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The role of citizen journalism in the rising of public awareness in the KRI

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Aljazeera Fellowship Program:

A program launched by Al Jazeera Media Institute which aims to encourage academic research as well as to provide journalists and researchers with an opportunity to gain practical experiences and learn about applied practices in an in-depth way that contributes to the improvement of the profession of journalism, with the help of many Arab and international institutions.

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Abstract

The development of new technology in recent years has offered ordinary people various online digital platform tools and internet access in providing news stories, information and subjects of public interest in the Kurdistan Region Government-Iraq (KRI). This shifting aspect has offered more opportunities for ordinary people to engage with other individuals in many issues in order to discuss and argue matters relating to their everyday lives. The key purpose of this research project will examine the role of citizen journalism in the increase of public awareness in the Kurdish community in the KRI, particularly, that citizen journalism provides a new opportunity for ordinary people to raise their voices about problems and public matters in the KRI.

The sample of this research project encompasses the 'ordinary' people who use social media platforms as sources of information and news concerning the KRI government policy. In the research project, the focus is on the media students who interact with the blogs, posts and footage that are produced by citizen journalism. The research project targeted 963 media students in KRI universities and institutes. The total participation in the project reached a high level of response: 315 students from 900 total. This aspect produces statistically acceptable numbers to obtain a significant result for this research project. The sampling process is mainly based on the survey method in this study. The online questionnaire form includes many sections which are divided into four key sections. The first section contains socio-demographic questions including: gender, age and level of education.

The research project applied the survey method in order to gather data and information surrounding the role of citizen journalism in increasing awareness of individuals in the Kurdish community. For this purpose, the researcher designed a questionnaire as the primary tool for the data collection process from ordinary people who use social media as a source of news and information. During the research project, online questionnaires were distributed in two ways – via Facebook and email – to participants in the Kurdish community, and this questionnaire looked for answers to questions from ordinary people, such as to what extent citizen journalism helps users to obtain information and news about public affairs and government policy.

The research project found that citizen journalism plays an essential role in increasing awareness of the Kurdish community, especially mainstream journalism, which has helped ordinary people to raise their voices in the KRI. Furthermore, citizen journalism carries more advantages as digital sources of news, footage and information relating to public affairs.

Keywords

Citizen journalism, public awareness, democracy, social media news

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Introduction

The development of new technology in recent years has offered ordinary people various online digital tools and internet access as an essential space in providing news stories, information and subjects of public interest in the Kurdistan Region Government (KRG). This shift in technology tools has impacted the Kurdish community directly (Zanagana, A, 2017), particularly nowadays when individuals can play the role of journalists (non-professional journalists) in their community, in particular through the use of smartphones to record events, protests, car accidents, creating content for mainstream event coverage and distributing it on social media platforms. This research project examines the role of citizen journalism in the increase of public awareness in the Kurdish community in the KRG. Hence, citizen journalism provides a new opportunity for ordinary people to raise their voice about problems and public matters. In this manner, when ordinary people are not satisfied with traditional media coverage, they have the possibility use smartphone and digital platforms to post and share issues relating to public affairs (Mapudzi & Osunkunle, 2017). In this regard, Mapudzi and Osunkunle (2017) argue that the “citizens are contributing to nation building by raising awareness on some issues which are sometimes swept under the carpet by the professional journalist” (Ibid, 2017, p.18).

The participation of ordinary people in the process of media production and journalism as content creations in the digital era, has encouraged many media organizations to seek the contribution of those individuals

as non-professional journalists (Luo & Harrison, 2019). In this way, Mapudzi and Osunkunle (2017) stated that the “history of the citizen journalism phenomenon is linked to the popularity of the internet as a news and public information medium, together with the accessibility of portable media technologies, such as camera phones” (Mapudzi & Osunkunle, 2017, p.18). Further, Luo and Harrison (2019) argue that the new technology tools and digital platform provide “the way people obtain and interact with news and information about government policy” (Luo & Harrison, 2019). This change has offered more opportunities for ordinary people to conduct more engagement with other individuals in many issues, especially in creating debate related to their everyday lives and public affairs.

2.Citizen journalism:

Citizen journalism has become a most notable concept in the field of journalism. This term mainly indicates non-professional ordinary people practising journalism and reporting their everyday life, publishing via social media platforms. Also, Chung et al. (2020) argues in the “contemporary media climate where ordinary citizens can readily function as viable sources of information and participate in the news-making process” (Chung et al., 2020, p.210). The influences of the internet, digital platforms and participatory journalism are observed within the media system, especially breaking news that focuses on some cases such as a strike

by a group of ordinary people on the street (Lagerkvist, 2010). Hence, citizen journalism has unquestionably provided more ordinary people with the opportunity to participate directly in more journalistic practices, news processes and media production (Franklin & Carlson, 2010). It is the “ordinary citizen acting spontaneously as journalism” in generating digital content which is shared on the social media networks (Kozolanka & Orlowski, 2018, p.222). Thus, among the diversity of definitions of the concept of ‘citizen journalism’, Roberts (2019) suggested that “citizen journalism is the fact that the activity is done by a ‘citizen’, meant to distinguish it from the work done by a professional journalist” (Roberts, 2019, p.2). This means that citizen journalism is mainly based on citizens’ activities and ordinary people who are called ‘non-professional journalists’ – ordinary people, mainly creators of many forms of information and shape production, for instance, of texts, images, charts, video, music and audio, which are distributed on digital platforms and social media news (Ritonga & Syahputra, 2019).

