A study on the Journalism Code of Ethics in the Iranian Media

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Abstract

Since the early 20s, journalism was approved as a profession, and a set of norms, ethical values, and quality standards were defined for journalistic practice. As discussed by Day (2005) to build trust, and improve the moral ecology in the society, it is necessary to rely on an ethical system (p.50). In this regard, the fundamental ethical principles, such as truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and accountability should be considered by the media to be credible to the public.

However, journalism ethics was not observed by all media around the world in the same way. Hence, defining a universal code of ethics for journalism became a controversial debate among media scholars. While some theorists believe that a universal ethical code should be defined for journalism, others present the opposite views. As they mentioned, due to the differences between cultures, historical, political, and societal of the countries, it is not possible to arrange a universal code of ethics for all media around the world.

Since the general objective of this study is *to analyze the situation of media ethics in the Iranian media, the correspondence of ethical codes in the Iranian media houses with the international codes of ethics for journalism, and the challenges that Iranian journalists face adhering to media ethics*, I arranged two research questions:

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?
RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice ethical codes?

To gather data, and find the answers to the research questions, I interviewed 10 Iranian journalists. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and then translated from Persian to English. After codifying the answers, I analyzed the data. The key findings of this research were aligned with the related theories; thus, they could answer my research questions properly.

In a brief overview, the main findings revealed that journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism, since most journalists in Iran are not professionals, and they do not have the qualifications of professionals such as related education, autonomy, independence, moral values, working full time for a media and getting monthly payment.

Furthermore, interviews show that there is no defined united or local code of ethics for journalism in Iran, and every media house applies its policies for journalistic practice, which are not necessarily based on media ethics. Furthermore, the ethical codes, which are applicable for journalism in Iran are not compatible with a universal code of ethics for journalism.

Regarding adherence to media ethics, as interviewees pointed out, the Iranian media face many problems, such as a lack of professional journalism, the political and economic dependence on the state, the absence of legal enforcement to support media ethics, and many restrictions on the media made by the government or authorities. Due to these issues, there is no expectation to improve media ethics in the recent situation in Iran.

Since there is no proper study on journalism ethics in Iran, and there is not enough information to evaluate the extent to adhere to media ethics in the Iranian media, this study would broaden the reader's horizon about journalism ethics in the Iranian media ecology.

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By doing this study, I have examined the situation of media ethics in Iran, and I am really satisfied with the results. I hope the findings of this academic study may be beneficial for future studies.

Index

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

Ethical codes for journalism have been on the international agenda since the beginning of the 20th century. Media ethics is a self-regulation normative guideline for journalists. As mentioned by Haraszti (2008) "Media self-regulation is a joint endeavor by media professionals to set up voluntary editorial guidelines and abide by them in a learning process open to the public" (P.9).

He also continues that self-regulation is the primary ethical principle, such as accuracy, personal rights, and so on, which helps the media to respond to admissible complaints, correct mistakes, and preserve their credibility (pp.10,11).

To clarify the subject of this thesis, first, the word *ethics* needs to be defined. As mentioned by Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) ethics is regarded as moral philosophy (p.124). Friend and Singer (2015) also note that ethics is a guideline to distinguish moral duties and obligations (p.xv). Day (2005) defines some criteria for ethics, as he notes that a system of ethics includes the main criteria such as obtaining the shared values, wisdom, justice, freedom of choice, and accountability (p.50). According to Ward (2010) "Ethics comes from the Greek word 'ethos' meaning 'character' or personal disposition" (pp.11-13).

To define ethics, other concepts such as norms and moral values should be considered. Ward (2010) also argues that ethics adhere to the norms in the society, by focusing on ethical conflicts (pp.15,16). In this regard, Day (2005) argues that an ethical system is essential to solve moral conflicts, build trust and improve moral values in society (p.50). Frost (2015) also points out "In practice, ethics is a way of studying morality, which allows decisions to be made when individuals face specific cases of moral dilemmas" (p.9).

