0.81	0.05	Agree

6.8.2. Descriptive analysis of the impact of the political factor

Table 6.14 illustrates the means and the standard deviations of the responses about the political factor's impact on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia (M= 3.91, SD=0.53). The variable indicates that, on the whole, the respondents tended to agree that the political factor strongly influenced investigative journalism; however, they were undecided about the positive reactions of the

policymakers about the findings of the investigative reporting. For example, journalists indicated that the Saudi media policy shapes investigative reporting's ideas and professional values (M= 4.07, SD=0.93) and that they adopt the political authority's views to determine which issues should be investigated (M= 4.14, SD=0.99). The majority of the journalists agreed that the Saudi media system does not encourage accurate investigative reporting (M= 3.67, SD=1.11). Additionally, the absence of clear guidelines about what is allowed to be published and what is not has caused some journalists to avoid investigative reporting (M= 4.03, SD=1.10). Their responses indicate that Saudi media laws pose challenges to investigative reporting.

An examination of the means reveals that journalists believed that constraints on the freedom of expression prevent them from exploring the information critical for investigations (M= 3.80, SD= 1.17). The preponderance of them agreed that officials are selective about permitting access to information sources (M= 4.10, SD= 0.92). These responses are significant because the majority of journalists nevertheless agreed that the political system allows them to monitor and criticise governmental institutions (M= 4.11, SD= 0.87). However, journalists tended to be undecided about whether policymakers reacted positively to the findings of their investigative reporting (M= 3.38, SD= 1.24). One explanation for these responses is that the political system may allow for criticism of certain civil governmental institutions, such as the ministries of municipalities, health and education, but not the main governing and political institutions like those that oversee interior and exterior affairs and defence. Ultimately, though the political system allows for citizens to criticise governmental institutions, journalists may still face obstacles from those same institutions. This will be explained in detail in Chapter Seven, which presents an in-depth analysis of the interviews with the editors-in-chief.

Table 6.14: *The means and standard deviations of the participants' responses about the impact of the political factor*

Ser No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	The degree of approval
1	The Saudi media policy shapes the ideas and professional values implemented in investigative reporting.	4.07	0.93	0.06	Agree
2	I adopt the standpoint of the political authority in determining the issues to be investigated.	4.14	0.99	0.07	Agree
3	Saudi media system does not encourage accurate investigative reporting.	3.67	1.11	0.07	Agree
4	The lack of clear guidelines concerning what is allowed to be published and what is not allowed has led to scarcity in the practice of investigative reporting.	4.03	1.10	0.07	Agree
5	The level of freedom of expression does not allow me to explore crucial information for investigations	3.80	1.17	0.08	Agree
6	Regarding information sources, officials are selective in what they permit me to access	4.10	0.92	0.06	Agree
7	The political system allows journalists to monitor and criticise governmental institutions	4.11	0.87	0.06	Agree
8	Policymakers react positively to the findings of investigative reporting	3.38	1.24	0.08	Undecided
	Total	3.91	0.53	0.04	Agree

6.8.3. Descriptive analysis of the impact of the cultural factor

Table 6.15 summarises the responses to the items that addressed the cultural factor's influence on the practice of investigative journalism. The common responses

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for this variable were disparate: strongly agree, agree, and undecided (M=3.75, SD=0.71). This suggests that the cultural factor is the second most influential. An analysis of means shows that the journalists tended to agree that a society's cultural values determined what is and is not published (M= 4.17, SD= 0.93) and that the values of investigative reporting are abandoned to uphold the society's cultural values and beliefs (M= 3.89, SD=1.29). The responses skewed towards 'strongly agree' for Items 3 and 4, which stated that controversial issues that would result in conflict are not investigated (M= 4.27, SD=0.99) and that the images that infringe on others' privacy or that go against public consensus are not published (M= 4.71, SD= 0.70). This indicates that Saudi journalists are strongly committed to the society's moral values in their professional practices. In addition, the respondents tended to agree that they do not investigate sensitive social issues (M= 3.45, SD= 1.22).

The responses to Items 6, 7, and 8 tended to be undecided. These items included the statements that topics that tend to stir confrontation with religious leaders are not investigated (M= 3.11, SD=130), that topics that tend to stir confrontation with the social elite and top officials are not investigated (M= 3.11, SD=132), and that the journalists' tribal affiliation and geographic location impact the kind of topics they choose to investigate (M= 3.30, SD=137). The lack of clarity in the journalists' responses will be discussed in the following chapter.

Table6.15: *The means and standard deviations of the participants' responses about the impact of the cultural factor*

Ser. No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	The degree of approval
1	The cultural values of society determine what is and is not published.	4.17	0.93	0.06	Agree
2	Precedence in investigative reporting is abandoned at the expense of upholding society's cultural values and beliefs.	3.89	1.29	0.09	Agree
3	Controversial issues that might cause conflict amongst people are not investigated.	4.27	0.99	0.07	Strongly agree
4	The images which invade the privacy of others or those that go against public consensus are not published.	4.71	0.70	0.05	Strongly agree
5	Sensitive social issues are not investigated.	3.45	1.22	0.08	Agree
6	The topics that tend to stir confrontation with religious leaders are not investigated.	3.11	1.30	0.09	Undecided
7	The topics that tend to stir confrontation with the social elite and top officials are kept away from investigation.	3.11	1.32	0.09	Undecided
8	The tribal affiliation and geographic location of journalists impact their choice of topics to investigate.	3.30	1.37	0.09	Undecided
	Total	3.75	0.71	0.05	Agree

6.9. Quantitative results for the independent variables

For this section, the statistical variables were tested in order to compare the statistically-significant differences of the Saudi journalists. Two t-tests were conducted to compare the means of two independent variables for gender,

specialisation, and type of work. A one-way ANOVA F-test was used to compare more than two independent variables for age, education, experience, and income.

6.9.1. Quantitative results for two independent variables

6.9.1.1. The gender variable

A t-test to compare the two genders was performed (see Table 6.16). Three of the four variables were not significant when considering gender. These were the practice of investigative journalism (T = 1.716, p = 0.092), the organisational level (T = 0.716, p = 0.474), and the cultural level (T = 1.668, p = 0.097). The only factor that was statistically significant was the political factor (T = 2.629, p = 0.009). However, it is worth noting that this factor was only marginally significant. Nonetheless, it suggests that the only significant difference for gender is located in the political factor. The mean score for males was 3.96 and, for females, 3.68. These results suggest that males were more influenced by political factors. This may be caused by the gender disparity; in Saudi Arabia, the field of journalism and, in particular, journalistic leadership are heavily dominated by men. Consequently, men are more frequently in contact with government officials than women are. A third of the female participants indicated that they were undecided about the influence of the political factor, whereas 81% of male respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the political factor was influential.

Table 6.16: *T-test analysis of gender for the four variables*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Male	193	3.57	0.502	0.036	1.716	0.092 (N. S.)
	Female	30	3.70	0.348	0.064		
Organisational factor	Male	193	3.60	0.801	0.058	0.716	0.474 (N. S.)
	Female	30	3.48	0.899	0.164		
Political factor	Male	193	3.96	0.519	0.037	2.629	0.009 (0.01)
	Female	30	3.68	0.585	0.107		
Cultural factor	Male	193	3.79	0.693	0.050	1.668	0.097 (N. S.)
	Female	30	3.56	0.817	0.149		

6.9.1.2.   The specialisation variable

The next t-test was performed to see if there were any statistically significant differences between those who were specialised in media and those who were specialised in non-media. There were no significant differences between the specialisations (media or non-media) across the four factors: the practice of investigative journalism (T = 0.508, p = 0.612), the organisational factor (T = 0.195, p = 0.846), the political factor (T = 0.995, p = 0.321), and the cultural factor (T = 0.455, p = 0.650).

Table 6.17: *T-test for the differences in the factors according to the differences in scientific specialisation*

Variable	Scientific specialisation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Media	115	3.61	0.525	0.049	0.508	0.612 (N. S.)
	Non-media	112	3.58	0.439	0.042		
Organisational factor	Media	115	3.57	0.732	0.068	0.195	0.846 (N. S.)
	Non-media	112	3.59	0.879	0.083		
Political factor	Media	115	3.95	0.539	0.050	0.995	0.321 (N. S.)
	Non-media	112	3.88	0.530	0.050		
Cultural factor	Media	115	3.77	0.696	0.065	0.455	0.650 (N. S.)
	Non-media	112	3.73	0.725	0.068		

6.9.1.3. The work variable

The next t-test was performed to see if there were any statistically significant differences between those who worked full-time and those who worked part-time. There were no significant differences between the type of work (full- or part-time) across the four factors: the practice of investigative journalism (T = 0.088, p = 0.930), the organisational factor (T = 0.055, p = 0.956), the political factor (T = 1.200, p = 0.231), and the cultural factor (T = 1.397, p = 0.164).

Table 6.18: *T-test analysis of the type of work for the four variables*

Variable	Work time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Full-time	104	3.60	0.421	0.041	0.088	0.930 (N. S.)
	Part-time	123	3.60	0.532	0.048		
Organisational factor	Full-time	104	3.58	0.822	0.081	0.055	0.956 (N. S.)
	Part-time	123	3.58	0.796	0.072		
Political factor	Full-time	104	3.87	0.451	0.044	1.200	0.231 (N. S.)
	Part-time	123	3.95	0.595	0.054		
Cultural factor	Full-time	104	3.68	0.667	0.065	1.397	0.164 (N. S.)
	Part-time	123	3.81	0.740	0.067		

6.9.2. Quantitative results for three or more independent variables

6.9.2.1. The age variable

Next, it was assessed to see if age played a role in any differences between the four factors. A one-way analysis of variance F-test showed that there was a statistically-significant difference in age between two variables: the cultural factor (F= 7.47, p = 0.000) and the organisational factor (F= 3.15, p= 0.026). The remaining two variables were not statistically significant: the practice of investigative journalism (F= 1.71, p= 0.167) and the political factor (F= 1.39, p = 0.246). Consequently, the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test, used to calculate the smallest significant difference between two means, was performed to evaluate the stratified series of ages (see Table 6.19).

Table 6.19: *Groups' statistics for the four variables according to age*

Variable	Age	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The practice of investigative journalism	18-24 years	6	4.00	0.24	0.097
	25-34 years	50	3.60	0.49	0.069
	35-44 years	109	3.61	0.50	0.048
	45 years or older	62	3.54	0.45	0.057
	Total	227	3.60	0.48	0.032
Organisational factor	18-24 years	6	3.92	0.79	0.321
	25-34 years	50	3.38	0.96	0.136
	35-44 years	109	3.53	0.79	0.076
	45 years or older	62	3.80	0.64	0.082
	Total	227	3.58	0.81	0.054
Political factor	18-24 years	6	3.79	0.82	0.336
	25-34 years	50	3.81	0.60	0.084
	35-44 years	109	3.92	0.52	0.050
	45 years or older	62	4.00	0.47	0.060
	Total	227	3.91	0.53	0.035
Cultural factor	18-24 years	6	3.13	0.51	0.209
	25-34 years	50	3.65	0.70	0.099
	35-44 years	109	3.65	0.70	0.067
	45 years or older	62	4.07	0.64	0.081
	Total	227	3.75	0.71	0.047

Table 6.20: *Table 6.20 One-way analysis of variance (F-test) of age for the four variables*

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Between Groups	1.19	3	0.40	1.71	0.167 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	51.70	223	0.23		
The organisational	Between Groups	5.98	3	1.99	3.15	0.026 (0.05)

factor	Within Groups	140.93	223	0.63		
The political factor	Between Groups	1.19	3	0.40	1.39	0.246 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	63.34	223	0.28		
The cultural factor	Between Groups	10.38	3	3.46	7.47	0.000 (0.01)
	Within Groups	103.32	223	0.46		

Table 6.21 shows that there were significant differences between the age groups. The groups '18-24 years', '25-34 years', and '35-44 years' significantly differed from the '45 and older' group (p <.05) for the cultural factor (M= 4.07). For the organisational factor, the majority of the groups were not significantly different from one another, suggesting that experience does not greatly impact the organisational factor. Significant differences were found only in the '25-34 years' and '35-44 years' groups when compared to the '45 and older' group (p <.05). These results are not surprising, given that people from similar, adjacent age bands have more in common (and thus, fewer differences) than younger cohorts have with those from the opposite side of the sample range.

Table 6.21: *Multiple Range Tests: LSD test for the differences in the factors according to the differences in age*

Variable	The age	Mean	18-24 Years	25-34 Years	35-44 Years	45 or older	The difference in favour
The organisational factor**	18-24 years	3.92					
	25-34 years	3.38					
	35-44 years	3.53					
	45 years or older	3.80		*	*		45 years or older
The cultural factor	18-24 years	3.13					
	25-34 years	3.65					
	35-44 years	3.65					
	45 years or older	4.07	*	*	*		45 years or older

(**) Indicates significant differences (shown in the table).

(*) The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

6.9.2.2. The education level variable

Next, the role played across the four variables by the level of education was examined. A one-way analysis of variance F-test was performed. The results indicated that there are highly significant differences among levels of education across all variables. There were two significant differences: in the practice of investigative journalism (F= 4.93, p= 0.000) and in the organisational factor (F= 4.44, p= 0.001). There were marginally significant differences in the political factor (F= 2.38, p= 0.040) and the cultural factor (F= 2.80, p= 0.018). Table 6.23 explains the source of these differences by the LSD test.

Table 6.22: *Groups' statistics describing the factors according to education level*

Variable	The educational level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The practice of investigative journalism	High school (or less)	4	4.13	0.18	0.088
	Diploma	24	3.64	0.44	0.090
	Bachelor's degree	130	3.65	0.44	0.038
	Higher Diploma	8	3.77	0.28	0.099
	Master's degree	53	3.35	0.52	0.072
	PhD	8	3.77	0.70	0.246
	Total	227	3.60	0.48	0.032
The organisational factor	High school (or less)	4	3.50	0.58	0.289
	Diploma	24	3.40	0.86	0.175
	Bachelor's degree	130	3.64	0.76	0.067
	Higher Diploma	8	2.59	0.98	0.348
	Master's degree	53	3.56	0.77	0.106
	PhD	8	4.31	0.72	0.253
	Total	227	3.58	0.81	0.054
The political factor	High school (or less)	4	3.63	1.01	0.505
	Diploma	24	3.80	0.61	0.125
	Bachelor's degree	130	3.99	0.50	0.044
	Higher Diploma	8	3.81	0.38	0.136
	Master's degree	53	3.77	0.53	0.073
	PhD	8	4.22	0.38	0.135
	Total	227	3.91	0.53	0.035
The cultural factor	High school (or less)	4	3.06	0.65	0.325
	Diploma	24	3.76	0.70	0.143
	Bachelor's degree	130	3.87	0.64	0.056
	Higher Diploma	8	3.59	0.20	0.070
	Master's degree	53	3.52	0.84	0.116
	PhD	8	3.88	0.81	0.285
	Total	227	3.75	0.71	0.047

Table 6.23: *One-way analysis of variance (F-test) of the education level for the four variables*

variable	Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Between Groups	5.31	5	1.06	4.93	0.000 (0.01)
	Within Groups	47.57	221	0.22		
The organisational factor	Between Groups	13.40	5	2.68	4.44	0.001 (0.01)
	Within Groups	133.50	221	0.60		
The political factor	Between Groups	3.30	5	0.66	2.38	0.040 (0.05)
	Within Groups	61.24	221	0.28		
The cultural factor	Between Groups	6.78	5	1.36	2.80	0.018 (0.05)
	Within Groups	106.93	221	0.48		

Table 6.24 breaks down the results by education level. Most of the groups were not significantly different, suggesting that experience does not substantially impact the variables. In the practice of investigative journalism, the only significant difference was between those who have bachelor's degrees and those who have master's degrees ($p < .05$). This, however, was not the case between those with PhDs or low levels of education.

For the organisational factor, there are significant differences between those who have Higher Diplomas and those who have bachelor's degrees or PhDs ($p < .05$). For the political factor, there are significant differences between those who have master's degrees and those who have bachelor's degrees or PhDs ($p < .05$). For the

cultural factor, there are significant differences between those who have high school educations (or less) or master's degrees and those who have bachelor's degrees (p <.05). These data indicate that those who have bachelor's degrees, on the whole, were significantly different in every variable. This result could have been caused by the fact that the majority of the samples have bachelor's degrees. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between those who have very large gaps, such as PhDs and high school educations (or less).

Table 6.24: *Multiple Range Tests: LSD test for the differences in the factors according to differences in education level*

The factors	The education level	Mean	High school (or less)	Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Higher	Master's degree	PhD	The difference in favour
The practice of investigative journalism	High school (or less)	4.13							
	Diploma	3.64							
	Bachelor's degree	3.65					*		Bachelor's degree
	Higher Diploma	3.77							
	Master's degree	3.35							
	PhD	3.77							
The organisational factor	High school (or less)	3.50							
	Diploma	3.40							
	Bachelor's degree	3.64				*			Bachelor's degree
	Higher Diploma	3.59							
	Master's degree	3.56							
	PhD	4.31				*			PhD
The political factor **	High school (or less)	3.63							
	Diploma	3.80							

	Bachelor's degree	3.99				*		Bachelor's degree
	Higher Diploma	3.81						
	Master's degree	3.77						
	PhD	4.22				*		PhD
The cultural factor **	High school (or less)	3.06						
	Diploma	3.76						
	Bachelor's degree	3.87	*			*		Bachelor's degree
	Higher Diploma	3.59						
	Master's degree	3.52						
	PhD	3.88						

(**) Indicates significant differences (shown in the table). (*) The mean difference is significant at the .050 level.

6.9.2.3. The experience variable

Table 6.25 shows that there are significant differences in experience among nearly every variable, except for the practice of investigative journalism. The statistics are as follows: the practice of investigative journalism (F = 1.06, p = 0.379), the organisational factor (F = 3.36, p = 0.011), political factor (F = 2.89, p = 0.023), and the cultural factor (F = 2.82, p = 0.026). These results suggest that experience does exert some influence on most of the factors. Consequently, these factors were stratified where possible in order to tease them apart and see how and when experience was influential, using the LSD test to detect the source of these differences (see Table 6.27).

Table 6.25: *Groups' statistics for the four variables according to years of experience*

Variable	Years of Experience	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The practice of investigative journalism	Less than 5 years	18	3.72	0.48	0.112
	5-9 years	26	3.71	0.41	0.081
	10-14 years	77	3.56	0.50	0.057
	15-19 years	50	3.63	0.51	0.073
	20 years or more	56	3.53	0.46	0.061
	Total	227	3.60	0.48	0.032
Organisational factor	Less than 5 years	18	3.39	0.99	0.234
	5-9 years	26	3.87	0.52	0.103
	10-14 years	77	3.52	0.87	0.099
	15-19 years	50	3.35	0.81	0.114
	20 years or more	56	3.80	0.69	0.092
	Total	227	3.58	0.81	0.054
Political factor	Less than 5 years	18	3.67	0.66	0.156
	5-9 years	26	3.95	0.43	0.085
	10-14 years	77	3.83	0.59	0.067
	15-19 years	50	3.93	0.53	0.075
	20 years or more	56	4.08	0.41	0.055
	Total	227	3.91	0.53	0.035
Cultural factor	Less than 5 years	18	3.53	0.63	0.148
	5-9 years	26	3.66	0.56	0.110
	10-14 years	77	3.61	0.75	0.086
	15-19 years	50	3.88	0.72	0.101
	20 years or more	56	3.95	0.68	0.091
	Total	227	3.75	0.71	0.047

Table 6.26: *One-way analysis of variance (F-test) of experience for the four variables*

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Between Groups	0.99	4	0.25	1.06	0.379 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	51.89	222	0.23		
Organisational factor	Between Groups	8.38	4	2.09	3.36	0.011 (0.01)

	Within Groups	138.53	222	0.62		
Political factor	Between Groups	3.19	4	0.80	2.89	0.023 (0.05)
	Within Groups	61.34	222	0.28		
Cultural factor	Between Groups	5.49	4	1.37	2.82	0.026 (0.05)
	Within Groups	108.21	222	0.49		

Table 6.27 breaks down the results by experience group. The majority of groups did not significantly differ from each other, suggesting that experience does not greatly impact the organisational factor. There were significant differences only between comparisons between the '5-9 years' group and the '15-19 years' group, and when comparing the '10-14 years' and the '15-19 years' groups and the '20 years or more' group (p <.05). However, there were no significant differences in comparisons with those who had slightly less or slightly more experience. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no significant differences between those at opposite ends of the experience spectrum (i.e., 'less than 5 years' compared with '20 years or more') regarding the organisational factor. This result may be a reflection of the inadequate funding for journalists in the Saudi Arabia, which curtails their ability to carry out effective investigative reporting. This may also demonstrate a generational organisational issue, where poor training opportunities have carried on from one cohort of journalists to the next.

For the roles of the political factor and experience, there are significant differences for the polar-opposite ends (i.e., 'less than 5 years' and '10-14 years' compared with '20 or more years'). This may reflect differing understandings of

journalistic practice, as well as what journalists are and are not allowed to do in Saudi Arabia. The seemingly benevolent permission to allow criticism of the political sphere is nonetheless undermined by the lack of clear rules about what is allowed. It is possible that this uncertainty causes those who are just beginning their careers, and even those who are established, to refrain from investigating stories that may cause problems. These differences between the age groups may also reflect differences in a journalist's confidence and holistic knowledge, which can be gained only through hands-on experience.

These data show that there were significant differences between the age groups when comparing the 'less than 5 years' group and the '10-14 years' group with the '20 years or more' group. This suggest that those with considerable experience gaps, such as those between the '10-14 years' group and '20 years or more' group, perceived a greater cultural impact on their experience. Interestingly, those with smaller gaps, such as the '10-14 years' group and the '15-19 years' group, were also significantly different, which perhaps shows that they viewed the culture's impact not only at extremely different levels of experience but also at many parts of their careers.