Additionally, citizen journalism plays an essential role in society, tackling many matters at multiple levels of the community. At the level of individuals contributing to making news and also providing the ability to engage in everyday activities in regard to politics, society and culture (Nah & Chung, 2020). Moreover, at the organizational level, Nah and Chung (2020) stated that participatory journalism has changed journalists’ practices, everyday routines, news agenda of channels and forms of their duty in the field (Ibid). The change of new media has led to the birth of a new term in the field of journalistic practice which is known as “Citizen Journalism”. Citizen journalism has become an essential part

of the contemporary community and given more opportunity for people to take on their role in society practically, for the ordinary people who demand to have their voice heard and, also, participate in the political process (Riaz & Pasha, 2011).

Previous research has established that citizen journalism is a new phenomenon which is used as a new term in the field of journalism even in the developed countries since the mid2000-s, and even in the KRI, citizen journalism has grown as a new concept of journalism in the aftermath of the Arab Spring since January 2010 (Mutsvairo & Columbus, 2012). Early in 2010, the Arab Spring wave in the Middle East changed journalistic practice, especially the method of news coverage, when the concept of “citizen journalism” rapidly became a part of protests in the KRI, as in other countries of the Middle East. In this manner, ordinary people increasingly used their smartphones to cover pro-democracy protests in the Kurdish community and uprisings of people on the street. Bebawi and Bossio (2014) stated that the circumstance of technological change and social media platforms have provided more and more opportunities for journalistic practices, especially the use of social media networks increasingly for reporting and news coverage as a form of media at the time of crisis around the world (Bebawi & Bossio, 2014).

At the Kurdish community level, citizen journalism has contributed to the civic community to express their ideas, opinions and thoughts more freely on the digital platform. In recent years, this aspect of the changes of non-professional journalism has provided a new method of news making, a new way of consuming news and a new way of transferring news stories from a wide

range of digital platforms. In this context, citizen journalism as a new tool in the field of journalism has helped to distribute true information in different forms on the social media networks in many countries (Allan & Thorsen, 2009). An important aspect of citizen journalism emphasised is that it empowers ordinary people to take on a role as journalists and field reporters by using their smart devices (Ibid.), for instance, using smartphones for recording their videos and editing them, then sharing them on their own social media. Hence, citizen journalism has provided ordinary people with power and a means of empowering the process of democracy in the Kurdish community. In this way, the ordinary citizen has obtained more opportunity to have “participation in the political process” and have an impact on the government policy in relation to public affairs (Allan & Thorsen, 2009).

3.Public awareness:

Citizen journalism is an important aspect of modern society, in many communities it has contributed to increasing public awareness in relation to public affairs and government policy, such as in the Kurdish community. Roberts (2019) provided an explanation of the connection between citizen journalism and public awareness as follows: with the growth of new media the interest of ordinary people has increased to use citizen journalism as an essential tool of public awareness. In this manner, citizen journalism has contributed to an increase of public affairs and public information (Roberts, 2019, p.3). Also, the change of new media has added a new way of accessing information by ordinary

people, which helps them to increase their knowledge in regard to public awareness. The media of public affairs, especially new digital platforms, is recently increasingly used by ordinary people to distribute their views of public issues and their perspective and opinions in regard to the public and private sectors (Rodrigues & Braham, 2008, p.50). Hence, this situation has grown when social media platforms have increasingly been used by ordinary people as the main source of information and news, especially “citizen journalists who are dissatisfied with traditional media’s version of events are telling their own stories” (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011, p.4).

In this way, as the researchers argued that the new technology changes have allowed ordinary people to conduct more engagement in the issues that are related to the public sphere, apparently this change has impacted the role of the traditional gate-keeper in the field of journalism (Blaagaard, 2013). Furthermore, Kaufhold et al. (2010) stated that the digital online content information has supported and contributed to create a political knowledge, and also, the online producers that are known as non-professional journalists play a great role in producing digital content and shaping content such as blogs in which the majority of content is devoted to issues in relation to public affairs (Kaufhold et al., 2010). Hence, the ordinary community members have full freedom to access and use social media networks; there is no role for gatekeepers in the procedure of creating, selecting, sharing and editing of digital content. Alamiyah and Achmad (2015) discussed that the new circumstance of shifting technology has offered a new model in regard to the public sphere and public affairs which mentioned that: “With this new paradigm of public

sphere, democracy grows rapidly and widely” (Alamiyah & Achmad, 2015, p.95).

Overall, therefore, it seems that citizen journalism has authorised ordinary community members in both sides in their homeland and diaspora with their voices and their access for information to think about alternative public spheres where they are interacting with the media channels and the way of engagement with alternative space to increase their voice and participate in controversial public affairs (Mpofu, 2016, p.21). Hence, the ordinary community members engaged in many campaigns in the Kurdish community which increased their voice and their opinion by using digital platforms to express their ideas in regard to the political process, policy, government and election campaign. This aspect has grown with the space of freedom to create a national debate for reform and change in public affairs. Furthermore, the new media allows citizen journalism to improve and increasingly evolve as a new tool of modern journalism which is for common ordinary people to take action to creating, sharing their news or freely expressing their views in relation to what is happening in their environment, in the manner of: “it’s news of the people, by the people and for the people” (Okafor et al., 2013, p.78).