In the early 1920s, journalism was accepted as a profession, hence it was essential to define a set of moral principles for this profession. According to Yavuz Baydar (n.b) "Codes of ethics publicly define the functions, rights, and duties of journalists, thus provide journalists with guiding principles on how to best exercise their profession" (cited in Haraszti (2008), p.21).

The ethical code for journalism is intertwined with the subjects such as professional journalism, freedom of expression, freedom of journalism, and democracy. According to Haraszti (2008) "Media self-regulation is an effort to impose democracy's political culture, independent of

political forces" since governments are political players and may not adhere to ethics, thus it is the responsibility of the media to supervise the state, to achieve democracy (pp.11,12).

However, in a country like Iran, which was introduced by human rights organizations as a not-free country, the situation of democracy, freedom of expression, freedom of the media, adhering to the ethical code for journalism, and the legal enforcement to support media ethics would be questionable.

Based on a report from NGO Freedom House, in 2008, the Iranian regime restricted press freedom and arrested or detained journalists or bloggers, who criticized the state's policies (Allen & et al. 2009, p.48). Moreover, in The World Press Freedom Index, Iran was ranked 173 out of 180 countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2021). Based on the report published in 2009, by the UN General Assembly on human rights in Iran "Serious restrictions remain on the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Allen & et al. 2009, p.48).

In this study, I investigate the situation of media ethics in Iran, and the general objective is *to analyze the situation of media ethics in the Iranian media, the correspondence of ethical codes in the Iranian media houses with the international codes of ethics for journalism, and the challenges that Iranian journalists face adhering to media ethics.*

Based on the research objective, I arranged two research questions.

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?

RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice ethical codes?

Here, I briefly discuss the fundamental concepts such as the significant principles of ethical codes for journalism, professional journalism, and the situation of journalism ethics in the Iranian media. Each relevant part has been explained in more detail in the next chapter (literature review).

1.1. The significance of the journalistic code of ethics

The journalistic code of ethics is on the international agenda in times when professionalism and journalism's place in society are discussed. To begin with, I will discuss the journalism code of ethics briefly. UNESCO defined the journalistic code of ethics as a guideline for journalistic practice (UNESCO, n.d). Belsey & Chadwick (1992) name the main ethical principles of journalism as fairness, justice, democratic significance, and avoidance of bias and harm (pp.9,10).

Regarding the importance of defining the ethical codes for the professions, other scholars presented the same viewpoints. As defined by Friend & Singer (2015) ethics is a human social concept related to a system of values and customs, shared in groups of people such as professionals. They continue with "All professions incorporate a normative or ethical dimension in their self-definitions of who they are and what they do that distinguishes them from other groups or individuals" (p.xv).

As discussed by Babran and Ahadzadeh (2010) "Journalism ethics tries strived to explore what manner and behavior of media and media practitioners are ethically acceptable" (pp.127,128). Ward (2010) also points out that the principles of journalism ethics act as a code of conduct to regulate the interactions of journalists with other citizens, and it focuses on the problems and norms in journalistic practice (pp.43, 44).

Here, I present a brief look at the historical background of media ethics as an overview of where media ethics goes today. Media ethics have passed five historical stages: Authoritarianism-Utopian stage in 16th to 17th centuries, Liberal stage in 18th century, Objectivity-Social responsibility stage in the 1900s, Interpretive and Advocational stage in 20th century, and Care-Communitarian stage is the last stage (Ward, 2011, cited in Babran & Ataherian, 2019, pp.2,3).

To recognize the way the media ethics is headed today, Belsey & Chadwick (1992) refer to the essential ethical concepts arranged for today's journalism practice such as freedom, democracy, truth, objectivity, honesty, and privacy (preface). According to Meyer (2011), these ethical standards were voluntary and beyond the law, issued by organizations of journalists in western countries to lead for the best journalistic practice (p.4). The code of ethics for journalism is an

example of self-regulation, and a voluntary editorial guideline to help the media be independent and credible with the public (Haraszti, 2008, pp. 9,10).