Table 6.27: *Multiple Range Tests: LSD test for the differences in the factors of the research according to the differences in experience years*

Variable	Years of experience	Mean	Less than 5 years	5-9 years	10-14 years	15-19 years	20 years or more	The difference in favour
Organisational factor	Less than 5 years	3.39						
	5-9 years	3.87				*		5-9 years
	10-14 years	3.52						
	15-19	3.35						

	years							
	20 years or more	3.80			*	*		20 years or more
Political factor	Less than 5 years	3.67						
	5-9 years	3.95						
	10-14 years	3.83						
	15-19 years	3.93						
	20 years or more	4.08	*		*			20 years or more
Cultural factor	Less than 5 years	3.53						
	5-9 years	3.66						
	10-14 years	3.61						
	15-19 years	3.88			*			15-19 years
	20 years or more	3.95	*		*			20 years or more

(**) Indicates significant differences (shown in the table). (*) The mean difference is significant at the .050 level.

6.9.2.4. The income variable

Next, the participants' incomes were analysed for each of the variables. The test showed that there was no a statistically-significant difference in income between the different factors. The results were as follows: the practice of investigative journalism (F = 1.25, p = 0.292), the organisational factor (F = 0.62, p = 0.651), the political factor (F = 1.23, p = 0.300), and the cultural factor (F = 0.51, p = 0.727).

Table 6.28: *Groups' statistics describing the factors according to monthly income*

Variable	Monthly income	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The practice of investigative journalism	£1000 or less	36	3.73	0.47	0.078
	£1000- £2000	35	3.65	0.59	0.100
	£2000- £3000	68	3.59	0.42	0.050
	£3000- £4000	50	3.55	0.53	0.076
	£4000 or more	38	3.50	0.43	0.069
	Total	227	3.60	0.48	0.032
Organisational factor	£1000 or less	36	3.49	0.91	0.152
	£1000- £2000	35	3.69	0.70	0.118
	£2000- £3000	68	3.60	0.68	0.083
	£3000- £4000	50	3.48	0.89	0.125
	£4000 or more	38	3.68	0.91	0.147
	Total	227	3.58	0.81	0.054
Political factor	£1000 or less	36	3.74	0.69	0.116
	£1000- £2000	35	3.90	0.51	0.085
	£2000- £3000	68	3.94	0.51	0.062
	£3000- £4000	50	3.94	0.51	0.071
	£4000 or more	38	3.99	0.45	0.074
	Total	227	3.91	0.53	0.035
Cultural factor	£1000 or less	36	3.63	0.75	0.125
	£1000- £2000	35	3.74	0.65	0.109
	£2000- £3000	68	3.74	0.64	0.078
	£3000- £4000	50	3.81	0.78	0.110
	£4000 or more	38	3.84	0.76	0.123
	Total	227	3.75	0.71	0.047

Table 6.29: *One-way analysis of variance (F-test) of monthly income for the four variables*

Variable	Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	Sig.
The practice of investigative journalism	Between Groups	1.16	4	0.29	1.25	0.292 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	51.72	222	0.23		
Organisational factor	Between Groups	1.61	4	0.40	0.62	0.651 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	145.29	222	0.65		

Political factor	Between Groups	1.40	4	0.35	1.23	0.300 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	63.14	222	0.28		
Cultural factor	Between Groups	1.04	4	0.26	0.51	0.727 (N. S.)
	Within Groups	112.66	222	0.51		

6.10.   Multiple regression analysis

A series of stepwise multiple regressions was calculated to predict how the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia would be affected by the organisational, cultural, and political factors. These calculations produced significant regression equations, which are as follows. First, the political factor's impact on the practice of investigative journalism was entered into the regression equation. It was significantly related to the level and nature of the practice of investigative journalism: $F(1,225) = 5.321$, $p < 0.001$. The multiple correlation coefficient was 0.317, which indicates that approximately 10.1% of the variance of the practice of investigative journalism could be accounted for by the political factor's impact on investigative journalism. Hence, the organisational and cultural factors did not enter into the equation during the following steps of the analysis.

Table 6.30: *Analysis of variance for multiple regression to discover the factors that contribute to the prediction the practice of investigative journalism*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F value & sig.	Multiple correlation coefficient R	Coefficient of determination R^2
Regression	5.321	1	5.321	25.170 (0.01)	0.317	0.101
Residual	47.561	225	0.211			

Table 6.31: *Values of the constants in the regression equation*

Model	B	Std. Error	Value of Beta (β)	t value	Sig.
Constant	2.474	0.226		10.948	0.000
Political factor	0.287	0.057	0.317	5.017	0.000

Table 6.32: *Values of excluded variables*

Variables	Beta in	t value	Sig.	Partial correlation	Collinearity statistics tolerance
Organisational factor	0.097	1.432	0.154	0.095	0.859
Cultural factor	0.006	0.084	0.933	0.006	0.734

Thus, the regression equation for predicting the practice of investigative journalism is:

The predicted practice of investigative journalism = 0.287 * political factor + 2.474

This may indicate that the political factor has the greatest effect on the practice of investigative journalism in less-democratic countries.

6.11. Conclusion

In the present chapter, the quantitative results of the surveys were evaluated to measure the four latent variables: the practice of investigative journalism and the organisational, political, and cultural factors. The intent for exploring these constructs was to tease them apart and identify how aspects such as perceptions, experiences,

and attitudes affect journalists in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the chapter looked at what roles other variables like income, educational level, and level of experience played. This study revealed the existence of several strong relationships between the factors of interest. Perhaps not surprisingly, the political factor weighed most heavily upon the respondents, which, as previously discussed, could be a result of the Saudi environment, where the rules of reportage are ambiguous and the press are frequently unable to access sources.

The cultural factor played a significant role as well. One example of this is that many journalists seem to be unwilling to adopt an intrusive tabloid style that infringes on citizens' private lives. Interestingly, the data suggest that journalists use cultural trends to guide their practice rather than attempting to shape these trends. Whether this stems from wishing to avoid causing conflict or from anxiety about the rulers' response will be discussed later in detail. Nonetheless, it is clear that, though journalists in Saudi Arabia appear to operate within relatively strict forms of moral and professional codes, much of these behaviours may be the results of state influence. The discussion chapter will consider how the variables interact with, and perhaps play causal roles for, the main factors.

CHAPTER SEVEN: QUALITATIVE DATA

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

7.1. Introduction

This chapter's aim to present the findings that emerged from the qualitative data. As explained in Chapter Five, a mixed-methods approach — quantitative and qualitative—enriches the data because it combines the advantages of both methods and avoids the disadvantages of using only a single method (Clark & Creswell, 2011). The data was gathered from in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The methodology chapter explained the rationale for choosing in-depth, semi-structured interviews to collect the data. There were thirteen interviewees, which included editors-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief.

The interview consisted of a total of 22 questions in a semi-structured format. Sometimes, the interviews progressed according to the interviewees' responses. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed for analysis. The transcriptions were read several times, and the data was thematically coded. Then, the data was analysed under the relevant thematic categories using Braun and Clarke (2006) step-by-step guide to thematic analysis: (1) repeated readings to become familiar with the data; (2) systematic coding using notes about the data's features; (3) looking for main themes across the codes and subthemes; (4) checking the validity of the themes across the data; (5) identifying the data's themes; and (6) preparing the report by selecting significant parts of the data and relating them to the research questions and the literature review.

Next, the participants' names and distinguishing features were removed and replaced with codes: EIC (editor-in-chief) and the interview number (1-13). For

example, the first respondent was coded as EIC1, and the last respondent was coded as EIC13.

7.2. The thematic analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews was analysed using the NVivo software program (version 11.04). This program is commonly used for analysing qualitative data. Its advantages include importing and coding written data, editing the text without affecting the coding, searching for combinations of words in the text and allowing data to be separated into subclasses. It provides a simpler structure for reviewing emergent themes and more security with data backup (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The analysis was conducted through the following steps:

- the responses from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed;

- a new folder was created in NVivo to collect the relevant information; and

- the themes were selected and coded. The coded themes and the findings were compiled into different families in tree nodes and graphically presented as networks of relationships (see Figure 7.1).

The data contained words and phrases such as 'no applied mechanism', 'factors influencing investigative journalism', 'racism', 'social', 'tribalism', 'religious', 'training', 'finance', 'no regulations', 'specific resources to apply pressure', and 'illogical commands'. For the analysis, the responses were categorised under ten broad themes (see Figure 7.2). The following sections present the research findings for each theme. Figure 7.1 presents an NVivo screenshot of the tree nodes.

Figure 7.1: *NVivo screenshot of the tree nodes*

Figure 7.2: Thematic map

The nature and practice of IJ

Issues that are Avoided

Culture and society

Availability of clear guidelines

Relationship with the government

Thematic map

Selection of topics

The pressures of specific resources

The impact of the Internet and Social Media

Factors influencing IJ

Editorial policy
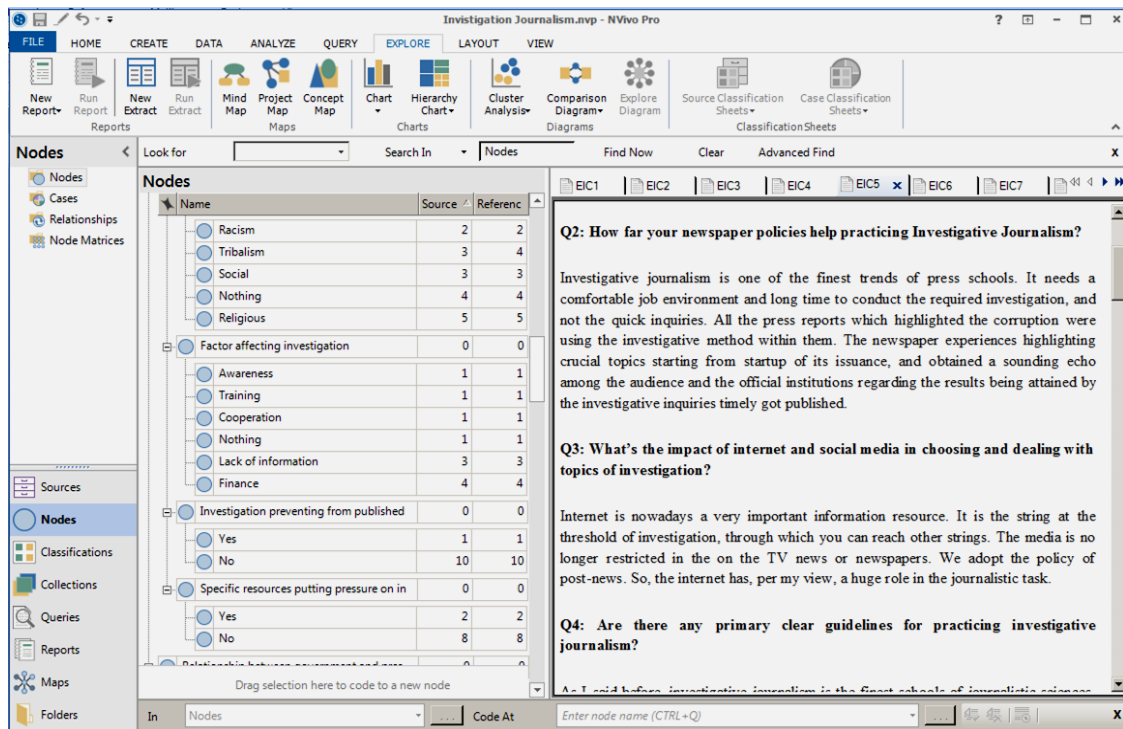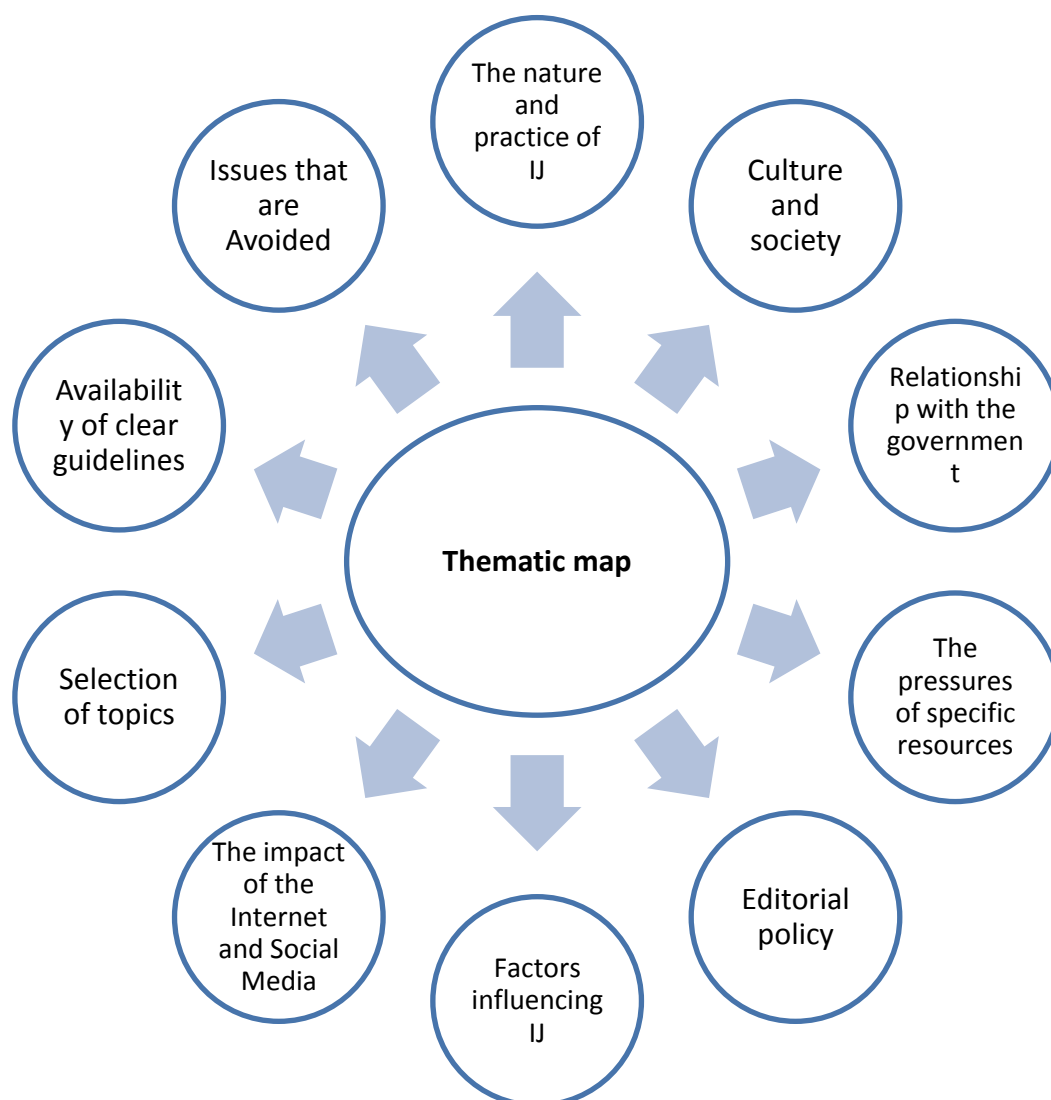
7.3. Interviewees' profiles

Thirteen editors-in-chief and deputy editors-in-chief, each with more than 20 years' of experience, were interviewed in order to gather their opinions about the practice of investigative journalism and the factors that influence it. The interviews were conducted throughout Saudi Arabia (the Central, Western, Eastern, and Southern regions) and London, where the main headquarters of *Asharq Al-Awsat* is located. However, only 12 interviews were completed; one of the respondents did not want to

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complete the interview after answering the first set of questions. He refused to answer the questions related to the influence of political and cultural factors, though he did not object to his answers being used in this study.

The researcher's profession as a journalist and his close relationships with journalists and several of the editors-in-chief helped him to cultivate an element of trust with the respondents, and the anonymity of the responses increased participation. The face-to-face interviews, often as long as an hour, gave the respondents ample time to answer the questions and offer explanations. The dialogue style allowed the researcher to explore the interviewees' answers thoroughly and, when necessary, ask them to justify their responses. Given the topic's sensitivity, the respondents made it a prerequisite that he had to conduct the interviews face to face. However, circumstances did not let him conduct face-to-face interviews with two interviewees; instead, telephone interviews were conducted. A third interviewee, after the researcher met him, he read the questions and then asked to answer in writing and send the answers electronically.

7.4. The practice of investigative journalism and influential factors

7.4.1. The nature and practice of investigative journalism

During the interviews, the themes were elaborated using laddering techniques in order to avoid short standard replies. A laddering technique is a tool for uncovering subjective causal chains in qualitative interviews. It involves a series of consecutive probes that allow respondents to develop causal chains (Grunert & Grunert, 1995).

There were disparities between the descriptions of the nature and the actual practice of investigative journalism. The interviewees used words and phrases such

as: (1) 'Requires in-depth inquiry of a problem', (2) 'Reaching facts', (3) 'uncovering secrets' (4) 'No applied mechanism', (5) 'Random individual practices', and (6) 'Does not exist'. Figure 7.3 illustrates these results.

Regarding 'requires in-depth inquiry of the problem', the majority of the participants (N = 8, 62%) said that it is an important component of investigative journalism. In this context, EIC1 declared that:

Investigative journalism is a deep professional practice that seeks to investigate issues to reach suitable solutions to solve the problems that the society encounters. Thus, investigative journalism is currently a new trend in journalistic professional practice (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

EIC5 and EIC2 shared the same opinion that investigative journalism chases a case, such as corruption or abuse within service institutions. It means researching every file and document and becoming acquainted with every viewpoint. EIC12 added that the investigative journalism is based on searching for and inquiring about economic, political, or humanitarian information. The process of inquiry takes varying lengths of time, according to the stages of transfer from one place to another.

Figure 7.3: *Words and phrases to respond to the nature and practice of investigative journalism*
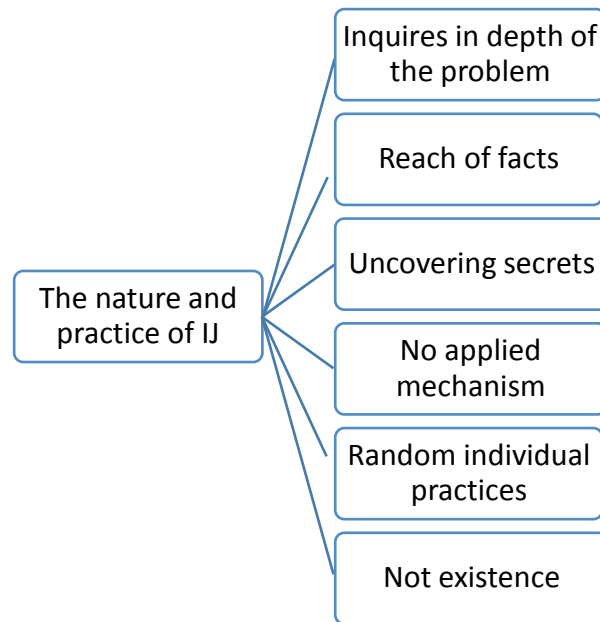
Regarding 'reaching facts', two respondents defined investigative journalism as the search for information to tie up all loose ends in a story. According to EIC11, the task of investigative journalism is to uncover political, economic, social, or cultural issues by documenting details, uncovering secrets, and solving mysteries. Similarly, EIC7 specified that investigative journalism dives deeply into a topic, using practical steps to determine the problem, develop hypotheses and questions, find several sources of documentation, and to uncover previously unknown information. It is a complicated procedure that requires extensive time and effort. It is worth mentioning that this concept most closely matches the global concept of investigative journalism. However, according to the respondents, the Saudi press has weakly implemented critical concepts related to investigative journalism.

On the other hand, three respondents indicated that nobody practises investigative journalism professionally in Saudi Arabia; what is present is dominated

by random individual practices. For this reason, EIC9 explained that they do not have qualified journalists to lead investigations. He added:

> If we take the issue of pollution in Jeddah, we'd find that it is very polluted and contaminated with garbage, and the underground water is tainted. Such a case needs journalists who are able to research and inquire and go out into the field (Personal interview, 12 January 2017).

However, EIC13 had a different attitude. After he declared that the practice of investigative journalism does not exist, he acknowledged that, during the past few years, some journalists have become aware of international press, particularly online. Another respondent confirmed that the nature of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia very vague. Investigations require transparency and sources of information, but, in Saudi Arabia, these are not available to journalists. He added:

> Comparing investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and in other Arabic countries, you see that investigative journalism exists in Egypt and Morocco, but does not in Saudi Arabia because our media regulations and laws do not encourage this kind of journalism (Personal interview, 14 January 2017).

7.4.2. The newspapers' editorial policies

It worth mentioning that many respondents indicated that editorial policies were associated with the editor-in-chief's personality. Though half of the respondents stated that the newspaper's policies were supportive and encouraging, the other half believed that the newspaper's policies did not encourage to practice investigative journalism (see Figure 7.4).

One respondent agreed that his newspaper's policies assisted journalists in their investigatory practices. EIC11 elaborated, 'Indeed, our newspaper is used to assisting the practice of investigative journalism. It is the most modern newspaper,

established in 2000. Soon after its founding, it published an investigation every day.' (Personal interview, 3 January 2017).

EIC11 stated that his newspaper highlights many political and social issues, especially taboo topics. His newspaper has also reported on the governmental body that promotes virtue and prevents vice, and it has played a role in many social issues, such as equality in marriage, the marriage of young girls, and tribal customs that are incompatible with Islamic law or not in accordance with human rights. In fact, the newspaper has never drawn a red line for its journalists. Another participant shared the same attitude, saying that his newspaper encourages its journalists to practise investigative journalism according to professional requirements. It devotes sections for conventional and investigative reports (EIC7). EIC8 expressed that his newspaper supported him to an 'Unlimited extent because it's the most prominent type of journalism'.