4.Democracy:

Citizen or democratic journalism has a pivotal role in society, particularly supporting freedom of speech and space for civilians to express their views about a variety of issues in the community. Furthermore, the technological change and new media

landscape have provided an opportunity to transfer an easier method for ordinary community members to act as journalists and engage citizens in the process of media production and journalism (Banda, 2010). In particular, members of the Kurdish community use digital platforms for news coverage and post their views in regard to many matters: election campaigns, protests and demonstrations. The key goal of this engagement is to supply independent, trustworthy, accurate wide-ranging information which is pertinent to that which democracy requires (Noor, 2017, p.56). Hence, most of ordinary people’s news coverage and websites only concentrate on one aspect of specific news pieces, or they post their news from specific ideological views or perspectives in relation to their campaign on the streets (Bruns, 2010).

The literature on citizen journalism has highlighted several key elements that have directly connected in growth and implication of this type of non-professional journalism in the community, which includes: more and more access of ordinary people to digital platforms; more opportunity for citizens to use their voices and their everyday stories in the news stories in relation to public affairs and from people to people; the possibility of ordinary community members to act as journalists, to own space to express their views and freely conduct themselves on the digital media platforms; greater opportunity for the community to have ownership of the information and news stories; the rise of elitism competition among parties and commercial media; availability of great space to experiment with more contributory access to information and journalistic product (Bruns, 2010). These factors have mainly contributed to the growth of citizen journalism and supporting free speech,

democratisation of society, reform, justice, rights and wide national debates linked to the public sphere in developed countries and the same for the Kurdish community.

Additionally, there is an essential relationship democracy implication of participatory journalism and social network news. Thus far, previous studies of Banda's (2010) have provided the first exploration that revealed a correlation between the democracy of citizen journalism as a new phenomenon. Furthermore, Goode (2009) stated that the link between citizen journalism and social media news can support focus on the implication of social media news upon democracy and public affairs (Goode, 2009). Moreover, Banda (2010) argued that: "citizen journalism thrives in a context of democratic pluralism" (Banda, 2010, p.73). This aspect of the progress of citizen journalism has given more opportunity to individuals to express their opinions freely and have access to a wide range of information available on the internet. The freedom of the media landscape of the Kurdish community has allowed individuals to obtain a space to express their views in relation to public affairs. Interactivity of news media and new technology has given ordinary people the opportunity to raise their voice and help them to have autonomy as individuals to participate in the political process. Furthermore, the overcommercialisation of political partisan media in the KRI has pushed ordinary people to think about alternative media that discuss their life stories, their interest and issues in regard to public affairs. Moreover, the availability of new technology devices and adoption of new news media led to the creation of new circumstances for ordinary people in the Kurdish community to share and post their views, giving them more

space to have more engagement in the political and cultural process.

It is clear that the free press in the Kurdish community is essential to establish more freedom and more democracy in the society. In this manner, Simons (2016) argued that: it discovers the public affairs and support to establish a public debate in the community, it is assumed to conduct more improvement of information and engaging of citizens and also, create new methods for public opinion that play an essential role in the running of the country (Simons, 2016, p.2).

5.Social media news:

The relatively dramatic changes in the field of journalism and media allowed by the internet have destroyed the monopoly of information used by elites, which is creating new circumstances of free posting and free distribution of news and information among people everywhere around the world. This aspect has changed the way of receiving information from the term "information elite" to "information public" (Simons, 2016). Also, the social media networks have emerged as powerful platforms for citizen journalism, especially in providing new opportunities of participation in conducting mainstream live events/reporting on the digital platforms or engaging them with the elite journalists' activities, particularly in making news, producing stories and engaging viewers (Ali & Fahmy, 2013). This aspect of the change has directly impacted social media news and blogs. Thus, the shifts in the new technology have played an essential role in influencing the news environment in the Kurdish community and, also, ordinary

people have obtained their role by using their smart devices to make more of an impact on the Kurdish news industry and news organization agenda.

Currently, the ordinary community members in the Kurdish community have a pivotal role in social media news and collaborative media. The civilian follow-up contribution in the process of news creation and production, for instance social networks, includes sharing, re-sharing, generating content, blogs, commenting, linking, posting, tagging others, live stream on social media and rating (Kim & Lowrey, 2015). Thus, the role of citizen journalism requires ordinary people play an effective role in the process of gathering and distributing news through different digital media platforms (Ali & Fahmy, 2013). In this manner, citizen journalism indicates to a variety of web-based that the ordinary people as so-called non-professional journalists, engage in the process of news making and journalistic practices.

The development of citizen journalism in the Kurdish community and the use of social media news have been connected to many elements, especially the political circumstance, freedom of speech and social movement. The political and social implications have a great impact on the rise of citizen journalism and how users are dependent on the social media news as main sources to obtain their everyday information in relation to the political process and their community, for example, mainstream media in election campaigns or a protest on the streets have great influence on the users of social media news to increase their awareness about public affairs. This aspect of the appearance of new levels of ordinary people in involvement in the political

process by using internet and digital media platforms, includes the increase of citizen journalism as an alternative outlet and new methods of reporting information in regard to the election campaign (Flew & Wilson, 2008).

Moreover, the networking of new technology and news media, for instance digital content, blogs, smartphones and social networks facilitate users to be supported in more participation and more interaction, particularly for ordinary people to have engagement in public issues (Kim & Lowrey, 2015).

It is clear that the ordinary people in a community have a great way to share and post their information, opinions and mainstream views on a digital platform without any barriers or cost. This means that at the same time, the citizens are consumers of news and producers of news. In this manner, when ordinary people have selected to produce digital content or news in relation to conflict, protests or disasters, they may be aware or unaware of sharing to the mainstream news effort (Wall, 2017). Furthermore, this aspect of social media news is known as alternative media which includes many tools that help ordinary people (users) to generate news and digital content. Also, within this framework, citizens have more engagement and participation in the public affairs and public debates in the community.