Due to the prevalent role of the media in modern society, the character of media ethics would be crucial as well. As mentioned by Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) ethics is an essential part of the media, and without it, there is no critical guideline for the media (p.124). in this regard, Day (2005) discusses the functions of ethics in society, by saying "A system of ethics is a cornerstone of any civilization. It is essential for (1) building trust and cooperation among individuals in society, (2) serving as a moral gatekeeper in apprising society of the relative importance of certain moral values, (3) acting as a moral arbitrator in resolving conflicting claims based on individual self-interest, (4) improving society's moral ecology, and (5) clarifying for society the competing values and principles inherent in emerging and novel moral dilemmas" (p.50).

Rothman (1984) also notes that journalism's ethical codes are self-regulation to "assure the highest standards of conduct, protect clients, and contribute to the public welfare" (Cited in Kovacic & Putten, 2011, p.33). As Ward (2010) points out norms are the instructions to fulfill responsible journalism in society (p.51). He also notes that journalism ethics helps to fix ethical problems in journalistic practice, such as the relationship with the sources, truth-telling, and objective reporting (p.44).

1.2.   Professionalization of journalism

Since journalism is a profession, and the process of journalism professionalization is ideological progress, studying journalism ethics would be essential to know more about the professional identity and occupational ideology of journalism. Before World War II, journalism was not known as a profession (Merrill, 1986, cited in Banning, 1999, p.159). There were many debates on introducing journalism as a profession. However, with the establishment of journalism schools and associations, and the emergence of the media code of ethics, professionalization in journalism was initiated (Banning, 1999, p.159). According to Obijiofor & Hanusch (2011), to realize ethics and journalists' role in society, acquiring academic knowledge is important (pp.62-64).

At the beginning of the 20s, journalism was introduced as a profession; as Davis (2010) points out "Journalists are something more than mere news reporters, editors, media employees, or the like"

(pp.91,92). The code of ethics for journalism was introduced in the 20th century when professional journalism has been initiated (Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p.21). Moreover, Hanitzsch & et all (2019) note that journalism is posited as a moral calling profession to promote the common good. However, journalism practice is influenced by various factors at societal and institutional levels, making it hard to negotiate about serving the common good (p.200). In this regard, it would be necessary to observe the media not only by the law but by ethics as well since there is a complicated relationship between the media and people. Also, the media can challenge people's rights and there is no guarantee that the media may act correctly in society (Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.125).

As defined by Waisbord (2013) professionalism is an ideological construct, and professionalism in journalism is "a set of normative ideas about what journalism is and should be" (pp.2,3). He also notes that professional journalism requires media ethics, fulfilling the quality standards at work, obtaining related knowledge, and the media discipline. He also refers to the democratic press as a relevant subject to professional journalism (pp.3,4).

1.3. A universal code of ethics for journalism

Regarding defining ethical codes for journalism, globalization may be one of the relevant concepts. The globalization of media ethics is a noticeable concept, which was introduced by some theoreticians in media studies. While the media and media technologies are becoming more global, the practice of journalism is becoming global as well. According to Ward (2010) "Global ethics is global in three ways": presuming citizens as "members of a global humanity", flourishing the humanity as its main principle, crossing borderers by "seeking fair terms of cooperation among people and nations", and forming ethical consideration about global issues (p.154). The globalization of media ethics is a serious debate, which caused arguments among the theorists in this field. Due to the globalization of news media and journalism practice, some scholars have argued for the formulation of an international journalism code of ethics.

For the first time, in the 1980s, the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) introduced the concept of international media ethics (Alleyne (n.d), cited in Christians & Wilkins, 2009, p.382). So, at that time, the document International Principles of Professional Ethics in

Journalism has been generated (McQuail, 1994, cited in Nordenstreng, 1998, p.124). In the 1980s, after presenting the New World Information and Communication Order and publication of the MacBride Report, the idea of an international ethical code for the media was initiated. To this end, Christians (2014) suggests three principles to reflect the international perspective: truth, human dignity, and non-violence, which should be prominent in media ethics (Christians, 2014, p.45).