Another respondent explained that his newspaper has correspondents who play significant roles in the tasks of investigative journalism. He offered the example of a Syrian colleague who conducted investigative inquiries about human rights violations among immigrants, torture by extremists or armed militias, and recruiters polarising youth and convincing them to join groups like ISIS. The editorial policy supports this kind of journalism because it uncovers important information. However, six respondents stated that their newspapers' policies did not encourage them to practice investigative journalism. EIC6 and EIC9 said that the policies and regulations do not help because the newspaper lacks professional personnel and financial resources. In addition, those who run the newspapers are not very competent, and most of them are afraid of publishing the findings of investigations that touch on the society's concerns.

Overall, the editorial policy varies according to the editor-in-chief's personality. EIC6 declared that, once an editor-in-chief is changed, there are changes in the newspaper's policy. This happened at one newspaper. It passed through different phases, and each editor exerted personal influence during his tenure. If we are to judge a newspaper's excellence vis-a-vis its investigative journalism, we must recall that this distinction was associated with a particular editor. EIC9 explained:

> In fact, the newspaper's policy depends on the editor. Some editors do not want to incur anyone's wrath. I remember that a bus carrying pilgrims from the UAE got into a traffic accident and about 47 people died. Though the News Agency published this story, the editor of the newspaper refused to publish this story because such a large number of victims died and he was afraid of the reaction. I asked him why he was afraid when the Saudi News Agency had published the story (Personal interview, 12 January 2017).

EIC9 recounted another example when a woman investigated maids at home and the editor agreed to publish the investigation. However, after that, the editor asked the Ministry to terminate the investigator for conducting the investigation: 'Our press system is not yet sophisticated because newspapers have not hired highly qualified editors, and most of them are afraid to publish investigations on community issues. Their statuses as editors-in-chief are merely prestige'. However, EIC1 alluded to the notion the editorial policy in any newspapers is inseparable from the media policy of Saudi Arabia. If the political system sets this media policy, it is inevitable that this policy would have an impact across all forms of media. Also, Saudi Arabia does not have opposition newspapers. Consequently, newspapers adopt the line that conforms with that of the political system. He added:

> The gatekeeper in Saudi newspapers works in the capacity of the big wheel. When we refer to that wheel, we find it being dictated to do what is required from it. Nobody has the will or the courage to attempt to think outside the box.

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It's a wheel rotation, and he becomes part of this wheel, unable to get out of its path, having no courage or ability to get out of this framework. One of the obstacles that affects us today is the state of panic that the editor-in-chief suffers from in the Saudi press. They suffer from a strange sort of panic because they don't want to lose their posts only because they are not wanted. They don't want to lose their posts after many years solely because a case or a problem was filed against them. Therefore, we find that he is afraid to publish about many topics and investigative inquiries. For example, after they published investigative reports, some of the editors-in-chief retreated because they faced so much pressure (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

In conclusion, a free, successful, and dynamic press requires journalists and editors who are talented enough to balance between what is forbidden and what is reasonable to publish. EIC1 talked about some of the challenges they faced: 'Undoubtedly Saudi newspapers encounter major problems during investigations. Even if there is an investigation, the journalist will encounter great challenges.'

One of the respondents indicated that news stories need to be efficient and incorporate many opinions. Though many of these elements are not available to every newspaper. According to EIC4, every newspaper wants to publish investigations. In the past, some newspapers published investigations, but only at their discretion. They did not have regular publication schedules. Consequently, when they tried to publish an investigative series over one or two months, they didn't receive a public response. The situation was not able to accommodate an investigative press. In addition, many journalists did not enjoy their careers and, in many cases, were not qualified. The press did not have training programmes, and many journalists worked for the newspapers simply for the prestige. Some of them began their careers on social media, and when they started working at a newspaper, they were more interested in becoming famous than in working.

Figure 7.4: *The distribution of supportive and unsupportive editorial policies*

Support and encourage ■ Not help
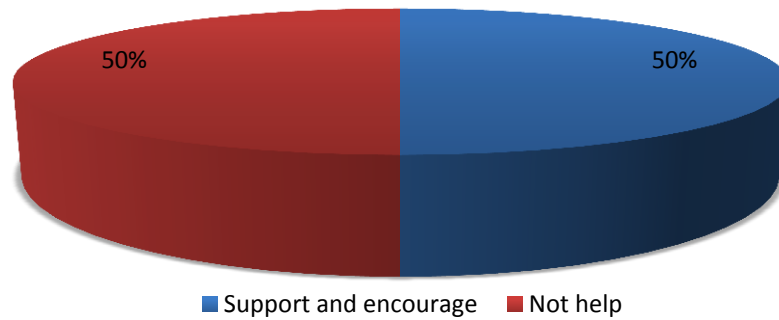
7.4.3. The impacts of the Internet and social media

The majority of the respondents indicated that the Internet and social media directly impact the choice of investigative topics (N= 8, 62%). Four respondents suggested that they had a negative impact (31%), and one respondent suggested that they did not have a direct impact (7%). Figure 7.5 shows the distribution of the responses.

EIC10 and EIC11 said that the Internet is like a huge library and that it is an easy way to gather information. It helps in communicating with the various parties involved with a topic. They added, however, that the information on the Internet is frequently inaccurate and not credible. Sharing similar concerns, EIC4 said that many Saudi newspapers have become subject to the demands and conventions of social media, which is reflected in the quality of what is produced. He added that social networks are not used by intellectuals and they are not used as intellectual tools in Saudi society. EIC4 added:

> Many Saudi newspapers are now controlled by social media platforms because their topics are more readable than traditional reportage. Twitter has become a major media platform for reasons that are obvious and clear. In some

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democratic countries a journalist can present his or her views in newspapers or on TV without being afraid to use his or her real name. In our country, we can't publish our opinions or criticisms in newspapers or on TV, which encourages everyone to publish their criticisms on social networks. Consequently, people criticise on Twitter using aliases which have become a popular platform for everyone because the freedom is high (Personal interview, 2 January 2017).

EIC13 said that the Internet and social media have very minor impacts:

I think that the Internet and social media have a very minor impact in the choice of topics of investigation. Our rule is to transfer the newspaper to the Internet, but not to transfer Internet data to the newspaper. This, unfortunately, happens quite often in newspapers, and we keep far away from what's promoted on social media (Personal interview, 14 January 2017).

One of the respondents said that newspapers news is no longer restricted since the Internet has assumed a significant role in the journalistic profession, but there are concerns that information from the Internet cannot be used except through filtration and scrutiny channels, as with other press resources. However, four respondents believed that the Internet and social media have negatively impacted the process of choosing the topics for investigation. In this regard, EIC3 commented social media has made the traditional press less professional. He explained that digital newspapers have weakened the traditional press and media and copyright is not protected. Therefore, any extra effort will be, from an economic viewpoint, a lost effort. EIC8 identified a link between these negative effects and an editor's satisfaction about the choice of topic:

Sometimes there are negative effects if the editor was satisfied to take without investigation. The electronic press is limited and its impact is not very popular. The journalist benefits more from the Internet than he is negatively affected (Personal interview, 15 January 2017).

Only one respondent (EIC6) believed that the Internet and social media do not directly impact the choice of investigative topic because some published information cannot be confirmed from online sources alone.

Figure 7.5: *Distribution of the editors' beliefs about the impact of the Internet and social media*
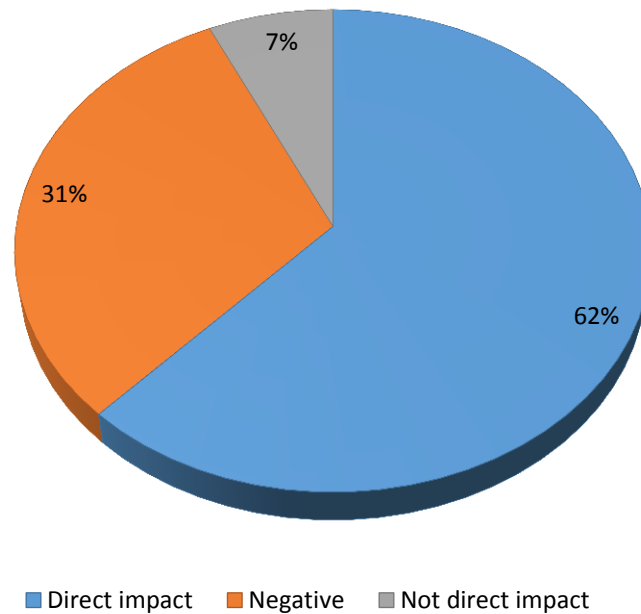
7.4.4. Clear guidelines

The majority of the respondents (78%) believed that they worked under clear guidelines, while only two respondents (22%) stated that they lacked clear guidelines and principles. Three respondents (EIC6, EIC8, and EIC9) agreed that there are general principles, as well as guiding principles that are specific to some newspapers.

EIC1 stated that organisational principles and guidelines are very important, but, for investigative journalism in particular, systems need to be updated so that modern journalists can easily acquire information and be able to engage with sources. He pointed out the importance of organisational principles and guidelines in facilitating a communicator's job and investigative journalism's mission. He added:

'we want a printing and publishing system and a journalistic institutional system and the Saudi's media policy and an electronic publishing organisation, all these systems to push investigative journalism forward.' In his views, the value-based principle is needed because investigative journalism requires values and ethics of credibility, objectivity and accuracy. Investigative journalism also needs professional principles, as there is no investigative journalism proper without in-depth and overall coverage of issues of concern. Special care ought to be borne in mind when dealing with the texts and journalists have to pay extreme attention to the available details in order to reach the information that certifies or defies the standpoint adopted by journalists. Investigative journalism also needs to abide by the technical principle in affirming the truth of the inaccessible information obtained, and the speed of information gathering, and the method of presenting the message. In this regard, EIC10 said confidently that:

> One of the editors can create the guidelines or the executive editor-in-chief, in collaboration with us, can agree on a sounding topic, or a colleague can draw the attention of the editorial board to a significant topic or a case, and the issue will be completed between our editors (Personal interview, 10 January 2017).

However, two respondents declared that journalism does not have principles because it has to face issues that are difficult to talk about publically. EIC3's opinion was that, despite lacking guidelines, many editors-in-chief apply the principle of it:

> We find that the editor-in-chief or manager or the deputy editor-in-chief has no ability to say: this subject is not good for publishing! Instead, they urge the editors to document the information for publication. Documenting information is difficult for beginner or nonprofessional editors. As such, we can't publish of the kind of stories that are being published in the foreign press (Personal interview, 11 January 2017).

EIC5 commented that there is scarcity of specialist journalists in investigative journalism, which has culminated in ignorance of journalistic principles, as such it is difficult to talk about a practice that is somehow not established.

7.4.5. The selection of the topics

The data indicate that the topics for investigation were chosen by either the editorial board (54%, N=7) or the editors (46%, N=6) (see Figure 7.6 for the NVivo text review of the selection of topics by the editorial board). The majority of the respondents stated that topics were usually selected during the weekly meeting of the editorial leaders. EIC12 confirmed that the editorial board, which included the leaders, editors, and journalists, usually collaborated during their meetings to select topics.

EIC11 stated, 'The editorial board has adopted a press line based on addressing unspoken of issues in society, and the press line sparks reformations in the social, economic, and religious spheres. It has a vision and a method.'

Another group declared that the editors selected the investigative topics; one of participants referred to 'those reportage editors'. He added, 'As editors, we meet every day to share ideas and discuss them with regards to the investigations. Our colleagues share and discuss ideas and then make a work plan' (EIC4). The group of editors should be aware and flexible and self-confident, and transparency should be discussed at the meeting. The editors create a comprehensive programme to investigate the topics (EIC8). On a similar theme, EIC10 mentioned, 'A colleague can draw the attention of the editorial board to a significant topic or a case and the issue will be completed under a partnership between our editors.' However, EIC1 added an important dimension about the selection of some issues to be investigated. 'Sometime

the authorities and the executive branch of an institution ask newspapers to investigate issues of their concern. For instance Saudi newspapers have investigated issues pertaining to opening up of cinemas, women driving, and some controversial religious issues, amongst others.' Such investigations functioned as a plea for the government to introduce legislations related to the issues that have been recommended for investigation.

Figure 7.6: *NVivo text review of the selection of topics by the editorial board*
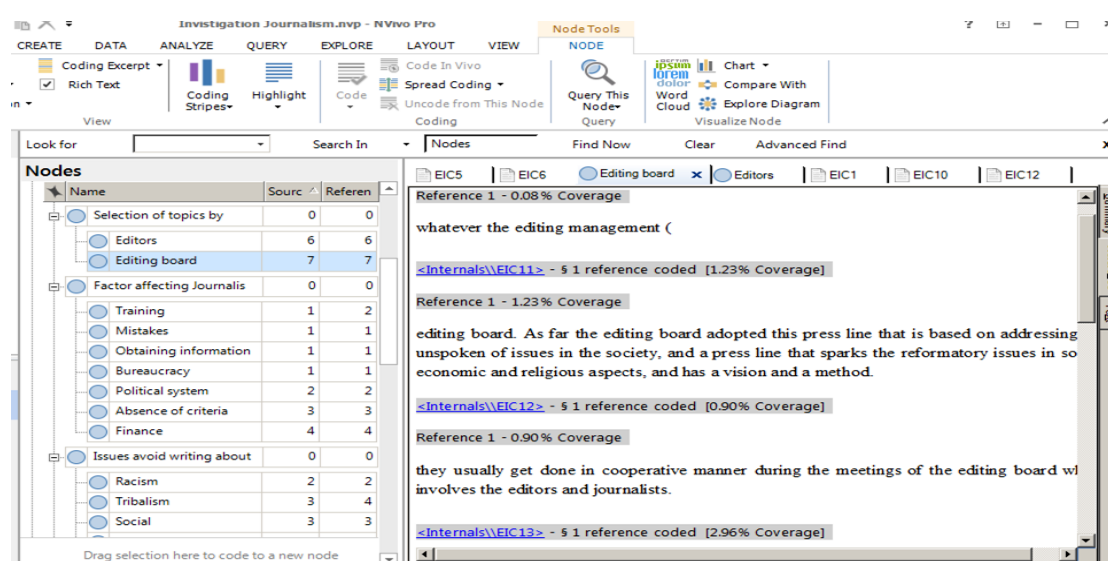
7.4.6. The factors that influence the practice of investigative journalism

The respondents identified many key factors. Nevertheless, the factors varied among individual, organisational, political, cultural, and social factors such as: personal values, editorial policy, training, advertisers' pressure, freedom of press, pressure by official authorities, religious and tribal pressures. Figure 7.7 shows a word cloud of the responses regarding the factors that affect the practice of investigative journalism.

In relation to training, the data reveals that the training of journalists and graduates of information studies is an important issue and that Saudi citizens who want to specialise in this field must find other ways to be trained. In this regard, EIC3

added, 'Investigative journalism needs well-qualified and trained journalists. Unfortunately, no local newspapers hold training courses in the investigative journalism.'

One of the respondents affirmed that practical experience is much more important than academic experience. However, the problem is that there are no training centres in Saudi Arabia. Another respondent stated: 'I think we have strong and talented journalistic cadres, but they don't have access to training courses that would enrich their talents. Therefore, I sometimes insist sending some talented journalists to training programmes.'

Commenting from a different perspective, EIC9 stated that Saudi Arabia does not have an investigative culture because journalists don't like to expose corruption. He thought that the most important factor that affects investigative journalism is fear. He said: 'For example, I asked one of the journalists investigate the environmental implications of the floods in Jeddah, and he refused because he was afraid of public reaction.'

Furthermore, EIC12 said that some journalists impose agendas and exert pressure to prevent the publication of certain materials. Likewise, EIC5 believed that there is a general ignorance by officials about the need for investigative journalism, since, when we criticise an issue, we correct errors, but such sensitivities hamper the investigation of many topics. EIC7 commented that journalists are not protected. There have been improvements, but sway of some authorities on journalists still exist. In addition, there are no journalistic criteria and established ethics. EIC1 said that many investigative journalists do not dig more deeply into a case because they fear legal action. EIC11 said: 'Courageous journalism in a conservative society bound by

tribal and religious laws will face difficulties before and after publishing. Our newspaper faces very strong reactions and provinces by several groups, specifically religious scholars.'

EIC4 pointed out that investigative journalism is particularly risky because a newspaper could be sued. For example:

> Approximately five years ago, we published an investigation about terrorism, and we included one of the judge's tweets in order to show how people have interacted with it. We were surprised because the judge filed a case against the newspaper claiming that our action constituted a threat against him. He wanted a huge sum of money—fifteen million riyals. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Information accepts such allegations (Personal interview, 2 January 2017).

Two other factors that affect the practice of investigative journalism are the journalists' support systems and the ministry's conservative policies. One of the respondents said that obtaining information was often difficult: 'The most prominent factor lies in obtaining the information. Whenever the public mood believes that it is a journalist's right to obtain information, it becomes easier' (EIC3). Likewise, EIC10 believed that the lack of information and informational resources are two of the most important factors that impede the practice of investigative journalism. In addition, commercial interests often prevent fair reportage because the institution under investigation advertises in the newspaper. EIC1 said 'advertisers are very influential in not publishing some issues whether these cases concern them or the public. Typical example for such practices is what doing by the telecom companies'.

EIC4 added that the Saudi newspapers are currently suffering because of a dearth of advertising revenues and because newspapers are undergoing renovations according to the new economic policy. This situation has affected the practice of investigative journalism.

EIC13 suggested that the most important issue is the availability of information. Investigative journalism is not possible in the absence of information. Many entities seek to monopolize and withhold information, despite official instructions to cooperate with the media. EIC7 said that not everyone believes in the right to obtain information. Obstacles also include problems with cooperation, shifting and searching into the issues.

Four participants said that finances affected the practice of journalism. EIC8 and EIC9 commented that inadequate salaries and the lack of resources have caused many problems. EIC4 added: 'The economic side is very pressing. The general manager and the editor-in-chief obsess over savings and budgeting. If the newspaper had sufficient financial support, it would publish remarkable content.' Furthermore, EIC8 indicated that some editors retreated when facing insufficient resources. EIC7 was the only respondent who believed that the bureaucracy negatively affected the practice of investigative journalism. He stated, 'Though the government has started to be more open with the press in the recent years, the bureaucracy and capitals construct unnecessary obstacles to impede the press in obtaining important information.' (Personal interview, 15 January 2017).

Three respondents said that the absence of journalistic criteria was a problem because since investigative journalism requires professionalism and a person who has a large network of relationships that allows him to gather information. This type of journalism is jeopardised as a media status yet it suffers from a kind of chaos because of it lacks criteria. Also, EIC5 stated that awareness about the role of the press is one of the key elements.

Figure 7.7: *Word Cloud of the factors that affect the practice of investigative journalism*

7.4.7. Avoided issues in investigative reporting

The respondents identified many issues about which they avoided writing were those that related to the royal family, the judiciary, and relations between Saudi Arabia and other countries, racism, tribalism, sensitive issues in society, religion, and advertisers. However, four respondents said that they did not avoid any issue. Figure 7.8 shows a word cloud of the responses regarding the issues about which newspapers avoid writing.

Two respondents stated (without providing any details) that they most often avoided reporting on issues involving racism. Four respondents (EIC1, EIC8, EIC9, and EIC11) shared the same attitude about tribal conflicts. EIC11 explained the problem in detail and his solution for solving it:

Tribal problems are mostly due to land or borders, if the conflict is with another tribe. Since the tribal society is subject to disputes and problems among its members, it is necessary to take practical and serious steps to resolve them, and these steps are not to be published so that strife does not worsen and society does not disintegrate (Personal interview, 3 January 2017).

The respondents stated that they frequently avoided writing about personal issues. EIC5 commented that some stories threaten social security. He said that, when the editorial board considers a story that is personal and has no prominent social relevance, the board avoids it. EIC9 remarked on women's role in a conservative society like Saudi Arabia's: 'Women and their role in the society should be cared for, and newspapers should avoid aggressive reporting about them.'

Five respondents said that they avoid religious matters and other controversial issues. EIC9 shared the same opinion as EIC12, saying that 'we most often avoid investigating religious issues.'

EIC1, EIC4, and EIC13 argued that there are some topics that are avoided because of their sensitivity. These are issues like rape or homosexuality, since these are shocking to Saudi society. For example, one journalist conducted an investigation about prostitution in one country, and he met with a number of girls who were brought to the country to work as fashion models or in sales teams at stores, and, instead, they were made to work in prostitution. When the editor-in-chief read the story, he prevented it from being published. However, four respondents said that they were not restricted from writing about or investigating particular subjects. EIC11 stated:

No restrictions if the journalist owns documents about topics related to the corruption in the State or related to the abuse of authority from statesmen and public officers, or to the absolute authority of the tribal chiefs, or to the

authorities of religious men, or even to acquired power of the businessmen in the social field (Personal interview, 3 January 2017).

These words accord with information provided by one editor-in-chief, who said that they cannot prevent material from being published unless they lack information, documents, or facts. Furthermore, one editor-in-chief maintained that he has never prevented an investigation from being published. Likewise, EIC4 said, 'We've never had an experience when an investigation was prevented from being published. However, there have been some circumstances that have led to the halting of an investigation.' EIC7 said that there was no subject that they avoided writing about:

> There are no restrictions for investigations. The most important are the way you introduce and display the issue. In Saudi Arabia, newspapers adhere to the law of printing and publications, which constitutes a roadmap for journalism. The journalists amend some of their articles to create a freer media environment (Personal interview, 15 January 2017).

Regarding the issues of advertisers, the majority of the respondents declared that the newspapers avoided to investigate issues related to advertisers. EIC13 stated that in many cases, advertisers have applied pressure to influence an investigation and prevent the publication of material.

Figure 7.8: *Word Cloud of the subjects those newspapers avoid writing about*

7.4.8. Specific resources to put pressure on investigative reports

The majority of the respondents (77%) said that there are not specific resources for applying pressure on the practice of investigative journalism. Only three respondents (23%) said that there are some resources. Figure 7.9 shows the distribution of the responses.