6. Research procedure and methodology

6.1. Research sample

The sampling process is mainly based on the survey method that targeted a group of media students in KRI universities and institutes. The sample of this research project encompasses the media students who were able to use mobile journalism in their recent protest campaign in KRI, and then they have full awareness of the use of smartphones in media production, such as, producing digital content, editing and then sharing it on social media platforms during the period of the protest campaign. In the research project, the questionnaire was distributed among the media department which focused it on the media students who interact with the blogs, posts and footage that are produced under the umbrella of citizen journalism. The questionnaire targeted 963 of the media department's students as participants in the KRI; this aspect produces statistically acceptable numbers to obtain a significant result for this research project. The data collection process started in mid-March 2022 to mid-April 2022.

The online questionnaire form includes many sections which are divided into four key sections. The first section contains socio-demographic questions including: gender, age, level of education. The second section focuses on the role of citizen journalism in increasing awareness and knowledge of the social media user. Further, the questionnaire concentrated on the use of social media platforms by the participants in their everyday lives. The third section focused on the social media platform in

news coverage of the Kurdish community demonstration and how digital media help ordinary people to express their ideas and opinions. Also, a section was designed to focus on the participants' engagement and their interaction with social media news.

The statement was designed for the participants to be graded using a -5point Likert scale in the questionnaire. The key points in the scale are "Strongly Disagree" (5), "Disagree" (4), "Uncertain" (3), "Agree" (2) and "Strongly Agree" (1).

6.2. Methodology

The research project will apply the survey method in order to measure the role of citizen journalism in increasing awareness of individuals in the Kurdish community. For this purpose, the researcher designs a questionnaire as the primary tool for the data collection process distributed to media students who use social media as a source of news and information. During the research project, online questionnaires mailed in two ways – via Facebook and email – to participants in the media department in KRI universities and institutes, and this questionnaire looked for answers to questions from media students, such as to what extent citizen journalism helps users to obtain information and news. Also, how media students respond and engage in social media for instance, to like, comment, share and post on the digital platform. In the research project. The media students in Iraqi-Kurdistan universities and institutes have been selected as the geographical place for conducting this research project. The questionnaire was designed to explore first-hand information about the role of citizen journalism in public awareness in the community and social movement. The

design of the online questionnaire will cover key words of the study, which include: citizen journalism, public awareness, demonstration and democracy, social media news. Moreover, the online questionnaire will contain 25 questions connected to each key word of the study. Also, the online questionnaire will consist of four sections, the first section will be devoted to personal information of media students and the other sections relate more to the research questions, title and research variables. The data of the study collected through the online survey method (online questionnaire) by using online software, such as Google forms, which allow the researcher to create an online survey and send an online questionnaire via emails and social media accounts for the participants, which helps the researcher to save time and manage the data collection process in a good way.

7.3. Research questions:

This section will provide the key research questions in the framework of this study:

- To what extent does citizen journalism have a role in increasing public awareness within the Kurdish community in KRI?
- To what extent is the citizen journalism content more useful to gaining more information about government policy?
- To what extent has citizen journalism changed the news production and consumption process in the KRI?
- To what extent does citizen journalism have a role in growing the concept of democracy in the developing country?

6.4. Statistical methods, analysis findings and hypothesis testing

The statistical analysis of this research project is based on the use of SPSS 21 and used in a high level of data analysis and data testing in relation to the role of citizen journalism on the increase of public awareness in the KRI. Also, the project is based on the use of techniques in analysis and presenting the study data. The data process is encoded, tabulated, presented and organized in a descriptive form. Further, the research project is mainly based on the use of a specific technique, which is called Cronbach's Alpha. This technique provides the project with efficient tools in order to deal with statistical measures, in particular in connection to formulating categories such as the frequency and mean, and to find the percentage.

The statistical procedure that was applied to determine the results of the present study included:

1. Alpha-Cronbach – used for testing the reliability of the questionnaire.
2. Descriptive statistical data analysis such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and relative importance.
3. Inferential data analysis: Spearman rank correlation, simple regression model and multiple regression model.

-The significant level of all statistical procedures was determined at (F test), $P < 0.000$.

-There are criteria of the probability level of determining the significance of the test: P-value as:

1. Highly significant ($P < 0.001$)
2. Significant ($P < 0.05$)
3. Non-significant ($P > 0.05$)
4. Very highly significant ($P < 0.000$)

6.5. Reliability of questionnaire

Reliability means the accuracy, dependability, stability and consistency of the research instrument. According to Plano and Creswell (2015), the recommended appropriate sample size is “approximately 200 individuals (or more) for research” which implies that a sample size of 200 respondents is an appropriate sample size for the current research.

Table (1): Reliability

Variables	N. of class	Alpha Cronbach's
Citizen journalism	5	0.939
Public awareness	4	0.941
Democracy	5	0.943
Social media news	4	0.948
Total	18	0.95

It can be seen in table (1) that Alpha Cronbach was used to get the result of the reliability of the participation. As a result, the value of Alpha Cronbach equals (0.962), so it is a highly reliable questionnaire.