Some scholars believe that defining a global code of ethics for journalism is essential. As discussed by Ward (2010) due to the technological progress, and the new pattern of media ownership, defining a global code of ethics for journalism is crucial (p.159). Hafez (2002) also argues "Internationalism in journalism ethics is important since foreign news coverage can influence international relations" (p.238). However, in another part of his article, Hafez notes that it is not necessary to demand global ethical standards as a prerequisite for global journalism (p.226).

The globalization of communication faced journalists with challenges. As explained by Herrscher (2002) it is not easy to reach an agreement toward united journalistic legislators, judges, and laws in international respect that would represent the ideals and values of journalists and the media in different cultures and settings (pp.282,283). Meyer (2011) also points out that the code of ethics for the media might seem obvious from a Western perspective; however, it is not evident in the countries, which are not free (p.4). Additionally, Christians & Traber (1997) argue that "The globalization of media spaces, for instance, Western European TV programs that are available in Saudi Arabia and Iran, among others creates ethical problems that should be addressed" (Cited in Hafez, 2002, p.226).

However, key media ethics scholars such as Ward (2005) suggest that "The globalization of news media requires a radical rethinking of the principles and standards of journalism ethics, through the adoption of a cosmopolitan attitude" (p.3). For instance, truth-telling, honesty, transparency, fairness, and resistance to propaganda are common ethical principles for the media both in the West and in the Middle East (Ward, 2013, p.100).

Several scholars have indeed pointed out that there is a great deal of commonality between Western and Eastern ethics. For example, Hafez (2002) indicates that the difference between individual Western and communitarian Eastern journalism ethics is superficial so it could not be accepted as a general paradigm to compare European and Middle Eastern, North African, and

14

Muslim Asian ethical codes (p.245). In an overall view of the globalization of media ethics, Ward (2013) argues that due to cultural, social, historical, and ideological differences among the countries, it is challenging to define a united universal ethical code for all media (p.106).

1.4. Journalism ethics in Iran

Since the focus of this study is ethical journalism in the Iranian media, it would be beneficial to discuss the relevant concepts such as regulations for the media and the principles of the ethical code of journalism in Iran. To begin with, I will talk about media ethics in the history of Iran. Unfortunately, in the Iranian media history, there was no serious attempt to ratify and enforce ethics for the media; the only attempt was arranging an eight-point regulation, which has been approved by the board of directions of the Iranian syndicate of writers and journalists in September 1963 (Babran and Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.126).

The atmosphere of the Iranian media is influenced by many factors. According to Ranji (2020) political, cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors made a special journalism culture for the Iranian media (p.12). In this regard, Ranji notes that the human rights organization introduced the Iranian media as the confined media, which means that journalism in Iran is dominated by the state (p.11).

Moreover, the situation of human rights in Iran is miserable, and this is thoroughly documented. As defined by Allen & et al. (2009) Iranian authorities posed critical restrictions on freedom of speech and the media. "Attacks on journalists critical of the government are commonplace with Iran emerging as the world's fourth-leading jailer of journalists in 2007 according to Freedom House" (p.43). They also point out "International human rights organizations, Western governments, and the United Nations have highlighted deliberate and systemic human rights abuses by Iran" (Allen et all, 2009, p.5).

The Iranian media are not free, as defined by Klein (2009) the Iranian media are under the control of the Islamic laws (p.392). In this regard, Sreberny & Mohammadi (1994) argues that the Iranian government controls the media and uses them to promote its ideology (Cited in Ranji, 2020, p.2). Based on Reporters Without Borders, "Iran is still one of the world's most repressive countries for

journalists, subjecting news and information to relentless control. At least 860 journalists and citizen-journalists have been prosecuted, arrested, imprisoned and in some cases executed since the 1979 revolution" (Reporters Without Borders, 2021).