EIC9, who said that there were no resources for applying pressure, explained that, from his point of view, most of the required data about terrorism, the Ministry of Health, and other information are available online. Moreover, though confirming that nobody pressured investigative journalists, EIC2 emphasised that they could not damage their relationships with ministries or officials: 'You cannot lose your good relationship with any of the ministries if you want the Minister to provide you with information and cooperate with you'.

EIC4, who said that there is occasional pressure, explained, 'There are no resources or entities that pressure us. There may be pressure time to time, but I am not

obligated to respond to them'. EIC7 agreed with EIC4 that the pressure is not direct, but there seem to be purposeful obstacles to impede their jobs and hide what a journalist looks for. Furthermore, EIC1 expressed that he was afraid to face pressures, saying: 'It is difficult to face pressures before publishing. We have been criticised many times about resources'. He confirmed that there is pressure to prevent the publications of investigations on certain subjects. These pressures stem from three sources: personal interest or personal relationships, advertisers, and some officials. One respondent stated that, because of these pressures:

> Our newspaper cannot publish on any subject that affects the Municipality due to, for example, personal relationships. Journalists have been threatened with dismissal if he published anything negative about the Riyadh municipality. We don't publish on a lot of topics because of these kinds of pressure (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

EIC1 added that there were some cases and issues which were banned in the second edition; for example, investigating racial tension was banned because the topic sounded harmful. Another example is the topic investigating Saudi women drug addicts and their rehabilitation was also banned. Some of the controversial investigations related to financial corruption amongst authorities were trashed, as a total of 30.000 copies were trashed.

EIC11 pointed out that many influencers pressure witnesses to deny information. In the past, it conducted an investigation in the southern region about women's rights in inheritance issues, and a source provided the information, but after it was published, he denied it on the grounds that he had not been aware of the consequences of this information. He compared this situation to Britain's.

> Absolutely there are pressures from official sources. There is a committee that receives journalistic complaints similar to the committee of journalistic

complaints in Britain. However, instead of going to the courts, where cases take a long time, there is a committee consisting of a syndicate of journalists for press complaints. Should there be any deficiency in professional standards, it would be sent to this committee at the Ministry of Information (Personal interview, 3 January 2017).

EIC11 said that there is pressure from statesmen, though his newspaper has managed to preserve its relative independence by not being swayed by these pressures. EIC13 was more unequivocal, saying that many entities relating to religious or social factions exert pressure. These pressure groups attempt to suppress ideas and prevent the publication of stories. These are popularly-based pressure groups.

Figure 7.9: *Distribution of responses about pressures on investigations*
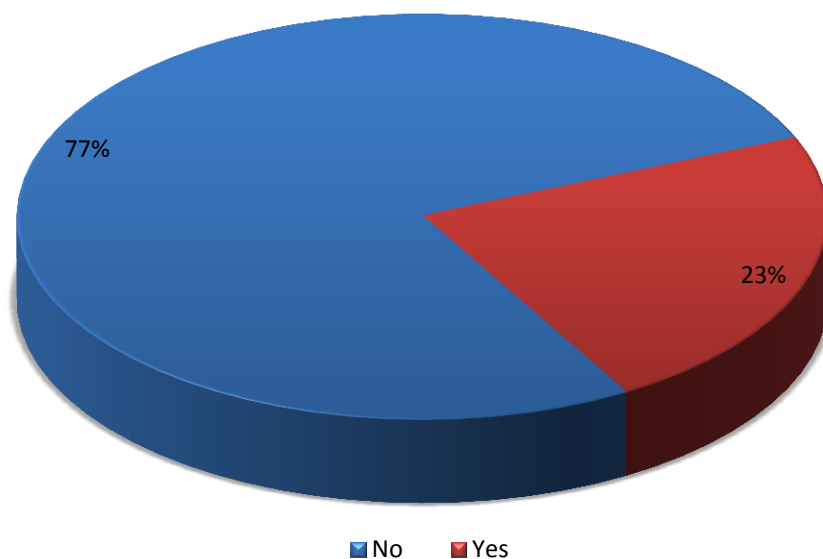
7.5. The relationship between the government and the press

7.5.1. The relationship with the Ministry of Information

The relationship between the respondents' newspapers and the Ministry of Information ranged from 'friendly' to 'mutually respectful', 'unfriendly', 'no

relation', or 'unclear'. Some respondents mentioned that the Ministry influenced the press but in a friendly way. Usually the monitoring took place only after the Ministry of Information received a complaint about published information. Only one respondent stated that there is no continuous monitoring of investigative journalists. Figure 7.10 shows the varying types of relationships between the newspapers and the Ministry of Information.

EIC8 and EIC9 (N = 2, 15%) admitted that their newspapers' relationships with the Ministry of Information and its officials are friendly: 'The relationship between us and the Ministry of Culture and Information and other governmental institutions are friendly and, to some extent, that is pretty far from being official relationship.' Two respondents said that their newspapers met and talked frequently with the Ministry of Information; they said that their relationships help realise the public interest.

Five respondents described the relationship as 'not friendly' (N = 5, 38%). EIC4 and EIC10 stated that the relationship is the worst it has ever been, i.e. the relationship is worse than it was with the former executives of the Ministry of Information. This relationship is not always friendly because the job of the press is to expose the government's mistakes. EIC10 said that many newspapers received illogical commands from the Ministry of Information.

Indeed there are explicit interventions, but I don't believe that intervention comes directly from higher instructions; instead, it is the intervention of lower-level entities. I think such instructions are not adapting to the rapid acceleration of the Internet and social media. We are still kept under umbrella of the local media, which I think is obsolete by now, i.e. there is no longer so-called 'internal' or 'external

information'. What is external is internal, and what was there has been exposed to external exploration. I hope we restructure the concepts because it is unreasonable for the media to step forward and then go backwards (Personal interview, 10 January 2017).

EIC3 said that it is impossible to have a fully independent newspaper because the editor-in-chief can be employed only with consent of the Ministry of Information, which has specific policies that prevent the newspaper from criticising the ministry. EIC1 explained the situation in detail:

> We have to be positive. When I say 'we have to', I mean that we do not negotiate what is required from us. You don't have the right to discuss. The Ministry of Information speaks to the newspapers in a commanding discourse. There are determined commands not to publish anything about certain specific issues—and not to highlight that and not to discuss that. You will be punished if you do not follow the directives. So, you are obliged to hear and obey what comes from the Ministry of Information (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

EIC11 stated that the relationship was complicated because the Ministry of Information does not pre-monitor them directly, and it does not intervene in the job or in choosing the topics. However, it still continues to control the law of printing with regards to the mistakes made. Furthermore, the legislations that pertain to the fields of intellect, culture and press are not complete. There are no laws to control the limits of journalistic profession. As such the concept of the national supreme interests is a relatively vague one, which allows the Minister of Information to discuss with the editor-in-chief and interfere on the basis of protecting national interests. Only one respondent said that his newspaper did not have a relationship with the Ministry of Information, and that was because they were an international newspaper. He added,

'And I can't even say that we have a relationship with the Ministry of any other country because we are of a global nature' (EIC12).

Figure 7.10: *The types of relationships between the newspapers and the Ministry of Information*
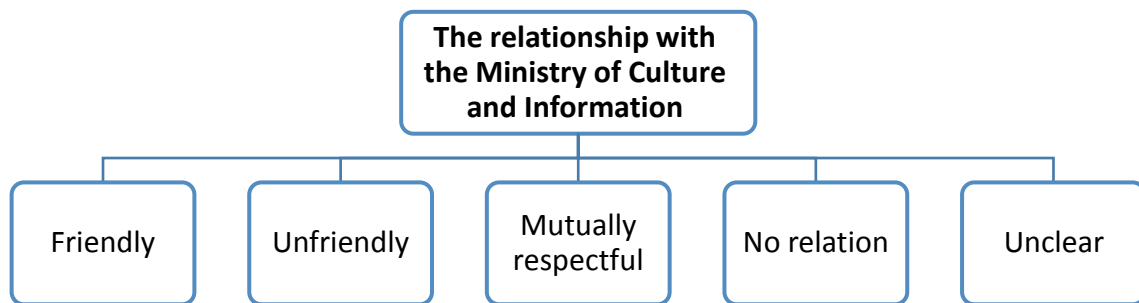
7.5.2. Governmental Authorities and Their Role in Monitoring

Most respondents believed that they were allowed to monitor and criticise public institutions. Figure 7.11 shows an Nvivo screenshot of an interviewee's answers to a question about monitoring.

EIC1 and EIC12 believed that there is a monitoring system at the Ministry of Information that is embodied in the ministerial agency for internal information, which monitors what is published in Saudi newspapers. They claimed, however, this surveillance programme is more open than it was in the past. EIC1 added:

> But there are confidential reports about what Saudi newspapers write about. Investigative journalism sometimes triggers executive authorities because it introduces digits, statistics, and information and lays out ideas and discusses them seriously. It gains importance, and it intrigues the monitoring bodies and questions that follow become more important than the initial questions. The first question that we are asked is: 'What is the purpose for publishing this topic? Were you demanded to publish it or not?' Such questions… give you the impression that it's required to prepare a report about the investigation and

that they want to use some of the information known to the newspaper in their report' (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

EIC12 pointed out that most Arab countries share the same culture and those Arabic authorities and societies need the criticism. In Saudi Arabia, there is a great deal of tolerance for criticising deficiencies in governmental institutions. He said, 'A good example is the case of Jeddah [the floods]. I have had so many experiences with this; I have observed some newspapers set redlines. I think there should not be redlines if there is documented information.'

Four other participants agreed that the governmental authorities allowed journalists to monitor and criticise public institutions, saying that nothing forbade them from criticising Saudi Arabia's government. However, the sole conditions are that criticism must be based on facts and that the journalist must have documentation to refute claims of inaccuracy. EIC11 added that they retain all documentation as evidence.

EIC5 and EIC6 stated that there is no single authority that controls the newspapers. There is, however, internal monitoring by the editors-in-chief who decide what they want to publish and what they want to avoid. Every Saudi newspaper criticises the government daily, and there are no formal limits for criticising the performance of any governmental ministry. One respondent said that the authorities have allowed journalists to monitor and criticise public institutions since the reign of King Abdullah:

Frankly, I think that, during the era of King Abdullah, we witnessed the Media Spring, when the press were able to criticise every entity for the first time. We wrote about corruption, human rights, and other issues. We were able to because the atmosphere was clear (Personal interview, 12 January 2017).

Figure 7.11: *An Nvivo screenshot of an interviewee's answers on permitted monitoring.*
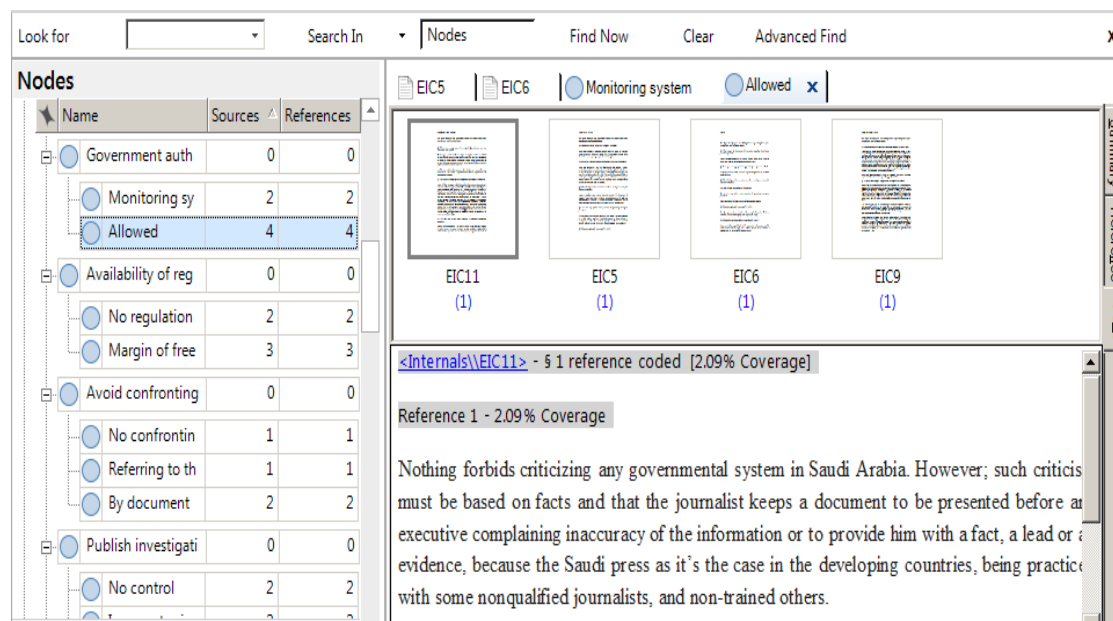
7.5.3. Freedom of the Press

The interviewees' answers were limited to 'Yes, with margin of freedom' or 'No regulations'. One respondent said that there were no regulations or laws for investigative inquiries when they were being conducted by press institutions. However, there are general principles that a journalist must follow to work in any country, saying, 'The control occurs after publication when the published topic contains false information or is inaccurate and far beyond reality. Consequently, there will be an investigation by the authorities, especially the Ministry of Information'.

Several respondents said that they had not experienced any confrontations because their newspapers used documentation in their investigative inquiries. EIC1 and EIC4 agreed, saying that, at their newspaper, a rule tightly regulates what they do before they can publish. It's 'documentation then documentation then documentation'. Figure 7.13 shows the outcomes of the text search about avoiding confrontation with the government by retaining documentation.

From a different perspective, EIC11 stated that the Ministry of Information does not control what they publish; however, journalistic ethics function as self-censorship. Similarly, EIC5 said that there are no official guidelines, but there is an informal agreement between his newspaper and the Ministry of Information. He added, 'There is an understanding between the chief auditors and the Ministry of Information in the section responsible for the press. At various times, the discussions have led to a neutral point that served the country'.

However, three respondents said that they have only a margin of freedom. EIC9 said that, for political and security issues, the newspapers are obligated to avoid certain investigations. He added that the newspaper is obligated to its editorial policies, its charter of honour, and the law of printing and publications. EIC4 mentioned that in general, there is redline that none should trespass, and this relates to religious matters and the royal family. EIC10 confirmed that they have some independence and a margin of press freedom. Sometimes they dare to publish a previously-rejected topic. A journalist needs the courage to insist on meeting with the executive and asking why he was prevented from publishing an article. EIC10 compared the situations of Saudi Arabia and that of the other Gulf States:

> We have some independence and a margin of press freedom. We may be much better than the other Gulf States regarding the issue of freedom and journalistic independence. Nevertheless, some journalists have to be daring and adventurous, and sometimes their safety is jeopardised (Personal interview, 15 January 2017).

This is also echoed by what EIC12 commented that there is a vast area of tolerance with regards to pointing at places of criticism and deficiency in government institutions, but some editors-in-chief set redlines. In this respect, EIC1 asserted:

Indeed, there are some topics that are worth publishing and that the newspaper risks publishing. Sometimes the editor-in-chief receives permission to discuss some issues before publishing, and some topics are sent to the concerned authorities to be approved (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

Figure 7.12: *The text search query about avoiding confrontation with the government*
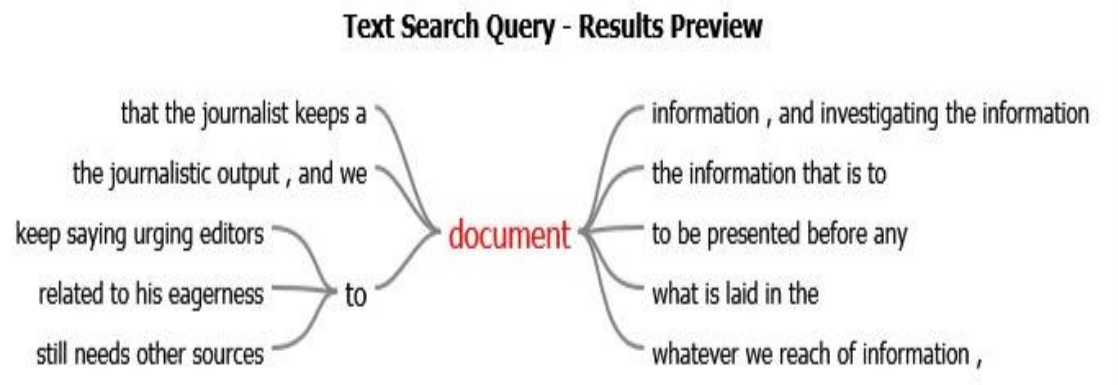
7.5.4. Media Laws

The interview questions were open-ended (i.e. 'Do the Media systems serve the practice of investigative journalism?') Answers to these questions depended on the newspaper's policies. The respondents' answers were limited to 'Yes, the media systems serve the practice of investigative journalism' 'No' or 'need to evolve'.

One respondent stated that 'Every part of the media system is used to conduct an investigation. Investigations use facts. They do not adopt one viewpoint over another' (EIC5). EIC7 confirmed that the media system helps in the practice of investigative journalism, but there is no doubt that some systems need to evolve to compete in the current environment.

Two respondents said that they do not believe that media systems help investigative journalists because extensive instructions by the Ministry of Information prevent the publication of certain articles and regulations do not allow journalists to

do their jobs. In viewpoint of EIC4, media laws do not give the chance to serve a comprehensive press material. EIC1 claimed that the media systems do not support the practice of investigative journalism.

The evidence for that is in the editing policy. Since 1981, it does not mention 'search' or 'detect' or 'investigate' or 'technique'. Article 9, regarding the objective criticism, in fact limits investigative journalism. The regulation of printing and publication has led to the binding of journalism (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

This accords with EIC10, who said that, currently, the Saudi media and its regulations do not serve the press for the sake of press. The media systems are old, and they constrain the press's performance. Journalistic performance is governed by tradition, journalistic unions, and professional associations. EIC11's opinion is that the country should not interfere with the press except in cases of criminal legislation or when others' rights are infringed. However, the legislation that has restricted the freedom of the press has begun to be repealed in recent years, resulting in an evolution of Saudi journalism. However, EIC9 said that the media systems were not helpful because of the large number of directives that regulate what they can write and publish.

7.5.5. Censorship by the Ministry of Information

The participants' answers were limited to 'No control' or 'No censorship before publishing'. Figure 7.14 shows the outcome of the NVivo text search for 'Control'. Three respondents said that the Ministry of Information does not control the newspapers in general and does not impact investigative journalism. Another respondent said the ministry did not seek to control or monitor their investigations.

Complaints most often came from commercial entities, not the Ministry. Similarly, EIC12 said that the ministry does not censor material before publication; however, it does censor material after publication. If articles contain false or inaccurate information, then the authorities, especially the Ministry of Information, will intervene. EIC12 provided an example:

> Twelve years ago, when I was conducting an investigation, I published some information about blacklisted companies that were dealing with Israel. I was called in by the authorities, and I said that this information was obtained by the Israel Boycott Office. I offered proof for what I said, and the case was closed. Another time I was called in and asked to prove the accuracy of my information, and when I proved it, that case was closed too (Personal interview, 10 February 2017).

Two respondents said that there was 'no censorship', explaining that the Ministry of Information only responds on the complaints of citizens or other institutions after the material is being published.. They will respond if they receive a complaint from a citizen or an executive that raises doubts about the validity of the published information, and the newspaper has to present documentation to refute such claims. EIC1 stated that there have been issues that were worth publishing, and the editor-in-chief has asked the authorities for permission to publish these investigations. For example, there are cases of detained people who have spent between months to years in prison without their cases being referred to judicial courts or being sentenced. The attached investigative report with the pictures was published in *Al-Riyadh* Newspaper 22 February, 2006.

Figure 7.13: *Detainees Behind Bars Spent Several Months to Years Waiting for Court Decisions in Their Cases*

EIC1 is of the opinion that:

The ministry is more hesitant than the newspaper, and its impact on investigative journalism is negative, not positive. The censorship that you talk about (the ministry) is unimportant compared with the importance of (the censorship) of the editor-in-chief. If there is someone who protects you in the press, then publish what you want. In my experience, the personal dimension plays a significant role in Saudi press, because the institutional systems are not yet mature (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

EIC4 added:

Nowadays, we see general confusion in the media system. Most of this confusion is caused by the Ministry of Information, and I believe that the ministry has been emptied of its experts and qualified cadres. This new generation has little experience, which has led to some confrontations. Some officials in the Ministry of Information try to put the newspapers under their control, and, unfortunately, some of them abuse their powers (Personal interview, 2 January 2017).

Figure 7.14: *The outcomes of the NVivo text search for 'Control'*

Text Search Query - Results Preview

affect investigations ? . There is no continuous

controlling authorities ? Indeed there is no

Do you publish investigations regardless to

regardless to the internal or external

of Ministry of Information . It's

To what extent does → the

the embarrassment from the newspaper .

the monitor of subjectivity . This personal

control

from the side of Ministry of

conscience that exists , which is

Ministry of Information affect investigations ?

journalist or the chief

newspaper ? . Sometimes we have

or monitoring dedicated for investigations . Communications

that you talk about is unimportant

whether internal or external , and why ?

of

the

7.6. The impacts of culture and society on investigative journalism

7.6.1. The impact of culture

Most respondents (N= 7, 54%) stated that cultural aspects are considered when selecting investigative inquiries. Figure 7.15 presents an example from an interview about the impact of culture. EIC1 stated that the cultural aspects in the society is special, it has also exaggerations to the extent that it became as a part of the values and culture of the society, as imbedded in the heritage, traditions and customs. Hence, the society's culture is the most significant factor that affects the practice of investigative journalism. Many topics are not investigated because of these considerations. He added:

> I will give you an example: when we have published investigative inquiries highlighting the phenomenon of the Camels Expo and discussed its relationship to corona viruses, I was threatened with jail. I even received death threats. Thus, I encountered great challenges and difficulties due to the culture. When you highlight such a topic in the Saudi press, you will find a solid wall (Personal interview, 24 December 2016).