6.6. Part one: Demographic variables

Table (2): Demographic data

Variables	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	125	39.9
Female	188	60.1
Age		
< 25	282	90.1
25 – 31	18	5.8
32 – 38	7	2.2
39 – 45	2	.6
> 45	4	1.3
Level of education		
Institute	251	80.2
University	62	19.8
Participation in the campaigns		
No	161	51.4
Yes	152	48.6
How do you participate in other posts on the social media networks		
Comment	56	17.9
Like	204	65.2
re-post	5	1.6
send to group	34	10.9
Never	14	4.5
How much time do you devote to reading news and posts on the social media networks		
1 hour	73	23.3
2 hours	34	10.9
3 hours	32	10.2
4 hours	13	4.2
I don't know	161	51.4
Do you have social media apps on your smartphone		
Yes	225	71.9
No	39	12.5
Sometime	28	8.9
Always	12	3.8
Never	9	2.9
Which social media do you use to monitor news		
Facebook	270	53.25
Youtube	39	7.69
Snapchat	79	15.58
Telegram	32	6.31
Instagram	87	17.16
Total	507	100
Total	313	100.0

of male was %90.15 .%39.9 of the respondents were less than 25 years old and %5.8 of the participants were between 31–25 years old. Approximately %80.2 of the participants graduated from an institute and also %19.8 graduated from a university; %65.2 of the participants made likes on the social media networks and %17.9 of the respondents liked to make comments on the social media networks; %23.3 of the participants spent 1 hour devoted to reading news and posts on the social media networks; %71.9 of the respondents had social media apps on their smartphones and %12.5 of the participants did not have social media apps on their smartphones; %53.25 of the respondents were using Facebook; %15.58 and %17.16 of the respondents were using Snapchat and Instagram respectively.

6.7. Part two: Description of variables

In this section, the response of the respondents' opinions about the (citizen journalism, public awareness, democracy and social media news) variables will be presented and analysed according to the results of the analysis with the appropriate programmed, and related to the means, standard deviations and relative importance.

-1 Citizen journalism

Table (3): Description of variables

Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometim e	Often	Always	Mean	S.D	RI
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.			
	%	%	%	%	%			
X ₁	28	48	127	79	31	3.12	1.07	62.36
	8.95	15.34	40.58	25.24	9.90			
X ₂	114	80	85	29	5	2.14	1.06	42.81
	36.42	25.56	27.16	9.27	1.60			
X ₃	82	62	112	46	11	2.50	1.13	49.90
	26.20	19.81	35.78	14.70	3.51			
X ₄	97	59	88	53	16	2.46	1.23	49.27
	30.99	18.85	28.12	16.93	5.11			
X ₅	32	27	98	111	45	3.35	1.14	67.03
	10.22	8.63	31.31	35.46	14.38			
Sum	353	276	510	318	108	2.71	1.13	54.27
	22.56	17.64	32.59	20.32	6.90			

It is clear from table (3) that the total arithmetic mean of the (citizen journalism) dimension reached (2.71), with standard deviation of (1.13), and the relative importance amounted to (54.27) with a high level which indicates that the (citizen journalism) dimension, which was approved by the organizations researched, is good from the point of view of the research sample.

In addition, the total percentage of people who responded with (Always) was (%6.9), (Often) was (%20.32), (Sometimes) was (%32.59), (Rarely) was (%17.64) and (Never) was (%22.56).

However, it is clear from the table that question paragraph (X5) has obtained the highest percentage, as the weighted arithmetic mean is (3.35) and S.D. (1.14), while the question number (X2) has achieved the lowest percentage, with mean (2.14) and S.D. (1.06).

Some of the questions got higher percentages than others, as the arithmetic mean values ranged from (3.35-2.14) which is a good and high percentage. This means that the (citizen journalism) dimension is important based on the respondents of the study sample.

-2 Public awareness

Table (4): Description of variables

Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometim e	Often	Always	Mean	S.D	RI
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.			
	%	%	%	%	%			
X ₁	18	26	132	106	31	3.34	0.97	66.7 7
	5.75	8.31	42.17	33.87	9.90			
X ₂	32	47	121	75	38	3.13	1.13	62.5 6
	10.22	15.02	38.66	23.96	12.14			
X ₃	14	17	103	120	59	3.62	1.00 1	72.3 3
	4.47	5.43	32.91	38.34	18.85			
X ₄	12	31	119	98	53	3.48	1.01	69.5 2
	3.83	9.90	38.02	31.31	16.93			
Sum	76	121	475	399	181	3.39	1.03	67.8 0
	6.07	9.66	37.94	31.87	14.46			

reached (3.39), with standard deviation of (1.03), and the relative importance amounted to (67.8) with a high level which indicates that the (public awareness) dimension, which is approved by the organizations researched, is good from the point of view of the research sample.

In addition, the total percentage of people who responded with (Always) was (%14.46), (Often) was (%31.87), (Sometimes) was (%37.94), (Rarely) was (%9.66) and (Never) was (%6.07).

However, it is clear from the table that question paragraph (X3) has obtained the highest percentage, as the weighted arithmetic mean is (3.62) and S.D. (1.001), while the question number (X2) has achieved the lowest percentage, with mean (3.13) and S.D. (1.13).

Some of the questions got higher percentages than others, as the arithmetic mean values ranged from (3.62-3.13) which is a good and high percentage. This means that (public awareness) dimension is important based on the respondents of the study sample.

-3 Democracy

Table (5): Description of variables

Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometim e	Often	Always	Mean	S.D	RI
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.			
	%	%	%	%	%			
X ₁	39	52	106	85	31	3.05	1.15	61.09
	12.46	16.61	33.87	27.16	9.90			
X ₂	11	37	120	91	54	3.45	1.02	68.95
	3.51	11.82	38.34	29.07	17.25			
X ₃	12	44	128	90	39	3.32	0.99	66.39
	3.83	14.06	40.89	28.75	12.46			
X ₄	18	54	141	76	24	3.11	0.97	62.17
	5.75	17.25	45.05	24.28	7.67			
X ₅	50	46	136	55	26	2.88	1.13	57.51
	15.97	14.70	43.45	17.57	8.31			
Sum	130	233	631	397	174	3.16	1.05	63.22
	8.31	14.89	40.32	25.37	11.12			

It is clear from table (5) that the total arithmetic mean of the (Democracy) dimension reached (3.16), with standard deviation of (1.05), and the relative importance amounted to (63.22) with a high level which indicates that the (Democracy) dimension, which is approved by the organizations researched, is good from the point of view of the research sample.