Another issue with the Iranian media is the unstable situation of professionalism; hence, media ethics is problematic in the Iranian media houses. As defined by Shahidi (2007) after the Iran-Iraq war, there was a relief of political tension and economic improvement. Also, the number of independent professional journalists and independent press increased. However, the journalists working in the media that belong to the state, criticized government officials due to not providing the information for journalists. Some journalists, who worked in the state-owned media, also complained about the obligations to the news coverage of official functions, disregarding news values (p.1).

As discussed by Shahidi (2006) in 2004, Iranian journalists work in inappropriate media environments and they are confronted with difficulties, such as a lack of awareness of the readers' views, ignorance of journalistic principles; commercialization, a lack of attention to the real social issues, reliance on news agency's reports, and so on (pp.20,21).

Considering the recent restricted situation of journalism in Iran, adhering to media ethics is problematic. It is a concern if there is any code of ethics defined for the Iranian media, and to what extent those ethical codes are compatible with the media ethics in other countries.

Regarding the correspondence of ethical codes defined for the Iranian media with the international ethical codes for journalism, Ward (2013) argues the main ethical principles which are applicable in the Western media, exist in the media organizations in the Middle East as well (p.100). However, some journalistic practices in the Middle East are not acceptable as ethical journalism in the West (p.101). He also mentions that journalistic practice in the Middle East is more based on the community, not individuals; also, applying some ethical principles for the Western media causes ethical dilemmas for the media in the Middle East (p.106). However, other scholars such as Hafez presented opposite views.

In the history of journalism in Iran, there was no serious effort to identify and formulate media ethics, and the Iranian media still suffer from a lack of coherent professional and ethical codes.

Moreover, there is no proper study on journalism ethics in Iran. There is not enough information to evaluate the code of ethics for journalism and its functions in different media outlets in Iran. Thus, this study may help us learn more about the code of ethics of the media in Iran and broaden the horizon towards the situation of journalism and journalistic practice in the Iranian media houses.

1.5. Study objective and research questions

The general objective of this study is to analyze the situation of the code of ethics for journalism in the Iranian media, the level of commitment of Iranian journalists to the journalism code of ethics in everyday work, and the correspondence of the existing media ethics with the international ethical codes for journalism.

To find information and gather data for these main concerns, I have formulated two research questions, which will be divided into various questions in the interview.

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?

RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice ethical codes?

The main method to gather data in this study is in-depth interviews. I have chosen 10 journalists by applying the snowball sampling method, and I have interviewed them online. All interviews have been recorded electronically and transcribed; moreover, since the interviews have been done in Persian, after transcribing I translated them into English. Interviewing the journalists have been done anonymously, however, since I recorded the voices of interviewees, I needed to get the permission of NSD (Norwegian Center of Research Data) to do this research project.

It is worth mentioning that applying an in-depth interview provides me with a comprehensive picture of the interviewee's background, attitudes, and a deeper understanding of the journalistic practice in the Iranian media atmosphere. I will discuss more in-depth interviews, snowball sampling, and data gathering, in the methodology chapter.

To structure the theories and findings, I arranged four chapters.

Chapter one is an introduction, which is a brief overview of ethics, the code of ethics for journalism, the importance of defining ethical codes for journalism, professionalization of

journalism, a universal code of ethics, journalism ethics in Iran, study objective, and research questions.

Chapter two presents the theories about the journalistic code of ethics, the significant principles of journalism ethics, the professionalization of journalism, the importance of the code of ethics for journalism, journalism ethical dilemmas, and a universal code of ethics for the media, and journalism code of ethics in Iran.

Chapter three is a methodology, which presents theories about the qualitative research method, in-depth interviews, online interviews, and sampling method. Also, I will explain my research method, sampling, the process of interviewing, and the difficulties I faced to interview Iranian journalists.

Chapter four includes a brief review of data analysis, the background of interviewees, the interview guide, presenting the main findings, data analysis, and a summary of the main findings.