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EIC12 stated that culture impacts on investigative inquiries, especially social inquiries, and he suggested that journalists treat these topics with greater objectivity and accuracy in order to avoid problems. He continued:

> However, the more you try to handle a topic with higher levels of objectivity and accuracy, you stay away from the problems. I remember conducting an investigative inquiry about tribalism and non-tribalism. I play with the mechanism to find a way to treat this issue. It made echoes and static waters moved. I always say that a smart journalist stirs a case, especially one about humanitarian issues. It is important for journalists to concentrate on humanitarian dimensions and clarify why he decided to conduct an investigation and why he searches for the information (Personal interview, 10 February 2017).

EIC11 believed that the extent of culture's impact relates to the kind of culture in which the journalist lives. Training courses are important for avoiding these issues. He said some journalists take professional courses. Some editors-in-chief attended professional courses in Britain and the U.S. I was personally trained with the *Daily Mirror* in London, with eleven of my colleagues. We attended lectures from the editors-in-chief of British newspapers. Other colleagues travelled to America to train with famous American newspapers. So, the journalists' cultural standards are very high. And they perform remarkably well.

He added that conservative societies like Saudi Arabia tend to resist change and criticism. They are dominated by a single religious, media, or social discourse. Since the society is not pluralistic or diverse, criticism tends not to be accepted: 'When our newspaper was first published, it faced great difficulties because of its tendency to express bold criticism.'

Cultural aspects also influence the selection of investigative inquiries. EIC5 said that the society's culture presently has a high level of awareness, which influences the selection of investigative inquiries. Three respondents said that the Saudi's culture varies from district to district. EIC9 offered an example: 'In Jeddah, you find different cultures in the northern and southern sides of the city. If you concentrate on culture in terms of content like arts and music, you find people who accept and reject you.' (Personal interview, 12 January 2017).

Figure 7.15: *An example from an interview about culture's impact*
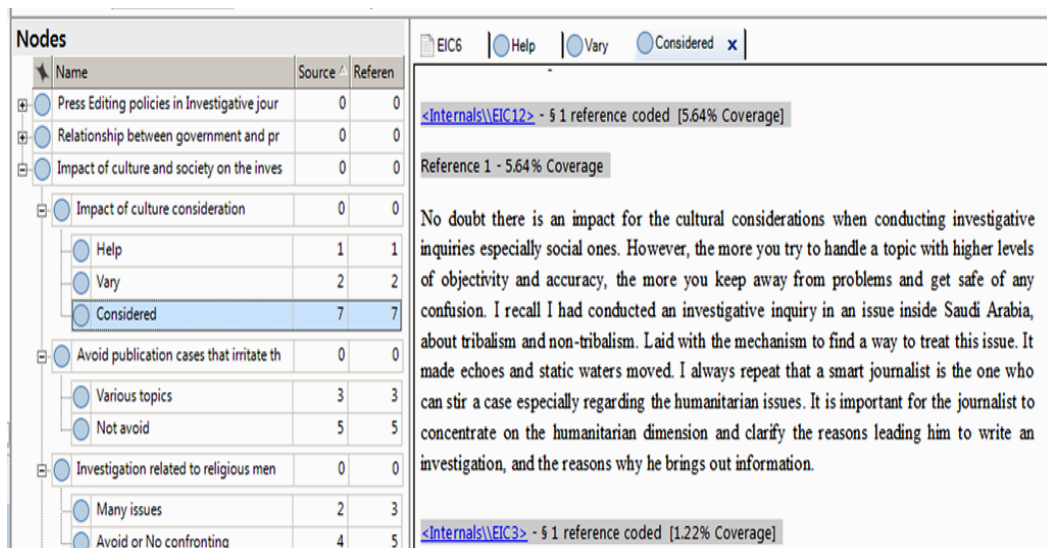
Most of the respondents stated that they do not avoid publishing articles that may tease readers, though others said that they avoid contentious issues. Figure 7.16 presents the distribution of responses. Five respondents said that they do not avoid writing about any topic. Whenever there are significant cases that need to be investigated, every newspaper plays its role. EIC12 added:

> We do not avoid publishing certain topics, but we make sure to discuss the issues in the editorial board, and then we begin the press investigation. However, regarding the topics and issues that include sensitive issues, we

discuss them after smoothening the sensitivity they have, especially those cases related to religious issues. (Personal interview, 10 February 2017).

EIC11 added that his newspaper desires to change and reform society. By adopting reforms, the government had helped newspapers to perform their missions. He explained in more detail how the reforms around the period of 2004 helped them: 'The adopted reforms have helped us to become open to journalistic freedoms, which came together with the openness from the Establishment of King Abdul Aziz for National Dialogue in the social sectors'.

However, many newspapers still avoid writing about subjects related to racism, sectarianism, and even sports. EIC5 declared that, in these cases, they respect the readers' culture. Another respondent offered an example regarding topics that readers find sensitive, especially sports: 'We avoid publishing in some areas because of their high sensitivity. Before documenting the championships, we were afraid to publish the club's titles. We face difficulties because sports fans are rough'.

Figure 7.16: *Distribution of publishing on topics that may offend readers*

46%

54%

■ Various topics ■ Not avoid
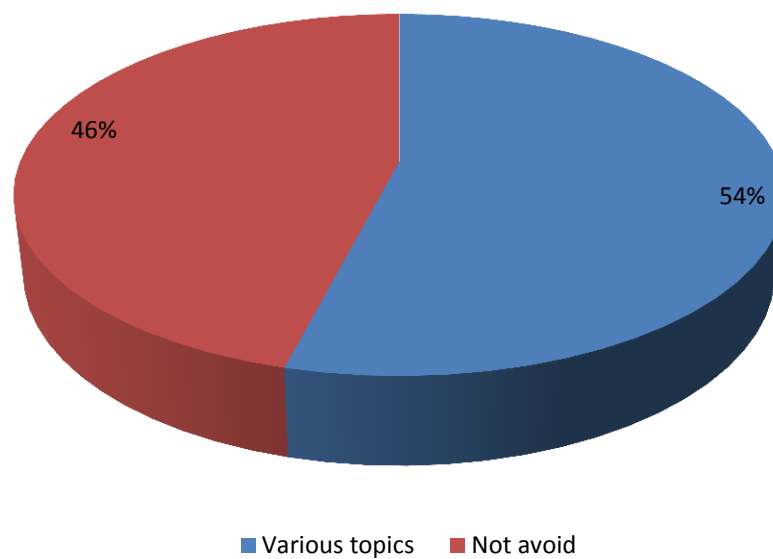
7.6.3. Religious leaders

The interview questions were open-ended (i.e. 'To what extent do you avoid investigating cases that may agitate the religious leaders? Did you experience confronting them in specific case?'). The participants' answers were limited to 'do not avoid confronting religious leaders' and 'avoid confronting religious leaders'. Figure 7.17 presents a transcript from NVivo of an investigation related to religious leaders.

EIC7 said that some religious leaders are extremely sensitive whenever the press reports on taboo topics. EIC11 said:

> Yes, we encountered them in many cases. Some of our writers criticised the religious leaders who resented references to the religious institutions. Hence, a 'fatwa' was issued by one of the sheikhs to boycott our newspaper, and some of social activists called it idolatry—in the sense of an idol other than God. It was attacked and boycotted. Nevertheless, they were keen to read it because it represented another opinion, and it criticised them and tried to establish new traditions (Personal interview, 3 January 2017).

EIC7 believed that differences in viewpoints must be discussed in peaceful circumstances, adding that a journalist has to cultivate his cultural sensitivity, his capabilities, and professional resources, or else his career will suffer. EIC9 said that they were not allowed to use the term 'religious leaders' because they were all religious, whether men or women. There is no monasticism in Islam, but there is a culture of fear. Several respondents explained that they didn't avoid investigating cases that could agitate religious leaders. The reaction to their dealings with journalist and accusation of journalists as liberalists, as well as accused them of lack of faith. In this regard, he added:

> There have been so many conflicts between us. They've accused us of being liberals and encouraging the gays. That is proof of their ignorance. We

received a telegram from them that condemned us for promoting the gays in the country. We were also accused for cases related to creed (Personal interview, 12 January 2017).

However, EIC5 and EIC6 declared that they 'avoid or do not confront religious leaders', saying that a religious leaders should be subject to special consideration. They respect all religious leaders, regardless of their sectarian affiliation and avoid mixing press responsibilities and religious issues. EIC10 commented that they do not concentrate specifically on investigating issues that agitate religious leaders. They recognise their importance and know that they are imperfect humans. These journalists try to highlight topics that relate to the religious men if they receive repeated complaints. The same respondent explained: 'At the newspaper, we do not consider any entity sacred'.

EIC1 stated that religious leaders and *'Sheikhs'* are prominent pressure groups due to the country's glorification of religious science and leaders. Therefore, journalism is forced to preserve this privilege. Since religious leaders are a pillar of Saudi Arabia, most newspapers avoid reporting on them, unless they are asked to via the Ministry. Furthermore, issues with religious leaders take different dimensions relevant to the topic under investigation, the targeted personnel, and relevant to the religious institution. Talking about the religious institution varies due to the variety of the religious institutions. Whereas, in relation to *fatwa*, for example, this differs from discussing issues related to The Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Most of the newspapers today avoid talking about religious leaders. He also added that most of the pressure groups today are religious leaders; especially when they utilised social media, as their followers amount to millions, so they own publicity and great presence. EIC3 argued that newspapers vary from each other: 'I'm from the school that does not believe in

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agitating society this way. Basically the media serves the society. I believe in change but not a destructive change. I believe in a calm, quiet, and gradual change'.

Figure 7.17: *The NVivo transcript about investigations of religious leaders*
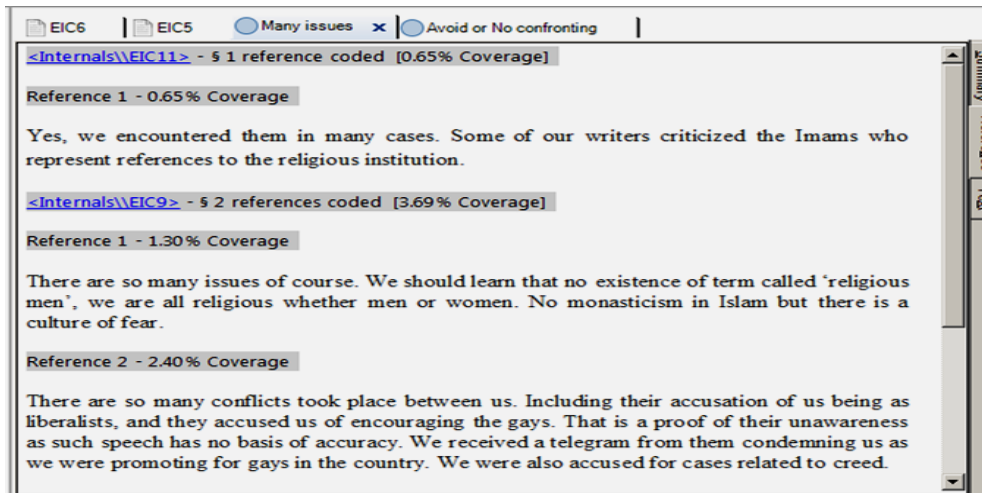
7.7. Conclusion

The findings show how editors define investigative journalism and discuss their experience of its practice in Saudi Arabia. Definitions include 'an in-depth inquiry into a problem', 'reaching facts' and 'uncovering secrets'. However, the attributes of investigative journalism have no applied mechanisms, and, in practice, they have been weakly implem ented. Furthermore, newspaper policies vary according to editors-in-chiefs' personalities, and there is a general shortage of professional journalists and financial resources. Those who run Saudi newspapers are rather afraid to publish investigations that criticise the governing politics and sensitive issues related to the culture of society.

The respondents suggest that, to have a free, successful, and dynamic press, it is essential that the journalists and editors can balance what is forbidden and what is reasonable to publish. This requires efficiency and talent. The results also show that

the Internet and social media directly impact investigative journalism, though the extents of their impacts vary.

The findings highlight many key factors that affect the practice of investigative journalism. The main factor is the political factor, which includes pressure by official authorities and the political system, the freedom of the press, and the willingness of sources to cooperate. Following this were cultural and social factors, including religious and tribal pressures, and then individual factors, such as personal values and relationships, and then organisation factors, such as the economy, editorial policies and editors, advertiser pressure. Compounding these difficulties were the absence of journalistic criteria, legal risks, and the lack of training courses about investigative journalism.

The findings also show that many topics are avoided. These topics include racism, tribalism, sensitive issues, religion, advertisers, the royal family, the judiciary, and political issues like international relations. It was found that the Ministry of Information send many commands to newspapers. Nonetheless, many newspapers follow through and publish on topics of their own choosing where these can be supported by documentation.

The results also reveal that the media policy adopted in Saudi Arabia does not encompass processes of search, detection or investigation and that publishing regulations limit the practice of investigative journalism. The findings show that culture affects the selection of investigative inquiries; many topics are not published due to these concerns. Regarding investigations that could agitate religious leaders, the findings range from avoiding these issues to investigating these issues regardless.

Many avoided investigating these issues in order to preserve the privileged position of religious leaders.

This chapter has presented the results that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. These several types of evidence offer valuable insights on the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. This chapter's findings and chapter six were categorised into groups (i.e., themes) in the discussion chapter and were discussed in reference to the research's aim and objectives. These findings were related to the findings of the preceding studies that were elaborated on in the literature review.

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

8.1. Introduction

This study recognises that investigative journalism is uncommon in less democratic and more despotic environments, where restrictions limit the freedom of the media (Aucoin, 2007; Fleeson, 2000; Jurrat et al., 2017; Kaplan, 2013; Waisbord, 2001). With reference to the studies that have been reviewed in this work, the practice of investigative journalism in less democratic countries, including most of the Middle East, is deemed to be dangerous and problematic (Bebawi, 2016; Hamdy, 2013; Jurrat et al., 2017; Lanao, 2001; Martin, 2010; OECD, 2018).

This chapter discusses the main findings of the study, bringing together evidence from the questionnaire, interviews and literature review. The discussion in the present study is based on the research questions. The study analysed the experiences of journalists and editors-in-chief and their perceptions of and attitudes towards Saudi Arabia's treatment of their profession. Investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is explored in terms of the interaction of the systemic environment with journalism. Surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted to enable analysis that draws upon two rich sources of data to address the objectives of the study:

- To examine the perceptions and experiences of investigative journalism among journalists and editors-in-chief in Saudi Arabia;

- To explore the factors that influence the implementation of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia;

- To develop a gatekeeping framework to understand the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and

- To recommend ways to improve investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

Investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is explored through primary surveys and interviews with journalists and editors-in-chief. Journalists' experiences are explored in relation to the political, cultural and social systems and the organisational and journalistic routines in which Saudi journalists operate each day as they seek to uncover the truth. The theoretical framework of this study and the literature reviewed in Chapters Three and Four are used to understand the main focus of the research and answer the research questions.

The main finding of this study is that there is no clear nature, role or practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia; aside from some random attempts, investigative journalism is uncommon. In contrast, previous research indicated that the practice of investigative journalism increased in the past decade (Kaplan, 2013; Rabiea, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). The results provide insights into a variety of issues. Some of these issues mirror those faced by Western countries, such as financial support, advertisers and time pressure, while others are more specific to journalism in Saudi Arabia, including the influence of religious leaders, interference by the Ministry of Information, media laws and lack of skills among journalists. As mentioned in Chapter One, a number of studies explored investigative journalism and the factors that impact it (see for example, Abdenour, 2015; Abdulbaqi, 2013; Bebawi, 2016; Hamdy, 2013; A. D. Kaplan, 2008), but as far as the researcher is aware, none have dealt with investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

Objectives one, two and three were achieved by constructing three research questions relating to the main themes of the study. These questions were answered by analysing the interview and questionnaire methods and comparing both sets of data. Objective four was achieved by analysing the findings of both sets of data to help improve investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

8.2. RQ1: How do Saudi Journalists and Editors-in-Chief Perceive Investigative Journalism?

The first research question was answered with the interview and questionnaire data by measuring the extent to which journalists and editors-in-chief are aware of the nature, role and techniques associated with investigative reporting, how much it is practised and their investigative journalism skills. Each respondent was interviewed using the laddering technique to more deeply understand what investigative journalism means to them. Interestingly, some did not believe their newspapers practised investigative journalism because of the heterogeneity of journalists' approaches to their work. Others appeared to distinguish between their definition and the practice of investigative journalism. The nature of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia presented in Chapter 7 (see EIC1, EIC7, EIC10 and EIC13) share similarities; all involve fact-finding, in-depth investigation, and exploration of hidden information. They are also similar to the definitions presented by de Burgh (2008), although those did not consider professional dimensions, such as original work and public importance, which are mentioned in prior studies (Abdenour, 2015; Aucoin, 2007; Bernt & Greenwald, 2000; Blevens, 1997; Poler Kovačić, 2009). These differences in definitions justify the literature, which implies that investigative journalism in the Middle East tends to be rather vague because stories that simply adopt a critical tone or provide leaked information are considered investigative (Kaplan, 2013). In this study, professionalism is discussed as a concept that is not prevalent or common as there is no strict set of standards for investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. This finding agrees with Berglez (2008) that considering journalism within a global paradigm presents the challenge of understanding its conceptualisation.

Analysis of the interview data revealed the poor mastery of investigative journalism techniques among Saudi journalists and editors-in-chief. Only EIC7 expressed that investigative journalism is a complex process encompassing identification of issues, hypothesising, questioning, interviewing and searching for documents to explore hidden information. As mentioned in the literature review, investigative journalism applies different techniques based on the nature of the topic under investigation and the hypothesis or question driving the investigation. It is a systemic inquiry that takes places over a period of time (Kaplan, 2013; Mair & Keeble, 2011; Marsh, 2013). This finding may be due to the lack of adequate investigative journalism skills and may reflect the shortage of such journalists in Saudi Arabia.

Although two-thirds of journalists claimed that they practise investigative journalism by their definition, the editors-in-chief had different views (see Chapter 7). In fact, the interview data shows that editors-in-chief EIC9, EIC7, and EIC6 believe that nobody practises investigative journalism professionally in Saudi Arabia: "what is present is dominated by random practices." This may be due to the fact that Saudi newspapers have not appropriately used the concept of investigative journalism. In addition, there are no specific rules governing its practice, unlike in well-defined international contexts such as the UK, the US, Canada and Scandinavian countries. The interviews with the editors-in-chief also indicate that investigative journalism is not widely practised in Saudi Arabia and has not matured.

The current study's findings seem to be consistent with other research, which found that the practice of investigative journalism is uncommon in less democratic countries (Aucoin, 2007; Kaplan, 2013; Lublinski et al., 2016; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013). This is reflected in the lack of specialised investigative journalists, which has

led to ignorance about journalistic principles. As such, 'it is difficult to talk about a practice that is somehow not established' (EIC5). Similarly, Kaplan (2013) stated,

> Some journalists, in fact, claim that all reporting is investigative reporting. There is some truth to this—investigative techniques are used widely by beat journalists on deadline... But investigative journalism is broader than this—it is a set of methodologies that are a craft, and it can take years to master. A look at stories that win top awards for investigative journalism attests to the high standards of research and reporting that the profession aspires to: in-depth inquiries that painstakingly track looted public funds, abuse of power, environmental degradation, health scandals, and more. (p. 10)

EIC9, EIC5, EIC6 emphasise that Saudi newspapers do not hire specialised investigative journalists. Although the questionnaire showed that over 80% of the journalists have more than 10 years of experience and over 85% have at least bachelor's degrees, Saudi journalists lack the journalistic skills to practise investigative journalism. According to EIC9, 'we do not have qualified journalists who master investigative journalism. For example, when we wanted to investigate pollution in Jeddah city, we did not find the specialist journalist who can conduct such an investigation as they did not have the ability to investigate such a case'. These findings support the ideas presented by Kaplan (2013), Sullivan (2013) and de Burgh (2008), who confirmed that investigative journalism cannot be performed if journalists do not have specialised skills and work hard because it takes a long time and journalists need to delve deep in search of facts, analyse statistical data and conduct direct interviews when necessary. Perhaps this is in part due to the lack of specialised investigative journalism training centres and the fact that media schools do not teach this type of journalism. This point is worth pursuing in future research.

This discussion of the findings from the interview and questionnaire data answers Research Question 1, which concerns the way in which Saudi journalists and editors-in-chief envisage investigative journalism. It is still a largely undeveloped profession in Saudi Arabia that produces few genuinely controversial stories. Thus, it is worth exploring the challenges that face the field in Saudi Arabia. The next section will examine the second research question in detail.

8.3. RQ2. What Challenges Influence the Practice of Investigative Journalism in Saudi Arabia?

The second question in this study sought to investigate the key factors that influence the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. It was answered by analysing the interview and questionnaire responses. The data showed that investigative journalism seeks to not only survive but also thrive in an increasingly digital atmosphere, to compete with social media and to balance the ethical ambiguity between securing funding sources and losing sovereignty and integrity (Aucoin, 2007; Bebawi, 2016; de Burgh, 2008; Gómez, 2012; Jurrat et al., 2017). The results indicate that these challenges are not isolated.

In Saudi Arabia, journalists must navigate the expectations of their own media outlets, the perceptions of society at large and their ability to work under the power and patronage of the Ministry of Information. The respondents identified a mixture of internal and external factors that influence the practice of investigative journalism: the political system (freedom of expression, legal challenges, freedom of information and censorship), cultural and religious factors (pressure groups, religious leaders, customs and traditions), economic factors (advertisers, funding and training) and organisational factors (editorial policies).