In addition, the total percentage of people who responded with (Always) was (%11.12), (Often) was (%25.37), (Sometimes) was (%40.32), (Rarely) was (%14.89) and (Never) was (%8.31).

However, it is clear from the table that question paragraph (X2) has obtained the highest percentage, as the weighted arithmetic mean is (3.45) and S.D. (1.02), while the question number (X5) has achieved the lowest percentage, with mean (2.88) and S.D. (1.13).

Some of the questions got higher percentages than others, as the arithmetic mean values ranged from (3.45 - 1.13) which is a good and high percentage. This means that (Democracy) dimension is important based on the respondents of the study sample.

-4 Social media news

Table (6): Description of variables

Questions	Never	Rarely	Sometim e	Often	Always	Mean	S.D	RI
	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.	Fr.			
	%	%	%	%	%			
X ₁	8	34	116	91	64	3.54	1.02	70.80
	2.56	10.86	37.06	29.07	20.45			
X ₂	15	20	93	119	64	3.63	1.03	72.67
	4.82	6.43	29.90	38.26	20.58			
X ₃	8	35	114	107	49	3.49	0.97	69.84
	2.56	11.18	36.42	34.19	15.65			
X ₄	19	32	151	90	21	3.20	0.93	63.96
	6.07	10.22	48.24	28.75	6.71			
Sum	50	121	474	407	198	3.47	0.99	69.32
	4.00	9.68	37.92	32.56	15.84			

It is clear from table (6) that the total arithmetic mean of the (Social media news) dimension reached (3.47), with standard deviation of (0.99), and the relative importance amounted to (69.32) with a high level which indicates that the (Social media news) dimension, which is approved by the organizations researched, is good from the point of view of the research sample.

In addition, the total percentage of people who responded with (Always) was (%15.84), (Often) was (%32.56), (Sometimes) was (%37.92), (Rarely) was (%9.68) and (Never) was (%4.0).

However, it is clear from the table that question paragraph (X2) has obtained the highest percentage, as the weighted arithmetic mean is (2.63) and S.D. (1.03), while the question number (X4) has achieved the lowest percentage, with mean (3.2) and S.D. (0.93).

Some of the questions got higher percentages than others, as the arithmetic mean values ranged from (2.63-3.2) which is a good and high percentage. This means that (Social media news) dimension is important based on the respondents of the study sample.

6.8. Part three: Analysing the study model and testing its hypotheses

This section aims to test the main and subsidiary hypotheses of the study statistically and analyse its model to identify the correlation and regression between its variables, and verify the validity of the assumptions, as follows:

Table (7): A correlation between variables

Independent variables	Public awareness		
	Correlation	Sig.	Sample
Citizen journalism	0.751	0.000	313
Democracy	0.747	0.000	313
Social media news	0.712	0.000	313

*The level of significance at level 0.05
*There is a relationship between the statistical function between variables

Ho: There isn't a positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and citizen journalism

H1: There is a positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and citizen journalism

Based on the data from table (7), it is noticed that the value of the correlation coefficient between public awareness and citizen journalism is equal to (0.751) at a significant level (0.05). Its value reached (0.000), and through comparing the significant value, we see that its value is less than (0.05), which means that there is a significant positive statistical correlation between (Public Awareness and Citizen Journalism). This indicates the acceptance of the main first hypothesis, because of a positive correlation between the (Public Awareness and Citizen Journalism). Then the first hypothesis is accepted.

Ho: There isn't a positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and democracy

H1: There is a positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and democracy

It is noted from table (7) that there is a positive statistically significant correlation between the public awareness and democracy, which is equal to (0.747) and that the significance value is equal to (0.000) and it is less than (0.05). A positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and democracy, in other words, means accepting the alternative hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis.

Ho: There isn't a positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and social media news

H1: There is a positive and significant correlation between the public awareness and social media news

Table (7) shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between public awareness and social media news. Then, the value of the correlation coefficient between public awareness and social media news is equal to (0.721) at a significant level (0.05), as it reached (0.000) and by comparing the significant value, we see that its value is less than (0.05), which means that it is a statistical function and that there is a relatively strong correlation between public awareness and social media news, and this confirms the acceptance of the second sub of the main first hypothesis. In other words, it means accepting the alternative hypothesis and rejecting the null hypothesis.

6.9. Test hypotheses of the effect between the study variables

Analysing the regression between public awareness and citizen journalism.

Table (8): Regression analysis between public awareness and citizen journalism

Model	Coefficients				Model Summary			ANOVA Table	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		T Test	Sig.	R	R ²	Adj.(R ²)	F Test	Sig.
	B	Std. Error							
Constant	1.424	0.102	13.976	0.000	0.751	0.565	0.563	403.278	0.000
Citizen Journalism	0.724	0.036	20.082	0.000					

The main fourth hypothesis: This hypothesis states that “Public awareness and citizen journalism”:

Ho Citizen journalism has no positive effect on public awareness

H1 Citizen journalism has a positive effect on public awareness

The data from table (8) indicates that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was run. Here, the (p-value) was (0.000) which is less than 0.05, and indicates that the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (it is a good fit for the data). This means that the method is possible to be used to analyse this data and this indicates acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. R² value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable (Public Awareness) can be explained by the independent variable (Citizen Journalism). In addition, R Square for this study is (0.565). In this case, %56.5 can be explained, which is very large.