Chapter five is a discussion. In chapter five I will discuss the main findings and analysis and link them to the theories to confer how they could confirm the related theories. I will present the main findings and analysis related to the subjects introduced in the interview guide, such as the definition of journalism ethics, professionalism in the Iranian media, the necessity to define ethical codes for the Iranian media, a universal code of ethics for journalism, practicing media ethics in Iran, the major challenges for media ethics in Iran, and conclusion.

Chapter 2

2. Literature review

Since the main objective of this study is *to analyze the situation of media ethics in the Iranian media, the correspondence of ethical codes in the Iranian media houses with the international codes of ethics for journalism, and the challenges that Iranian journalists face adhering to media ethics,* in this chapter, I will introduce the related theories about the journalistic code of ethics, the significant principles of journalism ethics, professionalization of journalism, the importance of code of ethics for journalism, journalism ethical dilemmas, a universal code of ethics for the media, and journalism code of ethics in Iran.

At the beginning of the 20s, journalism was introduced as a profession, by the foundation of journalism schools, and journalistic professionalization emerged. At the same time, the ethical standards for journalism were initiated as well. This is voluntary and beyond the law guideline, leading journalists to recognize their rights, and social responsibilities and apply the normative values in journalistic practice. According to Ward (2010) journalists' relationship with sources, the challenge between truth-telling and causing harm, and objective reporting are the concerns of journalism ethics (p.44).

However, not in all media systems around the world, do journalists adhere to journalism ethics. For instance, in Iran, where there never was a significant effort to ratify media ethics, the situation of journalism is not satisfying. The media ecology in Iran is not a proper environment for professional journalistic practice since it is an ideological and state-owned media system. In such a media domain, journalists work under the pressures and restrictions made by the government and authorities, hence they are not able to work independently, and due to the fear of being arrested or losing their lives, they cannot be committed to journalism ethics. As defined by Ranji (2020) the situation of journalism in Iran is politically restricted and journalists are suppressed by the state (p.3).

In this chapter, I present the related theories to the media ethics such as the significant principles of ethical journalism codes, professionalization of journalism, journalism ethical dilemmas, a universal code of ethics for the media, and the journalism code of ethics in Iran. To begin with, I briefly define the keywords of journalism ethics, and later I discuss the theories and the scholar's views.

2.1. Ethics

Cambridge English Dictionary defined ethics as "the study of what is morally right and wrong, or a set of beliefs about what is morally right and wrong" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). According to Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) "Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, deals with human morality and is often regarded as moral philosophy" (p.124). The word ethics, as defined by Friend & Singer (2015) is "a discipline dealing with what is good and bad, as well as with moral duty and obligation" (p.xv).

Ward (2010) also argues "Ethics comes from the Greek word 'ethos' meaning 'character' or personal disposition". He continues the initial definition of ethics as "correct conduct, responsible practice, and fair human interactions according to certain principles and values". However, in a broader outlook, ethics analyzes "the practice of individuals, groups, institutions, professions, and countries". Ward (2010) also points out that ethics demands people live in goodness and right relation and through ethics, people express their deepest values. The main concerns of ethics are rights, duties, human flourishing, and the reduction of harm (pp.11-13). He also refers to the relevant theories of ethics, which are presented in two types: philosophical and applied. The naturalistic approach is the most popular ethical theory about ethics, which defines ethics as a "Commitment to the natural explanation of human normative activity", based on this approach, ethics is a rational construction, not a search for absolute principles (p.52).

As Day (2005) points out, a system of ethics includes five criteria: obtaining the shared values, wisdom, justice, freedom of choice, and accountability. Shared values mean a society needs to reach a consensus about moral conduct standards. Wisdom means the moral standards in a society should be based on reason and experience. Moreover, an ethical system should pursue justice and be based on freedom of choice when moral agents can be free to ethical adjudication. Accountability is another requirement for an ethical system. Without accountability, there is no moral authority for virtuous behavior inspiration (p.50).