8.3.1. Political Factor

The quantitative and qualitative data show that political factors have a crucial impact on investigative journalism. The Saudi environment pressures journalists and editors-in-chief by requiring them to support government policies. Consequently, it is very challenging work (Bebawi, 2016). The findings revealed that most respondents were committed to the views promoted by the political system; nearly 80% of the journalists mentioned the significant influence of politics on investigative journalism. Rugh (2004) asserted that the Saudi government does not need to employ heavy censorship because the press is already sensitive to controversial issues and thus is self-regulated within the framework established by media regulation and law.

The questionnaire data showed that almost three-quarters of the respondents (73%) felt that the media system in Saudi Arabia did not support truly independent journalism because the political authorities, in particular, play a significant role in what can and cannot be published. It is no doubt disenfranchising and demoralising to engage in work that is based on independence and finding the truth but be confined by arbitrary and biased parameters. The majority of journalists (over 82%) admitted that they adopt the standpoint of political authorities when determining issues to investigate. The apparent indecisiveness about whether the political system permits negative stories about institutions may stem from ambiguity about which institutions can be criticised. It is realistic to assume that controversies pertaining to agriculture or municipalities, for instance, are far less damaging to the status of the state than those related to legislative or executive authorities. More than 80% of the respondents believed that, because there are no clear guidelines concerning what can and cannot be published, they have shied away from investigative reporting.

The state's influence remains pervasive in all forms of newsgathering and in the minds of professional journalists with no job security and professional affiliations, who are at the mercy of the Ministry of Information, which may single them out for retribution in the form of financial or other penalties. This finding corroborates the ideas of Al-Zahrani (2015), Martin (2010), Hamdy (2013), Rugh (2004) and Mellor (2011), who stated that the political authorities in Arab countries still control the media, despite their various systems of governance. Even private media, which does not depend on the government for subsidies, is still under the influence of politicians.

One unanticipated finding was the lack of evidence showing that the margin of freedom has been improving and Saudi journalism has started to discuss issues that were previously prohibited (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Alenizi, 2014; Alnassar, 2010; Awad, 2010). More than 75% of the respondents agreed that the level of freedom of expression in Saudi Arabia does not allow them to explore enough for investigations. EIC10 indicated that newspapers continually receive oral guidelines from the Ministry of Information. This is contrary to the findings of Awad (2010), who indicated that the Ministry's control over newspapers is waning. It is possible that this is related to the effects of the Arab Spring, which shifted the mood of the country. During the revolutions, all Arab governments, without exception, believed that the majority of media outlets contributed to incitement, sedition and interference in internal affairs and had their own agendas, which may be hostile (Shaban, 2011). As a result, as mentioned in Chapter Two, some articles regarding printing law in Saudi Arabia, such as Article 9, have been changed to increase the penalties tenfold for journalists who are accused of defaming religious leaders, government agents or any person in a position of authority or doing anything that damages public interest. Such changes are contrary to the essence of investigative journalism; any investigative report can be

interpreted as contradicting public interest or defaming a leader or person of authority. EIC1 explained that many journalists do not dig deeply into cases because they fear legal action. Some articles in the printing law are similar to the infamous insult law, which punishes those who criticise government authorities, that was adopted in some Latin American countries. Such laws hinder investigation and free media. There are no well-defined guidelines regarding what is and is not allowed to be investigated. Above all, these laws deter investigation of issues related to individuals in a position of authority or facing corruption charges (Lanao, 2001).

EIC9 described the environment as a 'media spring' since the press began to enjoy more freedom under King Abdullah from 2006–2015. However, currently, the Saudi media are more controlled than free. In the latest World Press Freedom Index, Saudi Arabia's freedom of the press was ranked 169th out of 180 countries. This is 21 places lower than its position ten years ago. This shows that there is no place for independent media and that there is no freedom of information (Reports without borders, 2018).

To illustrate the freedom of the press in Saudi Arabia, let us consider the case of Saudi columnist Saleh Al-Shihi. He was sued by King Abdullah's son Prince Faisal, the Head of the Red Crescent, for publishing an article in *Al-Waten* condemning the Saudi Red Crescent for their accumulation of funds without an apparent reason and a proper explanation of how and when they would be spent (*Elaph*, 2008). The columnist defended himself against the Prince in court, and the Saudi press enjoyed a good level of freedom during the case (*Elaph*, 2008). In an article entitled 'The King's Son', Al-Shihi comments on the fact that the Prince was suing a journalist and treats him like any member in society. At the hearing, Al-Shihi expressed his happiness to see freedom enforced and the fact that this was the first

time a member of the royal family would receive legal justice. However, when the same columnist criticised corruption in the royal court in December 2017, he was charged with defaming the Government Royal Office, leading him to be imprisoned for five years and prevented from leaving the country for another five years (Alhurra, 2018).

These two cases show that the laws concerning publications and information that govern newspapers and journalists in Saudi Arabia, such as the Freedom of Information Act, do not fully reveal the limits on journalists' work. Some studies have indicated that there is a lack of clarity regarding Saudi Arabia's media laws, as they are open to the interpretation of officials at the Ministry of Information (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Al-Shebeili, 2000). This issue is worth investigating in greater depth in future research. In the context of this study, the collected data showed that the media laws do not support the practice of investigative journalism; EIC1 admitted that 'media law has shackled journalism and has negatively influenced investigative journalism the most'. This finding is in agreement with Lanao (2001), who indicates that media laws, which regulate journalistic activities, are often formulated to serve the interests of the government.

A recent example of the lack of journalistic freedom is the limited criticism of the government's imposition of austerity measures, including job cuts and taxes and high prices on fuel and other commodities. In contrast, as Awad (2010) noted, social media strongly criticised the government's decision to raise salaries by 5% in 2008 during King Abdullah's reign. Workers demanded more, and the government yielded and raised salaries by 15%. In addition, Saudi sports media were allowed to criticise princes who were involved in sports, but with the recent appointment of Turki Al-Sheikh, an influential government figure, as the Saudi Head of Sport, these

media—and some journalists' Twitter accounts—have become vehicles of praise for sports authorities. Now, sports journalists are prevented from reporting on issues that criticise decisions made by the Head of Sport. For example, Turki Al-Sheikh announced that there was corruption in some Saudi sporting clubs and among some sports figures, but there has been no investigative report of any of these issues. This finding is rather disappointing.

Prior studies claimed that obtaining information is one of the most important challenges faced by investigative journalists (see for example, Fleeson, 2000; Poler Kovačić, 2009; Stetka & Örnebring, 2013). The current study confirms that Saudi journalists work in a stifling environment. According to the quantitative data, over 80% of journalists believe that officials select the information sources that they are permitted to access, and many entities seek to monopolise and withhold information due to the lack of a freedom of information law (see EIC5, EIC6 and EIC7). This constitutes a challenge facing investigative journalists; investigative journalism is not possible without information. In the UK, the US, Canada and Scandinavian countries, journalists have greater access to public documents, and this right is protected by freedom of information laws (Aucoin, 2007; Hollings, 2010).

The barriers mentioned above may also relate to the selection of topics, not least because of concerns regarding legal action from those under investigation. As EIC1 stated, the accessibility of digital media has made it difficult to ignore any issues with the government that are presented on social media. Nevertheless, some political issues mentioned online, such as foreign policy and the arrest of writers and journalists, are not covered by newspapers. For example, in November 2017, the government arrested more than 300 people, including princes, government ministers and entrepreneurs, on corruption charges. This was reported on social media and by

most international news outlets, but not by most Saudi newspapers, and those that did report on the story were given little space in which to do so. This reinforces the findings presented in the literature (Al-Kahtani, 1999; Kheraigi, 1990; Rugh, 2004): Saudi newspapers are obliged to be loyal to the government and avoid discussing issues that contradict the political authorities.

The lack of clear ethical guidelines and the spurious reasons presented for the government's need to intervene in news (given the ambiguity of what constitutes 'national interest') makes journalists, who may spend large portions of their careers and even risk their safety to deliver stories, subject to those who determine what can be published (Al Maghlooth, 2013). The lack of clear guidelines was explored through a thematic analysis (Chapter 7, Figure 7.2) of the issues that Saudi journalists must avoid and the various relationships between the government and journalists and their media groups. Although the anonymity of participants was guaranteed, we sensed some reluctance, even among those who had initially answered some of the questions. This indicates the intertwining of politics and culture in the work life of journalists in Saudi Arabia. In contrast, gatekeepers in some democratic countries are not known for being greatly influenced by government authorities, as these governments do not dictate terms by which the press must abide. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Information interferes in the media, limiting the freedom of the press and causing investigative journalism to suffer, as EIC1 explained:

> The Ministry of Information speaks to the newspapers in a commanding discourse. There are determined commands not to publish anything about certain specific issues—and not to highlight that and not to discuss that. You will be punished if you do not follow the directives. So, you are obliged to hear and obey what comes from the Ministry of Information.

Other political barriers to freedom of the press and the practice of investigative journalism include the double-edged swords of the Internet and social media. EIC10 suggested that, while technically offering a near-infinite library of information, the Internet could promote false information due to users' mistakes or malice. In the latter case, bending the truth could exacerbate negative social situations. However, social media also enables those who fear retribution from governmental authorities to remain anonymous. Twitter, in particular, serves as a way to reach a vast audience while retaining some form of anonymity, which may be useful for editors-in-chief, who, according to the data, must side with the government because they cannot be employed without the consent of the Ministry of Information.

EIC4, EIC1, EIC9 EIC10 stated that there has been a significant reduction in the amount of criticism and dissemination of political, economic or sports news via social media, particularly Twitter, which could be interpreted as governmental control. This is possible because the Saudi government has issued cyber-crime laws to control the material published online. Article 6 of the Cyber-Crime Law states that a maximum of five years imprisonment and/or a £600.000 fine can be imposed on anyone who produces, prepares, publishes or stores any material electronically or via the web that leads to public order offences or offends religious values, social values or private individuals' lifestyle. Recently, even the anonymity offered by Twitter has been compromised; people who have criticised some governmental authorities, such as the Head of Sports, using pseudonyms have had their accounts deleted and apologised for what they wrote regarding the authorities. For example, someone with the pseudonym Abo_sewaj used a hashtag on Twitter to demand that Turki Al-Sheikh, the Head of Sport, be sacked. He called sports journalists in Saudi Arabia cowards and mercenaries, as they flocked when they were called and dispersed when

they were not needed. The Head of Sport asked him if that was his opinion, calling

him by his proper name. This led Abo_sewaj to apologise and delete the tweets and,

later the same day, delete his account.

Figure 8.1: *is a print-screen of the first tweet made by Abo_sewaj commenting on the hashtag 'The departure of Turki alalshikh is a demand'.*

- Abo_sewaj: The only positive thing that Turki alalshikh has done is that he

  uncovered the truth about sport media that they are cowards.

- Turki alalshikh: [mentioning the real name of the person, who used the pseudo

  name abo_sewaj] Is that your opinion Aseel? [A threat]

- Abo_sewaj: For sure my opinion…and I tried hard to find a feature that I can

  attribute to you.

Figure 8.2: *Print screen of Abo_sewaj's tweet. As my mother advised me… I apologise to Turki alalshikh and omit my two tweets. Then I say good bye to all of you and I am deleting my account in its entirety…*

A common theme in the findings of this study and previous research on investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is censorship, a subject that is commonplace in many countries in the Middle East but not black and white for those investigating stories about Saudi Arabia. As civil institutions, the organisation and administration of Saudi newspapers are under the control of the state. In fact, Al-Zahrani (2015) and Martin (2010) have asserted that the political authorities in most Arab countries control the organisations that publish newspapers. According to Bebawi (2016), the challenges associated with investigative journalism in Arab countries since the Arab Spring are related to this governmental control. Social pressure also has an influence on investigative journalism. Although journalists' duty is to inform the public of the truth about events, some Arab society is often sceptical of change or uncomfortable with it. Journalists can thus find themselves trapped between governmental control and societal mistrust.

The findings of the current study show that the Saudi context features weak freedom of the press, legal challenges and lack of regulations ensuring freedom of

information. These characteristics have led journalists and editors-in-chief to be fearful, as EIC1, EIC9, EIC7, EIC10 admitted (see Figure 8.1). According to EIC1, 'one of the most important obstacles that impact on journalism today is the state of fear that editors in chief go through, as some of them rejected publishing investigative reports after their prior consent'. EIC9 also mentioned the culture of fear among journalists and editors-in-chief. For example, when 47 pilgrims lost their lives in a traffic accident, the Saudi Press Agency reported the news but one editor-in-chief was too scared to fully cover the atrocity, choosing only to report that a few people lost their lives. This fear, according to EIC7, is due to the lack of protection for journalists.

Driven by their fear of the laws and penalties imposed by the Ministry of Information or other influential political, religious, legal or social groups, Saudi journalists and editors-in-chief practise self-censorship to a great extent. Khazen (1999) explained, 'The most prevalent form of censorship is self-censorship…. If we are banned in Saudi Arabia, we stand to lose tens of thousands of dollars in advertising revenue' (p. 79). Similarly, Waisbord (2001) argues that journalists' fear of losing their job by reporting corruption or wrongdoing causes journalists to practise self-censorship. This practice is described by Sakr (2003) as the worst kind of censorship.
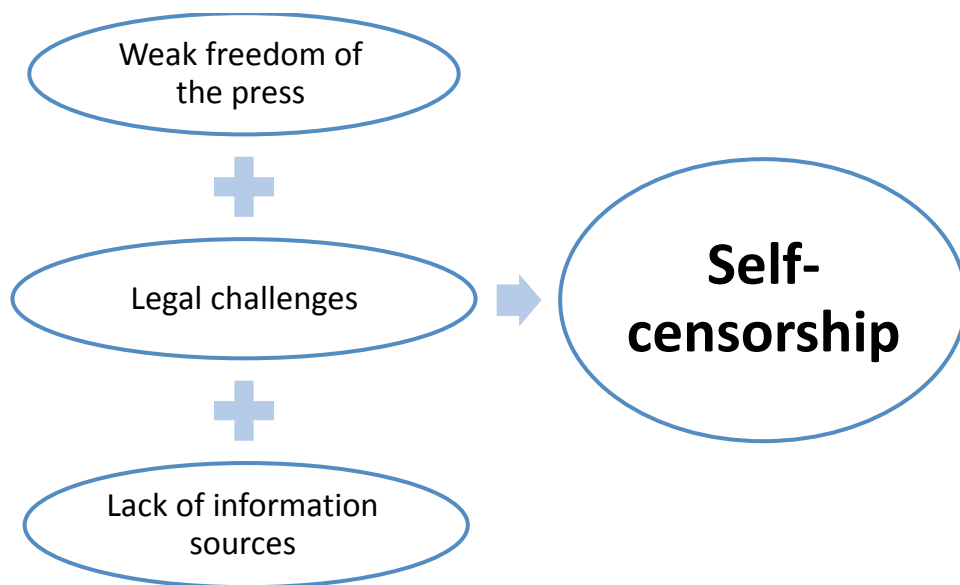
Figure 8.3: *Political factors that lead to self-censorship*

Although it has enacted several political and economic reforms, the Saudi government has not done enough to protect the freedom of the press as there are no specific laws and regulations regarding it. In turn, journalists' perception of the lack of freedom of the press makes it easy for influential groups, particularly government and religious leaders, to interfere with journalistic activities. As Awad (2010) explains, the lack of a democratic political culture in Saudi Arabia makes the authorities' interference in the national press appear legitimate.

8.3.2. Cultural and Religious Factors

According to the quantitative and qualitative data, the second factor that influences the implementation of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia is the impact of culture and religion, which are interrelated. Saudi society is conservative and does not embrace ideas that undermine it, as explained in the literature (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Al Maghlooth, 2013; Alhomoud, 2013; Awad, 2010) and by EIC11, EIC5, EIC1 and EIC2. It is dominated by a single religious and social discourse and

way of approaching the media. Due to this lack of diversity, criticism of societal norms tends to be rejected. Thus, culture and religion clearly influence the issues that are discussed and reported in newspapers. Although investigative journalists aim to uncover truths about issues of public interest, doing so runs the risk of clashing with society (see for example, Aucoin, 2007; Bebawi, 2016; Coronel, 2009; de Burgh, 2008). Thus, journalists are trapped, unable to appease the political system or society. The interviews performed in this study confirmed what was found in the literature: that religious and social groups exert pressure on the media and have a say in what newspapers can and cannot publish (Al-Jameeah, 2009; Al-Saggaf & Williamson, 2004; Al Maghlooth, 2013; Alhomoud, 2013; Awad, 2010).

Therefore, culture and religion overlap, and it is hard to separate them. EIC5, EIC8, EIC1 and EIC13 consider culture and religion to be significant factors that influence their decisions with regard to the publication of stories criticising religion and religious teachings, racism, tribalism and sexual issues. This finding is in agreement with Bebawi (2016), who found that, while many societies have social and religious taboos, these taboos tend to be much more exaggerated in some Arab countries, which makes investigative reporting about cultural or religious change very challenging. For example, EIC1 stated that when his newspaper published an investigative report about the corruption and damage caused by a festival in which different tribes compete, some people reacted very severely, and the journalist who conducted the report was threatened with death.

However, the qualitative data also revealed that some editors-in-chief believed that it is important to investigate cases, even if they might be regarded as sensitive to some groups of society. EIC11 and EIC7 explained that, except for fundamental religious and societal issues, all cases can be investigated. Their

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newspapers have published controversial investigations that elicited severe reactions from some groups, which called for boycotts of those newspapers.

In contrast, many journalists' ideologies are impacted by the dominant culture and their fear of society's reaction. The quantitative data showed that 84% of journalists tended to agree that a society's cultural values determine what can and cannot be published. Rugh (2004) alludes to the fact that editors' standpoints regarding and perceptions of events are related to their social environment as much as their cultural and religious background. That is why, Rugh (2004) explains, Saudi media conform to the cultural and religious values of society. This study obtained the same findings.

The respondents in this study emphasised that Saudi Arabia's deeply religious nature gives those in religious circles immense influence regarding the not only the issues that can be published but also the issues that can be investigated in the first place. When many newspapers avoid reporting on religious leaders, there is no accountability for powerful institutions, including religious ones. Sullivan (2013) stated that community and religious leaders and institutions are against investigative reporting that implicates them because they want journalists to avoid addressing issues they consider taboo. EIC1 believed that the ability of religious leaders to mobilise millions of followers, particularly on social media, was highlighted as a clear disincentive for any journalist to write controversial stories about them.

As stated earlier, a number of studies have addressed the influence of culture and religion on Saudi journalists (Alhomoud, 2013; Alnassar, 2010; Awad, 2010; Rugh, 2004). Adding to this stream of literature, the current study has found some statistical differences amongst journalists with regard to the impact of cultural factors

and the age group to which they belong. We found that older journalists are more impacted by cultural factors. It is highly likely that this is due to the impact of younger generations' openness to new technology and social media.

Ansell (2010) argued that it is necessary for journalists to not only consider the specific details of a story but also delve deeper and explore the underlying societal systems and institutional processes that created and perpetuated the issue under investigation. If the aim of investigative journalism is truly to trigger open discussion and societal change, then journalists must hold those in power accountable rather than act as tools for a biased newspaper. To do so, investigative journalists need to balance between uncovering facts that others (particularly the powerful elites in Saudi society) are attempting to hide and operating in a professional manner, not only to ensure that the facts are obtained ethically but also to protect their sources from retaliation. A great deal of investigative journalism around the world hinges on journalists' honesty when they agree with their sources whether information is on or off the record.

Unexpectedly, the results of this study show that some issues reported to irritate religious leaders and Saudi society (see for example, Al-Jameeah, 2009; Al Maghlooth, 2013; Alenizi, 2014; Awad, 2010) are now, to a certain extent, able to be discussed and published in the press, such as issues related to women. It is possible that this change is due to the influence of the Internet and social media. Alternatively, the government may be actively deciding to allow what used to be forbidden. For example, EIC9 mentioned that in 2012, when Saudi women were first allowed to participate in the Olympic Games, the Ministry of Information instructed newspapers not to publish the story. Nowadays, though, the government has appointed a female as a deputy head of sports to encourage women to attend sporting events and even participate in the games.

8.3.3. Economic Factors

The data analysis and literature review revealed that the revenue generated by newspapers is declining due to the growing dependence on the Internet and digital media (Alenizi, 2014; Bimber & Copeland, 2013; Hume & Abbot, 2017; McQuail, 2013; Obateru, 2017). In addition, the decline in advertising revenue was found to be the result of the financial crisis due to lower oil prices and the resultant economic status of the country. These factors have caused some newspapers to be on the brink of closing down, as they are unable to provide the necessary equipment to function properly. These newspapers are also unable to pay their staff's salaries. Instead, they depend on part-time journalists, who, according to the quantitative results of this study, comprise 54% of the workforce at newspapers. This situation is exemplified by the article published by the Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Jazira* and the Head of the Saudi Press Association on January 11, 2018, to appeal to King Salman and the Crown Prince and convince them to save newspapers facing major financial crises (Al-Malik, 2018).