In other words, this indicates that %56.5 of the variance of (Public Awareness)

has been explored in (Citizen Journalism), which illustrates that only %56.5 of factors affect (Public Awareness) in (Citizen Journalism) and the other variables (%43.5) are due to random error. Therefore, all the data from table (8) indicated the acceptance of the fourth hypothesis which stated that “Citizen journalism has a positive effect on public awareness”.

Analysing the regression between the public awareness and (citizen journalism, democracy and social media news)

Table (9): Regression analysis of a dependent variable (Public awareness)

Model	Coefficients				Model Summary			ANOVA Table	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		T Test	Sig.	R	R ²	Adj.(R ²)	F Test	Sig.
	B	Std.Error							
Constant	0.484	0.146	3.314	0.001	0.803	0.645	0.642	187.295	0.00
Citizen journalism	0.366	0.054	6.797	0.000					
Democracy	0.372	0.078	4.739	0.000					
Social media news	0.213	0.068	3.107	0.002					

According to the results of table (9) there are three (Citizen Journalism, Democracy and Social media news) and their impact on (Public awareness) was tested, and the test results are as follows:

Ho There isn't a significant and positive effect of the citizen journalism on (Public awareness)

H1 There is a significant and positive effect of the citizen journalism on (Public awareness)

The first sub-hypothesis of the main fourth hypothesis: This hypothesis states that “there is a significant and positive effect of Citizen journalism on (Public awareness)”. According to the results of table (9), it is clear that Citizen journalism affects public awareness because the (P-value =0.000) is less than (0.05), therefore, according to these results, acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and rejection of the null-hypothesis.

H0 There isn't a significant and positive effect of the democracy on (public awareness)

H1 There is a significant and positive effect of the democracy on (public awareness)

The second sub-hypothesis of the main fourth hypothesis: This hypothesis states that “there is a significant and positive effect of Democracy on (Public awareness)”. According to the results of table (9), it is clear that democracy has an effect on public awareness because the (P-value= 0.000) is less than (0.05), therefore, according to these results, acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and rejection of the null-hypothesis.

H0 There isn't a significant and positive effect of the social media news on (Public awareness)

H1 There is a significant and positive effect of the social media news on (Public awareness)

The third sub-hypothesis of the main fourth hypothesis: This hypothesis states that “there is a significant and positive effect of social media news on (public awareness)”. According to the results of table (9), it is clear that social media news has an effect on public awareness because the (P-value= 0.002) is less than (0.05), therefore, according to these results, acceptance of the alternative hypothesis and rejection of the null-hypothesis.

Analysing the regression between democracy and (affective relationship between citizen journalism and public awareness)

Table (10): Regression analysis between (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)

Model	Coefficients				Model Summary			ANOVA Table	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		T Test	Sig.	R	R ²	Adj.(R ²)	F Test	Sig.
	B	Std. Error							
Constant	0.055	0.125	4.442	0.001	0.811	0.658	0.657	598.266	0.00
Democracy	0.948	0.039	24.459	0.000					

The main hypothesis: This hypothesis states that “Democracy has a moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)”.

Ho: Democracy has no moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)

H1: Democracy has moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)

As can be seen from table (10), it is clear that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was run. Here, the (P-value) was (0.000) which is less than 0.05, and indicates that the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (it is a good fit for the data). This means that it is possible to use this method to analyse this data and this indicates acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

In addition, to support that, (R²) value indicates how much of the total variation in the (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness), can be explained by the moderate variable (Democracy). In addition, R Square for this study is (0.658). In this case, %65.8 can be explained, which is very large.

On the other hand, this indicates that %65.8 of the variance of (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness) has been explored in a moderate variable (Democracy), which illustrates that only %65.8 of moderate variable affect (the relation between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness) in (Democracy) and the other variables (%34.2) are due to random error. Therefore, the results from table (10) indicate that the main hypothesis which states that “Democracy has a moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)” is accepted.

Analysing the regression between social media news and (affective relationship between citizen journalism and public awareness)

Table (11): Regression analysis between (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)

Model	Coefficients				Model Summary			ANOVA Table	
	Unstandardized Coefficients		T Test	Sig.	R	R ²	Adj.(R ²)	F Test	Sig.
	B	Std. Error							
Constant	0.145	0.137	2.056	0.002	0.775	0.600	0.599	466.272	0.00
Social media news	0.838	0.039	21.593	0.000					

The main hypothesis: This hypothesis states that “Social media news has a moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)”.

Ho: Social media news has no moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)

H1: Social media news has moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)

As can be seen from table (10), it is clear that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. This indicates the statistical significance of the regression model that was run. Here, the (P-value) was (0.000) which is less than 0.05, and indicates that the regression model statistically significantly predicts the outcome variable (it is a good fit for the data). This means that it is possible to use this method to analyse this data and this indicates acceptance of the alternative hypothesis.

In addition, to support that, (R²) value indicates how much of the total variation in the (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness), can be explained by the moderate variable (Social media news). In addition, R Square for this study is (0.600). In this case, %60 can be explained, which is very large.

On the other hand, this indicates that %60 of the variance of (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness) has been explored in moderate variable (Social media news), which illustrates that only %60 of moderate variable affect (the relation between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness) in (Social media news) and the other variables (%40) are due to random error. Therefore, the results from table (11) indicate that the main hypothesis which states that “Social media news has a moderate impact on (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness)” is accepted.