Another important issue mentioned by the participants in this study was advertisers. The journalists felt that advertisers might be able to influence the stories they were permitted to investigate and publish, and that this was related to the newspapers' general lack of funding. A. D. Kaplan (2008) found that business entities influenced the press through corporate control, advertising subsidies and direct bribery. According to the quantitative results of this research, more than three-quarters of Saudi journalists agree that 'the newspaper tends not to investigate issues related to its advertisers'. In addition, EIC7 stated that 'some advertisers do not accept criticism more than some governmental authorities'. EIC1 added that 'most Saudi newspapers don't dare to publish material criticising Saudi Telecom Company (STC),

just because it is the most important advertiser'. Going beyond simply avoiding criticism, advertisers may expect favourable news stories. The present study seems to be consistent with other research, which found that when a newspaper publishes negative news that might go against the interests of advertisers, advertisers blame the newspaper or boycott it and pull their advertisements (Al-Jameeah, 2009). Awad (2010) studied the impact of advertisers on newspapers. Although they are a funding source that enables newspapers to depend less on government funding, and as such achieve some independence, they are still under an influence, as newspapers cannot function without the support of advertisers. Thus, newspapers try to accommodate advertisers' wishes and not publish material that causes harm to them or their reputations. In addition, Rugh (2004) found that the government is still often the main source of financing for newspapers as an advertiser, a provider of subsidies and a consumer. Thus, there is a strong relationship between economic and political factors; the influence and authority of the government are increased by the economic pressure it can exercise on newspapers. Martin (2010) alludes to this challenge facing investigative journalism in most Arab countries:

> The most common way that Arab governments stifle investigative reporting is by applying financial pressure. Arab states are intimately involved in the economic well-being of many Arab news organizations, so they apply pressure in several ways, most notably through ownership or advertising. (p. 85)

Although a number of studies (see for example, Abdulbaqi, 2013; de Burgh, 2008; A. D. Kaplan, 2008; Rolland, 2006; Singh, 2012) have mentioned the strong influence of media owners on the practice of investigative journalism, the current study does not support these findings. Rather, the quantitative data show that more than 60% of journalists are undecided about the impact of media owners on

investigative journalism. This may be due to the strong influence of the editors-in-chief, who are appointed with the consent of the Ministry of Information.

The qualitative data also reveal that inadequate salaries and a lack of resources have caused many problems in newspapers, although there were no statistical differences between journalists' income and the practice of investigative journalism. EIC8 and EIC9 commented that a shortage of funding leads to poor salaries and lack of professional training, which negatively affects the practice of investigative journalism. EIC9 explained that, while investigating pollution in Jeddah City, the newspaper realised that it does not employ adequately trained journalists. Similar concerns about the lack of training were expressed by most respondents, who assume that the lack of training may affect journalists' motivation to investigate what they deem worthy. Investigative journalism requires abundant energy and perseverance to capture all the dimensions of a story, and the absence of support by newspaper organisations can only be detrimental to this process (Abdenour, 2015; Berkowitz, 2007; Kaplan, 2013).

The quantitative data indicate that over 82% of journalists believed that there is insufficient financial support to enable investigative reporting. This finding is consistent with other research, which found that investigative journalism faces a number of challenges, including high cost and lack of financial support (see for example, Bebawi, 2016; Cooper, 2014; Gómez, 2012; A. D. Kaplan, 2008; Raphael et al., 2004; Sullivan, 2013).

In summary, economic factors are one of the biggest obstacles to investigative journalism. Media can overcome these limitations by cooperating with international organisations, institutions, and community groups (Bebawi, 2016;

Gómez, 2012; Kaplan, 2013; Ntibinyane, 2018; Singh, 2012); in fact, a few non-profit organisations across the world have been established to support investigative journalism. However, in the context of Saudi Arabia, there are no civil institutions or non-profit organisations supporting the practice, and newspapers that cooperate with foreign organisations in countries that do not approve of Saudi Arabia's policies will be accused of seeking to destabilise the country.

It is worth mentioning that economic factors are among the most important factors affecting investigative journalism in the West (Abdenour, 2015; Gómez, 2012; Kaplan, 2013; Raphael et al., 2004). However, in Saudi Arabia, they rank third, after political and cultural factors, which are less significant in some democratic countries.

8.3.4. Organisational Factors

The fourth type of factors influencing investigative journalism is related to organisations. The literature has reported that these are some of the most important factors affecting the practice of investigative journalism in Western media (see for example, Abdenour, 2015; Bauer, 2005; Berkowitz, 2007; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Raphael et al., 2004). However, the results of this study revealed that organisational factors have the least impact on investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. The quantitative data analysis illustrated that the impact of organisations is 72%, and the response for three out of eight items was 'undecided'. This may be due to the fact that the editors-in-chief fully control how newspaper organisations work. It is important to note that none of the respondents considered the guidelines for media practices to be opaque, and a clear majority (78%) of editors-in-chief felt that they had guidelines for doing their work. Surprisingly, about 65% of journalists were undecided about whether there was a lack of guidance from editors-in-chief regarding investigative reporting. This may reflect the gap between editors-in-chief and

journalists and the lack of unified policies governing the operation of journalism institutions. EIC3 stated that 'one of the disadvantages of these policies is that the newspaper is directly related to the character of the editor-in-chief. This means any change in the editor-in-chief will result in a change in the editorial policies of the newspaper. For instance, our newspaper witnessed four changes in the policies of the newspaper as a result of the four changes that happened to the editors-in-chief of the newspaper. Investigative journalism was practiced at a time of one editor-in-chief'. This is an important issue that can be explored further in future research.

Another unanticipated finding was that 60% of experienced journalists were undecided about whether the editorial policies of the newspaper encouraged or discouraged the practice of investigative journalism. This result might have occurred because the newspapers do not have explicit editorial policies or journalists are not aware of those policies. Regardless, this constitutes a problem for journalism institutions and journalists' professionalism in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the trend of journalists working part-time (54% of all journalists) is important and it expresses lack of job stability. This is because Saudi laws do not protect journalists against dismissal, and there is no active journalists' association to protect their rights (Kurdi, 2014). Hence, they are let go when newspapers endeavour to cut costs. In addition, this situation could lead to conflicts of interest if journalists have to work in other sectors and, thus, might not be able to investigate them. This is confirmed by Al-Jameeah (2009) and Obateru (2017), who claimed that some journalists may find themselves obliged to forgo their professional and ethical journalistic practices for individual gain.

The results of this study also indicate that organisational factors need to be updated to reflect how Saudi journalists can engage with sources in the 21st century

(i.e. digitally). At least four respondents felt that the credibility of newspapers was damaged by the wide-scale adoption of the Internet. However, others claimed that the problem was newspapers' unwillingness to embrace the innovative opportunities afforded by digital media. In this context, it should be remembered that traditional journalism is in decline globally, particularly with the rise of instantaneous Internet- and social media-driven news (Awad, 2010; Chan, 2014; Fortunati et al., 2009; A. D. Kaplan, 2008). It is impossible for a newspaper to challenge millions of Saudis' ability to share tweets and texts at any given time and difficult for any news source to intervene in such stories.

The quantitative data indicate that about 80% of journalists felt they were pressed for time to finish their investigations. This result is consistent with those of other studies and suggest that time is an important challenge facing investigative journalism (see for example, Aucoin, 2007; Bauer, 2005; de Burgh, 2008). Investigative journalists must devote significant amounts of time and money to a story, and a lack of such resources may lead some investigations to be dropped (Bauer, 2005; Mair & Keeble, 2011).

In summary, this section has answered the second research question, which concerns the factors that influence the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. These factors include the political system (the main finding of this study), culture and religion, the economic system and organisations. In the following section, we discuss the next research question and conceptualise the impact of each factor on the practice of investigative journalism. Previous studies and the data collected for this research have helped us understand the decisions made by journalism gatekeepers. Below, we analyse and provide some causes and justifications for

gatekeepers' decisions to publish or refuse investigative reports. We also assess and explain each factor and its impact.

8.4. RQ3 To What Extent do Systemic Factors Influence Gatekeeping in Saudi Arabia?

One main objective of this study is to establish the extent of the impact of systemic factors on the practice of investigative journalism. As discussed in Chapter 4, gatekeeping theory informed the present understanding of the formation of levels at which gatekeeping occurs in Saudi Arabia. It is crucial as it affects the decision to accept or reject a news story. A hierarchal model of the factors influencing gatekeeping at not only the individual or organisational levels but also the institutional and social levels was used. Shoemaker and Reese (2014) asserted that the decision to allow or forbid the publication of stories is not related to gatekeepers themselves because they abide by the routines and regulations of their institutions and other external factors. As mentioned in the literature review (see for example, Abdenour, 2015; Berkowitz, 2007; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014), the influence of external factors varies between societies.

It is worth mentioning that the literature review (Chapter 4) revealed some differences between global models of gatekeeping and the Saudi model. This is because the present study has concluded that factors influence Saudi gatekeepers in a different way than gatekeepers elsewhere and a different model is applied to investigative journalism. As has been argued in this study, individual and organisational factors most influence Western gatekeepers (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; White, 1950), while political and religious factors most influence Saudi gatekeepers.

The findings of this study show that investigative reporting involves a complex series of factors that determine the issues to be investigated and how they are dealt with. The data indicate agreement between editors-in-chief and journalists with regard to the fact that political factors most influence the issues that are investigated and discussed. Similarly, Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011) claim that political factors are negatively correlated with the democracy of a society and freedom of the press. Most of the editors-in-chief and journalists who participated in this study reported that political factors were the most important influence on their decisions. Therefore, one can conclude that Saudi gatekeepers keep political factors in mind when processing investigative reports. EIC2, EIC3 and EIC5 explained that journalism is responsible for maintaining national unity and not creating public discord by publishing material that contradicts the stances adopted by the government. Al-Kahtani (1999) admits that the Saudi press has adopted the role of portraying a positive image of the government, reflecting the authoritarian regulations regarding the press.

Thus, journalists avoid pursuing investigative stories that are critical of the political situation in Saudi Arabia, political leaders or the royal family. This study found that, in stories and decisions relating to the government, political factors do not only affect decisions about what issues should be published, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four. The most significant finding was that the influence of political factors requires newspapers to ask permission to investigate a topic and then forward the results to the authorities for final approval before publication. EIC1 indicated that stories on issues such as women and religion were requested by the government authorities. This is significant because it differs from the results of the reviewed studies (see for example, Al-Jameeah, 2009; Alnassar, 2010; Awad, 2010).

Although the respondents as a whole did not believe that the Ministry of Information was affecting their ability to do their jobs, all national papers, to some extent, are controlled by the Ministry and journalists are licensed. Thus, there is a deep conflict between journalists' ability to work independently and their ability to criticise political authorities. As previously explained, the response to the opportunities afforded by the Internet to challenge the Ministry's grip appears to have been muted at best, even though Bennett (2004) found that gatekeepers are losing their value due to the Internet. The findings of this study indicate that gatekeepers' work is overly complex and necessary. This might be due to the ambiguity of the laws and the censorship of the Ministry of Information.

Approximately 65% of the respondents felt that their ability to perform their job was determined by their editor-in-chief. This aligns with the traditional view of censorship as a top-down process (see for example, Al-Askar, 2005; Amin, 2002; Awad, 2010; Mellor, 2011; Sakr, 2003). Editors-in-chief have their own aspirations and may seek to avoid straining their relationships with influential leaders. This may cause Saudi editors-in-chief to avoid publishing any material that contradicts the political authorities. Hence, instead of advocating for freedom of the press, editors-in-chief are in fact censors of their own newspapers. EIC9 recounted an example in which a female journalist investigated maids working in homes. The editor-in-chief agreed to publish the report, but later he asked the ministry to terminate the contract of the journalists who conducted the investigation. This raises the concern that investigative journalism is unlikely to become professionalised in Saudi Arabia while journalists' rights are still determined not by clear-cut rules, but by biased officials within the Ministry of Information and editors-in-chief, who are capable of firing them if a particular article is too controversial. The hierarchical nature of the Saudi

news industry provides great latitude to gatekeepers (i.e. editors-in-chief) to challenge, change or fully censor potential stories.

EIC1 mentioned that gatekeepers exist 'within the circle'. There appears to be general awareness that any story presented for publication must be acceptable not only to society, religious institutions and the ministry but also to anxious editors-in-chief who could lose their jobs if they publish stories that present an unfavourable view of the government. This stifles journalists as they legitimately try to do their jobs, diluting the concept of their work and potentially discouraging them from exploring other controversial stories. The concern that an editor might abandon a journalist over a story is enough to dissuade many journalists from placing their careers and social networks in a precarious position. Thus, in Saudi Arabia, political factors control the media and its independence, determining what should be revealed to the public or concealed. This finding supports the view that in the practice of investigative journalism, the performance of the Saudi press system was in line with the authoritarian theory. This would explain why in the practice of investigative journalism, Saudi newspapers adhere very strictly to the line adopted by the government, without criticising, investigating or even interrogating sensitive issues.

The qualitative and quantitative data show that the groups that place pressure on investigative journalists in Saudi Arabia may be religious or private in nature, not only associated with the government. Thus, religious and social pressures influence the issues that are investigated in the Saudi press. Similarly, Rugh (2004) and Al Maghlooth (2013) found that what is published by the Saudi media is largely controlled by social and religious factors. Analysis of the quantitative data revealed that 84% of the respondents agreed that cultural values determine what is and is not published. Rugh (2004) also stressed that the perceptions of editors-in-chief relate to

their experiences and cultural and social backgrounds, which influence their decisions regarding what should be presented to the public. Saudi newspapers have their own strict rules and procedures for journalists to follow, as indicated by EIC1, EIC8, EIC5 and EIC11, who believed that social and religious factors were the second biggest influence on their decisions. These interviewees considered topics such as tribal struggles, fornication and homosexuality/lesbianism, which contradict Islamic and cultural principles, to be taboo and unable to be investigated and published by newspapers. According to EIC11,

> Courageous journalism in a conservative society bound by tribal and religious laws will face difficulties before and after publishing. Our newspaper faces very strong reactions by several groups, specifically religious leaders, who call for boycotting the newspaper.

The ideas of the editors-in-chief were supported by Mellor (2011), who believed that, particularly in the Arab region, journalists believe the news media is responsible for maintaining the culture of the region and its traditions and unity. Furthermore, Al-Shebeili (2000) stated that Saudi newspapers are not known for publicising topics, such as gambling and homosexuality, that are sensitive within Saudi culture. For instance, EIC1 revealed that an investigative report about female drug addicts was not published due to its controversial nature.

It is acknowledged that religious leaders have a strong influence on Saudi society. This outweighs the influence of gatekeepers' personal convictions (Awad, 2010). A number of the participants highlighted attempts to subvert the sovereign authority of newspapers. For instance, EIC9 explained that religious leaders accused his newspaper of going against Islam and supporting homosexuality.

Indeed, Saudi religious leaders can exert pressure on newspapers and make them change their decisions. As a result, Saudi gatekeepers tend not to allow

investigation of any issue that might provoke religious leaders. In contrast, the influence of religious organisations on newspapers in the West is not strong enough to make gatekeepers change their opinions or the material that is set to be published. While Western gatekeepers may use traditional measures (e.g., asking whether a source is credible), those in Saudi Arabia need to consider not only the quality of a source but also the possible repercussions in Saudi Arabia's deeply religious society and government guided by a constitution based on Shari'a law. In other words, in Saudi Arabia, religion and politics are intertwined. While this study has demonstrated a tendency to tackle topics considered taboo only decades ago, doing so remains a difficult issue, as reflected in similar research on the media in Saudi Arabia (Awad, 2010).

An important finding of this study was that media organisations had the smallest influence on gatekeeping. This contradicts studies identifying the strong influence of organisational factors in Western countries (Abdenour, 2015; Berkowitz, 2007; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011). This study's findings could be explained by the fact that other factors, such as religious and political factors, might have a greater influence or that the editor-in-chief controls organisational policies.

The results of this study reveal the factors that influence the decisions made by Saudi gatekeepers. There are instances in which a combination of factors influences a story; hence, gatekeepers should be mindful of all factors. In addition, multiple gatekeepers may have an influence upon the journey of a story. Not only do journalists or newspapers practise self-censorship but also gatekeeping acts as a filter through which information may or may not be permitted to be shared.
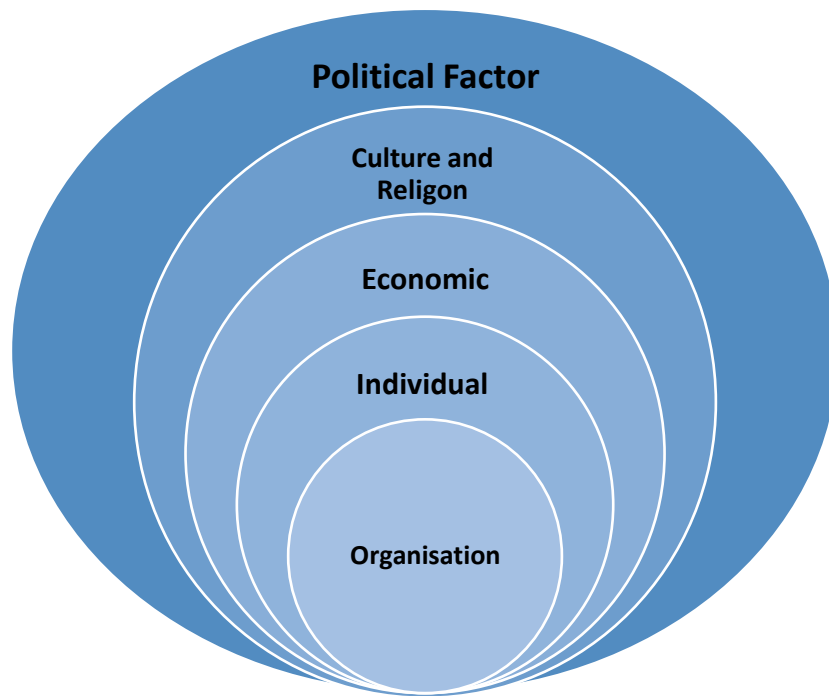
Figure 8.4: *The hierarchy of influences model proposed by Shoemaker and Reese (2014), but modified to suit Saudi gatekeeping*

Based on the findings discussed above, it is clear that political factors have the most influence on investigative journalism via gatekeeping. Although other factors exert some influence on investigative journalism, their influence is dominated or shaped by political factors. As EIC1 described, political factors are the hub around which all other factors revolve.

The most interesting finding of the exploration of the cultural, organisational and political factors influencing investigative journalism was the significant positive correlations, with the political factor having the strongest relationship. This is not entirely unexpected, as journalists have to work within a social environment in which all of these factors are prevalent. However, this finding differs from the findings of Al-Jameeah (2009), Al Maghlooth (2013), Alenizi (2014) and Awad (2010), who concluded that social and religious factors were more influential than political factors in Saudi Arabia. There are several possible explanations for our results. First, the current study was conducted at a time when politics play a major role in the media—

more than they did before, as the editors-in-chief (e.g. EIC9 and EIC10) who participated in this study declared. Currently, editors-in-chief receive a number of instructions that exert control over what newspapers publish. EIC4 stated,

> Nowadays, we see general confusion in the media system. Most of this confusion is caused by the Ministry of Information, and I believe that the ministry has been emptied of its experts and qualified cadres. This new generation has little experience, which has led to some confrontations. Some officials in the Ministry try to put the newspapers under their control, and, unfortunately, some of them abuse their powers.

Second, the focus of the current study is investigative journalism. Therefore, it is not surprising that the study has revealed that this practice is directly affected by governmental policies and practices. It goes without saying that the influence of political, religious and cultural factors shapes the differences between Saudi Arabia and other societies to a great extent. These factors drive Saudi media but may not play a significant role in other countries, namely advanced democratic ones. Comparison between the culture of journalism in Saudi Arabia, that is based on Islamic religion and tribal affiliation, and that of other countries involve reflection on conceptual indicators of freedom, politics, media laws, censorship and democracy.

Even more interesting is this study's finding that political factors relate not only to decisions about publication but also to the pre-investigation period (i.e. from the collection of information to after publication). This may cause some parts of an investigation to be withdrawn from the story (see Figure 8.3). Thus there is another dimension that must be considered—gatekeeping before an investigation—as it is a crucial stage influenced by political factors. This study thus expands the timeline of gatekeeping beyond the common focus only on the stage before news is published, as

Shoemaker (1991) and White (1950) suggest. The present study also reinforces Al Maghlooth's (2013) suggestion that gatekeeping also has a post-production stage.
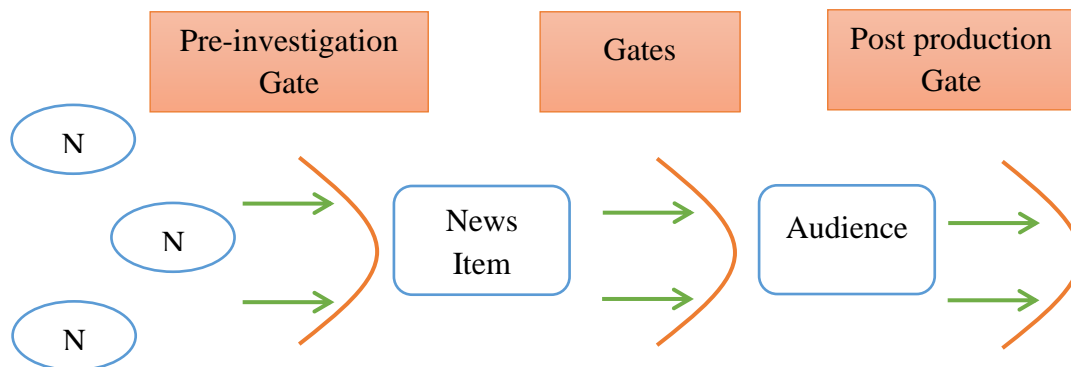
Figure 8.5: *The multi-stages of Gatekeeping recognised in this study*

This model supports Shoemaker and Reese (2014), who highlight the growing role of gatekeepers after the Internet and technological advancements. Bennett (2004) and Bruns (2008), however, allude that the Internet is a tool for reducing the significance of the role of gatekeepers. The current study offers a new dimension to consider: the strong influence of political factors on pre-investigation gatekeeping in the context of Saudi Arabia. This has negatively influenced the practice of investigative journalism and led to strong self-censorship. The study reveals the extent to which this finding is supported by evidence related to the following:

- Issues that are not open to investigation, particularly sensitive issues related to the royal family, army, judicial system and religious leaders, even if there is a basis for doing so. For instance, as mentioned before, the government announced that they arrested a number of princes, ministers and high-ranking entrepreneurs, but no investigative reports were published in any Saudi newspaper.

- Issues that can be investigated to a certain degree but require special government permissions, such as those related to prisoners or security offences. For instance, EIC1 stated that when his newspaper wanted to investigate prisoners who were held without charges, the newspaper had to gain the approval of the relevant authority before starting the investigation.

- Issues that are investigated upon the request of governmental authorities, such as those related to women and religion. The extent to which the gathered information can be published requires the permission of the governmental authorities that requested the investigation.

The next stage of gatekeeping is investigation of issues that are set for publication. These issues are filtered based on their compliance with governmental instructions and societal values. The final stage is post-production, in which some parts of the issue under investigation are allowed to be published or the whole issue is edited or deleted from the newspaper's website. These stages illustrate the lack of independence and freedom of the press in Saudi Arabia.

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that the findings contradict prior studies (see for example, Aucoin, 2007; Bernt & Greenwald, 2000; Blevens, 1997; Bolch & Miller, 1978), which argued that investigative report should predominantly be the sole work of journalists, and not requested or completed by others, and that there are people who try to hide it, and prevent the journalist from accessing the specific information the journalist requests. The results of the prediction scale indicate that there is considerable discrepancy in the practice of investigative journalism due to its strong link with political factors. Due to such challenges, investigative journalism cannot prosper in Saudi Arabia.

8.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of the data collected, analysed and presented in this thesis, which explores investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia through the paradigm of the interaction between systemic factors and journalism. The data reveal that there is no clear-cut framework for the practice of investigative journalism, but there are random practices. In the Saudi investigative journalism context, all individual, professional, economic, organisational and cultural factors are strongly influenced by political factors, which also control and penalise the practices of investigative journalism. It is the political dimension that places the greatest amount of covert and overt pressure on gatekeeping for investigative journalism. This effect appears to permeate all aspects of the investigative journalism process, including both post-production and pre-investigative practices as well as self-censorship of material intended for publication. Religious factors also play a strong role in gatekeeping, although Saudi Arabia's particular sensitivity to Islamic principles limits the scope of this finding. While the environment is largely censored and controlled by the Ministry of Information, many of the features of investigative journalism are influenced by global economic phenomena, such as the decline in investigative journalism. As newspapers seek to survive in a digital environment, additional economic pressures are created, engendering institutional responses that emphasise survival. Chapter Nine presents the general conclusions, contributions, limitations and recommendations of the study. It also proposes areas for further research.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

9.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions of this study and suggests recommendations for future researchers. It also provides an overview of the study and presents the contributions of this research to Saudi investigative journalism specifically and media studies in general.

9.2. Summary of the Study

As stated in Chapter One, the aims of this study were to examine the state of investigative journalism and understand how systemic factors influence the practise of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. The specific objectives were as follows:

- To examine the perceptions and experiences of investigative journalism among journalists and editors-in-chief in Saudi Arabia;

- To explore the factors that influence the implementation of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia;

- To develop a gatekeeping framework to understand the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and

- To recommend ways to improve investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

To achieve this, the study applied a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods through questionnaires administered to journalists and interviews with editors-in-chief. Each method compensates for the shortcomings of the other, making the data more convincing and credible (Creswell, 2015). Both thematic and statistical data analyses were performed. The datasets generated in both cases provided a rich account of the factors investigated. When combined, the two datasets complemented each other and justified the choice to

compare the data using a convergent strategy, which is a mixed-methods approach commonly used in academic research (Creswell, 2015).

The findings indicate that an understanding of the mechanism of investigative journalism is still uncommon among Saudi press, and when present, it is dominated by random practices due to various factors, some of which mirror those in Western countries and some of which are predominantly found in the Saudi media context. Saudi press has not embraced this type of journalism, reflecting a lack of awareness of the nature of investigative journalism and the journalistic skills required to practise investigative journalism.

Both the editors-in-chief and journalists acknowledged that political factors have the most influence on investigative journalism through censorship, lack of journalistic freedom and unclear media laws. As a result, journalists tend to consider politics an obstacle to their careers, and self-censorship is common. Self-censorship is reinforced by the Ministry of Information, which threatens newspapers with lost profits or retraction of news stories after publication. While the boundaries defining what can be published seem to be diminished in terms of the potential for punitive measures, they still appear to affect decisions about what constitutes investigative journalistic content. Although permission is now given to investigate some issues related to religious and cultural practices that were previously prohibited, this study has shown that the turmoil resulting from the Arab Spring has not led to improvements in the freedom of the press in Saudi Arabia. In fact, this turbulence has led to increased government control of the media. Although social media has had a somewhat positive effect on society, and Saudi press organisations are privately owned, the Saudi media are still controlled by political factors through censorship by the Ministry of Information.

Cultural factors were also found to influence investigative journalism. These factors' effect is likely based on compliance, a somewhat covert form of influence that achieves self-censorship due to fear of reprisal from social groups and institutions and cultural perceptions. However, the definition of freedom in democratic societies differs from that in Saudi culture. Cultural influences on the media include religious factors. The findings indicate that both culture and religion seem to function as a generalised, normative baseline for the types of content that can be used in stories.

This study discussed the large number of topics censored by the Ministry of Information, which creates difficulties when journalists must provide details or context for a story or event. Several topics were identified by both the journalists and editors-in-chief who participated in this study, reflecting the chain of command from production to investigation of a source within the context of a story. Common topics that must be avoided by the media are those associated with racism, tribalism, sensitive cultural issues, religion, advertisers, the royal family, judiciary and political issues and international relations. In general, the omnipresence of the Ministry of Information in the Saudi press was found to influence the types of stories ultimately published.

The structural analysis found that feedback channels successfully reinforced behaviours and attitudes relating to taboo topics. Often, journalists self-censor or are unsuccessful in obtaining approval from their editor-in-chief. Nevertheless, several newspapers still published stories on taboo topics by providing supporting documentation and being willing to edit the stories to make them more acceptable. The results indicate that the media policies adopted in Saudi Arabia do not correspond to the rigorous processes in the West. Work involving searching, detecting, collating

and investigating was lacking, and publishing regulations vastly limited the practice of investigative journalism.

This study reveals that economic and organisational factors are less dominant and less effective than political and cultural factors in relation to the practise of investigative journalism. This might be due to the lack of financial support for investigative journalism and training journalists. In addition, the lack of a standard organisational system for Saudi newspapers makes them subject to their editors-in-chief, who in turn are subject to instructions given by the Ministry of Information.

Overall, the qualitative interviews with Saudi editors-in-chief revealed a number of themes validating the general view that Saudi Arabia is in a state of flux. In addition, despite recent attempts at modernisation, political censorship is still common. The study provides an insight into the structural theoretical framework for testing significant elements of investigative journalism and the process of producing journalistic content in Saudi Arabia. The study concludes that, under the current circumstances, the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia has difficulty flourishing due to the government's strong control over the media. Ultimately, the findings of this research have achieved the objectives of the study.

9.3. Contributions of the Study

As stated in Chapter One, the present study makes several contributions to the knowledge about investigative journalism and the process of gatekeeping in the context of Saudi Arabia.

First, it is the first study to explore investigative journalism and the systemic factors that influence it in Saudi Arabia. It fills research gaps regarding the practice and nature of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and provides clues to the

relationship between systemic factors and investigative journalism practices. The main strength of this study is its collection of the views of Saudi editors-in-chief and journalists. It can thus be used as a primary source of reference for students, journalists and researchers exploring investigative journalism, particularly in the context of Saudi media.

Second, investigative journalism and its relation to systemic factors in Saudi Arabia is a relatively unexplored area of research, making this study original. Therefore, the study advances the knowledge about and understanding of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and the increasingly powerful influence of different systemic factors. It presents an overview of investigative journalism at this moment in time, which reflects the nature of totalitarian societies such as Saudi Arabia and how they impact the attitudes and perceptions of journalists, particularly investigative journalists. The study has proved that the nature of investigative journalism is not clearly understood in Saudi Arabia, and when it does take place, it is dominated by random individual practises due to the various internal and external factors that restrict the practice and implementation of investigative journalism. In addition, this study found that the most influential factors are external (i.e. related to the systemic environment, including political, cultural and religious factors), as indicated in Chapter Eight of this thesis.

Third, this study offers a theoretical contribution to gatekeeping literature by presenting a framework of the systemic environment in Saudi Arabia and its relation to investigative journalism. This is a pioneering study that unifies gatekeeping theory with the hierarchical model of news influences suggested by Shoemaker and Reese (2014). Most gatekeeping studies have examined private media in the West, but this study focuses on media in Saudi Arabia, a very different setting. The study identifies

and compares the framework in Saudi Arabia and the Western model. Structural analysis can be aided by this model as it identifies the nuances of the Saudi gatekeeping process. As explained in Chapter Eight, based on Shoemaker and Reese (2014) model of the factors of influence, this study has contributed to the perception that there are important differences in how significantly these factors influence the Saudi context. The model developed in this study recognises political, cultural and religious factors to be most important, followed by economic factors, organisational and individual factors to have the weakest influence (see Figure 8.2). The impact of political factors was found to contradict the practice of investigative journalism.

Moreover, the study contributes to the understanding of the disproportionate relationship between the impact of politics and cultural and religious factors: the stronger the political impact on gatekeeping for investigative journalism, the weaker the impact of cultural and religious factors. The findings are contrary to those obtained by Awad (2010) and Al Maghlooth (2013), who found that the impact of cultural factors is strongest. This implies that in terms of investigative journalism, the political factor currently influences gatekeeping the most.

The intricate relationships among governmental institutions, political and religious leaders and the role of culture and the economy in professional decision-making in Saudi Arabia can be examined in terms of the gatekeeping model suggested in this study, particularly due to recent technological developments in news production. The present study adds to the longstanding assumption that gatekeeping occurs before news publication and supports the model suggested by Al Maghlooth (2013), according to which gatekeeping occurs in the post-production stage in Saudi Arabia. The present study determines that there are several stages of gatekeeping and adds a dimension to gatekeeping: pre-investigation (see Figure 8.4). This dimension

has a crucial impact on the practice of investigative journalism. Journalists and editors-in-chief suffer markedly from its effects; for instance, investigative journalists have to seek the government's permission to explore sensitive and provocative issues prior to starting their investigations. The interviews revealed many incidents suggesting that pre-investigation of stories is particularly relevant to gatekeeping in Saudi Arabia.

9.4. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. Although investigative journalism delves into politics, culture and religion, the views we obtained are limited to some extent by the sensitivity of such issues. Some editors-in-chief had reservations about participating despite assurances that their responses would be anonymous. Hence, their responses may have been limited or lacking in depth. Time limitations and geographical differences necessitated that some interviews be conducted via telephone or email, and the views obtained this way also lacked depth.

In addition, the gatekeeping model applied in the context of Saudi Arabia is limited because investigative journalism is not common there, and thus there were few resources that this study could use. This study relied heavily on the respondents' accounts, experiences and understanding of their profession. Factors such as interviewer bias were not considered. Further, differences between respondents' perceptions and the reality of their experiences were not accounted for.

9.5. Practical Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, we provide practical recommendations to improve the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia:

- Due to developments in information technology and digital media forums, media institutions and academies should pay attention to the development of investigative journalism, as this would enrich the development of journalistic content, which in turn would strengthen the role of the media in society.

- The Ministry of Information and Saudi Journalistic Commission should review the media policies and printing laws that guide journalistic practices in Saudi Arabia in order to make them more effective. More than 40 years have elapsed without any modifications to media policies based on developments in media information technology. Moreover, Saudi printing law does not clearly identify the level of journalistic freedom. The law is filled with generalisations that are subject to the interpretation of the Ministry of Information. This can be interpreted as an attempt by the Ministry to limit the freedom of the media.

- There is a need for a law to protect the freedom of information and prevent the government from stifling journalism. An independent organisation should be established to monitor the government's control over the media. Without such a law and organisation, the government and special interest groups will continue to pressure the media.

- Saudi media organisations should administer regular media training to their journalists in order to update their knowledge and skills and make them more qualified to conduct investigative journalism.

9.6. Recommendations for Future Research

The current study explored the state of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia and presented the factors that influence its practice. The following are some

recommendations for future research regarding development of investigative journalism:

- Aside from this study, investigative journalism and its relation to systemic factors in Saudi Arabia is a relatively unexplored area of research. Therefore, supplementary work should be conducted to identify ways to encourage Saudi journalists to participate in investigative journalism. Specifically, there is a need to identify the specific barriers that newspapers face at each step of the investigative journalism process and develop effective interventions to avoid these.

- Although this study has provided a basis for investigative journalism research in the context of Saudi Arabia, researchers should further explore investigative reports by performing content analysis of published reports. This would be a step towards understanding the factors that influence the publication process.

- Future studies should develop an approach that utilises a more interrelated framework to identify the nuances of gatekeeping rather than rely on the gatekeeping model outlined in this study. They could build upon the findings of the model suggested in this study to establish a more substantial account of the factors pertaining to changes in Saudi media consumption.

- Researchers should explore the role of editors-in-chief, their relationship with the government and how these are reflected in investigative journalistic practise in Saudi Arabia. This would add another dimension to the literature that has not been addressed in the current study.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Approval

15 November 2016

Dear Ali,

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION AMR1617-06 – The Impact of the Saudi Systemic Environment on Investigative Journalism

Based on the information you provided, I am pleased to inform you that your application AMR 1617-06 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project and/ or its methodology, please inform the Panel as soon as possible by contacting A&M-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk

Yours sincerely,

Dr Samantha Newbery
Chair of the Arts & Media Research Ethics Panel
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Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. What is your newspaper's definition of investigative journalism?

2. To what extent do your newspaper's policies help in the practice of investigative journalism?

3. To what extent does the internet and social media influence your selection and treatment of stories to be investigated?

4. Are there clear guidelines imposed upon the practice of investigative journalism?

5. Who chooses the issues to investigate and why?

6. What are the factors influencing journalistic practice?

7. What are the most prominent issues that your newspaper avoids investigating?

8. What are the main factors hindering the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia?

9. Are there any sources that exercise pressure on the practice of investigative journalism? If yes, who are they and how do they do so?

10. Have you ever prevented any investigative report from being published for any particular reasons? If yes, please give examples.

11. What is the relationship between your newspaper and the Ministry of Information?

12. To what extent does the political authority allow monitoring and criticising of government institutions؟

13. To what extent is your newspaper committed to the government's guidelines?

14. How do you avoid confrontation with the government in your investigative reporting?

15. Does your newspaper publish investigative reports irrespective of censorship, whether internal or external, and why?

16. Do current media laws serve the practice of investigative journalism?

17. To what extent does censorship by the Ministry of Information influence investigative stories in the Saudi Arabian press?

18. To what extent do cultural considerations influence the selection and treatment of issues to be investigated?

19. To what extent do you avoid investigative stories that might provoke the readers?

20. What are the most prominent social issues that your newspaper avoids investigating?

21. To what extent does your newspaper avoid investigating issues that might provoke religious leaders?

22. To what extent does the journalists' culture affect their selection and treatment of investigative issues?

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am conducting a Doctorate Research at the School of Arts and Media, in the University of Salford, Manchester, UK. The title of the study is: 'The impact of the Saudi Systemic Environment on Investigative Journalism.'

The aim of the study is to identify, understand and explore the factors affecting the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

I present the questionnaire of this study to you in order to kindly respond to the questions asked, as your participation is invaluable. All your responses will only be used for the academic purpose of this study.

* In case there are any questions or concern about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me, as I will be very happy to explain anything you deem unclear.

Best wishes,

Ali Almania (PhD Candidate)

Mobile: 00966505261240

Email: A.M.Almania@edu.salford.ac.uk

1. **Personal Information**

Newspaper:

Al-Riyadh ☐   *Al-Jazeera* ☐   *Okaz* ☐   *Al-Watan* ☐   *Al-Youm* ☐

Al-Madina ☐   *Al-Sharq* ☐   *Makkah* ☐   *Al-Eqtisadiya* ☐

Asharq Al-Awsat ☐   *Al-Hayat* ☐   *Arab News* ☐   *Saudi Gazette* ☐

Gender

Male ☐   Female ☐

Age

18-24 ☐   25-34 ☐   35-44 ☐   45and older ☐

Education

High school (or less) ☐   Diploma ☐   Bachelor's degree ☐

Higher diploma ☐   Master's degree ☐   PhD's degree ☐

What is your Specialisation?

Media ☐   Non-Media ☐

Experience years

Less than 5 year ☐   5-9 year ☐   10-14 year ☐   15-19 year ☐

20 year or more ☐

Do you work full time or a part time?

Full time ☐   Part time ☐

Monthly Income

Less than 1000 ☐   1000-2000 ☐   2.000-3.000 ☐

3000- 4000 ☐   More than 4.000 ☐

2. Practice of investigative journalism

Sq.	Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	I practice investigative reporting in the newspaper where I work.					
2	I follow up the consequence of my report to ensure that the desired outcome has been implemented.					
3	Hiding my identity makes me more able to collect important information related to a story I am investigating.					
4	The Internet is a main source of information about any issue before it is investigated.					
5	I only use the					

Sq	Questions					
	main sources of information to investigate an issue.					
6	Government wrongdoings tempt journalists the most to conduct investigative reporting					
7	Social issues are most attractive for investigation.					
8	Private sector issues are less significant in my investigative reporting.					

3. Organisational level

Sq	Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	The newspaper editorial policy does not encourage the practice of Investigative reporting					
2	Lack of guidance from editors-in-chief in investigative reporting					
3	I am pressed by time to finish my investigation.					
4	Investigative reporting is influenced by owners of the					

Sq						
	newspaper					
5	The newspaper tend not to investigate issues related to its advertisers					
6	Financial support is not enough to allow the practice of investigative reporting.					
7	Lack of training has led to scarcity and poor quality of practicing investigative reporting					
8	Lack of motivations and incentives led to shortage in the practice of investigative reporting					

4. Political level

Sq	Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	The Saudi media policy shapes the ideas and professional values implemented in investigative reporting.					
2	I adopt the standpoint of the political authority in determining the issues to be investigated.					
3	Saudi media system					

Sq	Questions					
	does not encourage accurate investigative reporting.					
4	The lack of clear guidelines concerning what is allowed to be published and what is not allowed has lead to scarcity in the practice of investigative reporting.					
	The level of freedom of expression does not allow exploring crucial information for investigations					
	Regarding information sources officials are selective in what they permit me to access					
	The political system allows monitoring and criticising governmental institutions					
	Policy makers react positively to the findings of investigative reporting					

5. Cultural level

Sq	Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
	The cultural values of society determine					

what is published and not published.		275			
Precedence in investigative reporting is abandoned at the expense of upholding the cultural values and beliefs of society.					
Controversial issues that might cause conflict amongst people are not investigated.					
The images which invade the privacy of others or those which go against public consensus are not published.					
Sensitive social issues are not investigated.					
The topics that tend to stir confrontation with religious leaders are not investigated.					
The topics that tend to stir confrontation with the social elite and top officials are kept away from investigation.					
The tribal affiliation and geographic location of journalists impact their choice of topics to be investigated.					

University of Salford
MANCHESTER

Letter of Invitation

Dear Sir/Madam,

Invitation to participate in research study

My name is Ali Almania and currently doing my PhD in investigative journalism at the School of Arts and Media, The University of Salford, Manchester, United Kingdom.

I am conducting the research study in order to identify, understand, and explore the factors affecting the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study as an interviewee. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. The Ethics Committee of The University of Salford has granted its ethical approval for this study.

If you decide to participate, please see the attached Participant Information Sheet. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact me (Ali Almania PhD Candidate,

Phone +447454430440

Email: A.M.Almania@edu.salford.ac.uk)

or you may want to contact one of my supervisors: (C.OReilly@salford.ac.uk).

Your participation is highly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Ali Almania

PhD Candidate

University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

Participant Information Form

My name is Ali Almania, a PhD student at the School of Arts and Media in the University of Salford, Manchester, UK. I am currently conducting my PhD research program, which is aimed to identify, understand, and explore the factors affecting the practice of investigative journalism in Saudi Arabia. I would like to invite you to take part in this study.

Please, read the following information carefully and make sure you understand the research concepts. Kindly, if you have any questions or are uncertain about anything, do not hesitate to ask me. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part in this study.

Do you have to take part؟

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form, you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason; however your participation will enrich the research and is very much appreciated.

What will happen to me if I take part؟

First, you will be asked to schedule a free time, at your convenience. Please allocate at least one hour for a face to face interview. The sets of questions are in the form of semi-structured interview. You may request a copy of the semi-structured interview questions in advance. The interview process will generally deal with open-ended questions permitting you to share your views. Whenever the researcher feels necessary, you may expect some follow-up questions for clarification and elaboration. However, you reserve the option to either respond or decline a question. Please be assured that all the information you supply will be for the purpose of this study only.

What are the side effects and other possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

This study does not entail any clinical trial or any physical intervention that may cause harmful effects to you or to any participant. Your participation will be anonymously presented. The only inconvenience is that the researcher might request for follow-up interview should further questions may arise in the course of this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will not have any material benefit from taking part in this research. However, your participation will constitute a significant source of data that the researcher will use to understand the influence of the systemic environment on investigative journalism.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. If you do decide to withdraw, any data collected will be retained and used as part of the study, unless you request it to be deleted.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Any information obtained in connection with this study will be treated as privileged and confidential. All information will be anonymous so that you cannot be identified by others and will be stored securely in a lockable cabinet at the University of Salford.

Appendix 5: Research Participant Consent Form

University of Salford MANCHESTER

Research Participant Consent Form

Title of Project: The impact of the Saudi systemic environment on investigative journalism

RGEC Ref No:

Name of Researcher: Ali Almania- PhD Student

School of Art and Media – University of Salford

E-mail: A.M.Almania@edu.salford.ac.uk

Please tick the appropriate boxes	Yes	No	NA
I confirm that I have read and understood the study information sheet for the above study dated **DD/MM/YYYY**			
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, via telephone and email)			
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.			
I agree to take part in the above study.			
I agree to the experiment and observation session being audio recorded			
I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications			
I understand my personal details such as name, phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the study.			
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs but my name will not be used unless I requested it above			

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

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