Table (12): The value of testing moderate effect of moderate variables on (affective relationship between strategic management process and non-governmental organization performance)

Mode l	Variables	Public awareness			Ran k
		Correlation	R square	F-Test	
1	Citizen Journalism	0.751	0.565	403.278	3
2	Democracy	Interaction between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness			1
		0.811	0.658	598.266	
3	Social media news	0.775	0.600	466.272	2

The result from table (12) shows that the effect of a moderate variable such as (Democracy) increases the value of (R2) from (0.751) to (0.811). Consequently, the moderate variable (Democracy) is a suitable explanatory variable on the (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness) which was the first rank to suitable explanatory variable on the (affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness). Regarding moderate variable (Social media news), it is the second rank variable affective relationship between Citizen Journalism and Public awareness; the effect of a moderate variable such as (Democracy) increases the value of (R2) from (0.751) to (0.775).

7. Discussion

Over 10 years ago, in the Kurdistan Regional Government – Iraqi (KRG) – ordinary people started using their smartphones for multiple usages (as non-professional journalists) in news coverage and protest campaigns in the Kurdish community. This aspect has provided more opportunities for the people to involve the ordinary community in order to raise their voices by using various digital platforms and engaging in the political process. This aspect has helped ordinary people to increase their awareness in regard to public interest and public affairs. This change has also facilitated people to become more engaged in the process of democratization. In fact, ordinary people look to find alternative media channels to express their opinions more freely and argue on public matters that are not covered by government media or partisan media.

According to the findings of this study there is a strong statistical correlation between citizen journalism and public awareness in the KRI. Roberts (2019) stated that citizen journalism developed as the awareness of citizen journalists, which is contributing to public knowledge and information, increased, and furthermore, this contribution has been increased as ordinary people have access to smart devices, using, shaping, sharing and recording video (Roberts, 2019). Also, another important finding of this research project, in relation to the role of citizen journalism on the increase of public awareness in the KRI, is that according to findings, %56.5 of citizen journalism has a role in increasing public awareness in the Kurdish community. A strong relationship among citizen journalism and public awareness has been reported in the literature (Banda, 2010): “giving ordinary citizens the skills to use all the available ICT tools to tell their stories, promote development in Nigeria and raise awareness about very important issues that affect their existence in their various states” (Banda, 2010, p.-1 93). Also, the current research confirms the findings that there is a positive relationship among democracy and social media news; in this respect, citizen journalism has a significant influence on the democracy and social media news with %64.5 in the Kurdish community.

8. Conclusion:

To summarize, citizen journalism has impacted and will continue to influence the individuals and groups in the Kurdish community, specifically in increasing awareness of many matters related to public affairs. It is important to know that

citizen journalism has a great impact on the public awareness in the KRI, especially in the political process, social movement and engagement in campaigns in regard to public interests and government policy. Also, it is important to know that the increase of use of citizen journalism by ordinary people has a great influence on expanding democracy in the society and development of space of freedom and expression. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that social media is the main source of news and information for people in the KRI.

In Iraqi Kurdistan and around the world, citizen journalism is increasingly being created and acknowledged as a way to use social media and new technology to raise awareness about crucial topics. Anyone can make news on their own channels and distribute it to the public via contemporary technology.

Many news organizations are now integrating citizen-generated content in official stories. It is critical to build a bridge between official media outlets and citizen journalists for this sort of journalism to be effective. For higher-quality material, citizen journalists must be instructed on how to report effectively, ethically, and professionally.

In the age of new media, citizen journalism is entering a new phase. This new phase in Kurdistan is akin to a transformation journey that occurs within citizen journalism as public participation in the context of new media. The uncertainty between news, information, and opinions provided by citizens via social media platforms is the most remarkable feature of this new phase. Nonetheless, because these activities play a role in raising public awareness among users, they have offered a chance for the public's voice to be

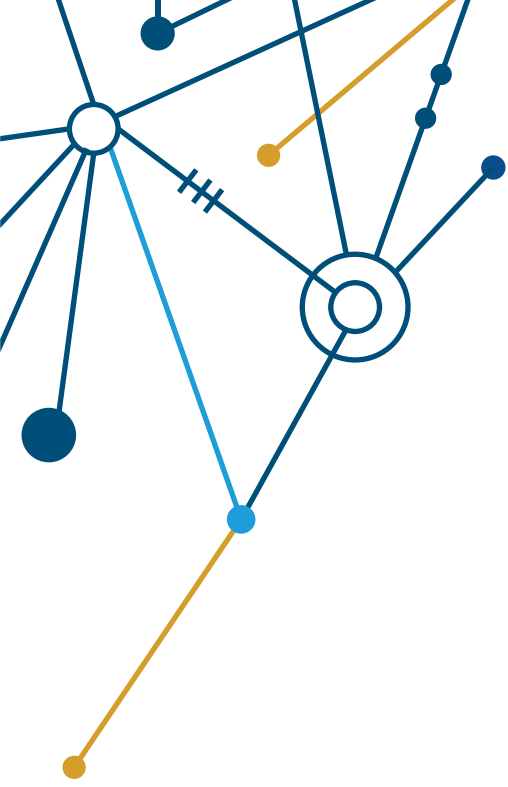
heard by the government and politicians.

This research adds to the growing of knowledge about citizen journalism and its significance in boosting public awareness in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as their engagement and involvement in the new media period. Furthermore, this research sheds light on citizens' relationships and how they freely engage in dialogues about public awareness.

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