Without any doubt, commitment to the norms in a social manner would be essential, as Ward (2010) notes "Ethics is the activity of critically constructing and adhering the norms, practically

and socially, starting from the experience of ethical doubt, conflict, and plurality" (pp.15,16). He also refers to the aim of ethics "The aim of ethics is the construction of a liberal democracy where citizens enjoy a relatively free pursuit of their goods within the bounds of justice" (p.5). In this regard, Frost (2015) points out that ethics is a moral guideline to help people decide on moral dilemmas (p.9). Day (2005) also notes that "Ethics instruction refines our ability to make a critical judgment and to defend those decisions on some rational basis" (p.4).

2.1.1. Journalism code of ethics

As defined by UNESCO, the journalistic code of ethics is a "fundamental point of reference, guiding journalists on their role, their rights and obligations and how they can best perform their job" (UNESCO, n.d.). A professional code of ethics is a combination of societal and personal values and laws (Black et al. 1993, cited in Kovacic & Putten, 2011, p.33). According to Ward (2010) moral systems or codes of conduct emerged via ethical principles (p.12).

Since the focus of this study is ethical codes for journalism, based on Ward's definition, ethical principles should be the primary requirement to define the ethical codes of conduct for professions such as journalism. Regarding the importance of defining the ethical codes for the professions, other scholars revealed the same viewpoints. As Friend & Singer (2015) note that ethics is a system of shared values among professionals, which differentiate them from other groups (p.xv). They also continue "The ethical codes guiding journalists are practical in nature; they focus on such day-to-day concerns as source relations, conflict of interest, and the need for accuracy in reporting" (p.xxi). Friend & Singer (2015) also refer to the function of journalistic ethical codes by saying that "A function of journalistic ethics is to lend continuity and stability to some shared idea of what is good" (p.xxiv).

Here it would be relevant to review the history of the establishment of ethical codes for the mass media. Media ethics have passed five historical stages: Authoritarianism-Utopian (16th and 17th centuries), Liberal (the 1800s), Objectivity-Social responsibility (the 1900s), Interpretive and Advocational (20th century), and Care-Communitarian. In the first stage, supporting the authorities was the aim of journalism ethics; in the second stage, journalists provided the information and views for a liberal society. In the 1900s, which was the third stage of media ethics,

the watchdog role of journalists was dominant. In that stage, objectivity was the dominant ethical value for the media. In the interpretive and Advocational stage (20th century), journalists were advocates for reforms and social causes. In the last stage, journalists are free, but they are responsible for that freedom. They are also responsible for modifying human relations and communities (Ward, 2011, cited in Babran & Ataherian, 2019, pp.2,3).

In 1973, the first draft of the code of ethics for journalism was provided by the Society of Professional Journalists, based on an earlier draft from the American Society Newspaper Editors. The press's role as an apparatus for public enlightenment and a precursor for justice and democracy had been emphasized in the draft. Moreover, journalists' duty to accomplish those goals was pointed out in the first draft of ethical codes for journalism. Seek the truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable, were the four guiding principles indicated in the draft (Friend & Singer, 2015, pp. xviii-xix).

According to Ward (2010), the ethical code for the Society of Professional Journalists of the United States was one of the oldest national ethical codes, which demonstrates the main ethical principles of Western journalism. This code of ethics that affected other ethical codes in the world posits a social contract between journalists and the public. Based on the social contract, "The purpose of journalism is the promotion of democracy". Hence, journalists are allowed to report freely due to their responsibility to reveal public issues (p.50). As defined by Meyer (2010) code of ethics "as in developed by the society for professional journalists provide a snapshot of a profession's ethical norms" (p.9).

At the beginning of 20 century, while the professionalization project of journalism started, the code of ethics for journalism was established as well. A different form of journalism history was essential in the professionalization project. In this regard, "The new school of journalism wanted a teachable history that could provide moral exemplars for aspiring professionals" (Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p.21).

According to Christians (2000), the history of mass media ethics was initiated in 1890, and later in the 20th century formulated distinctively. He also notes "The rights and responsibilities of media use, freedom, regulation, and journalistic conduct have been debated in Western societies since the oldest known newspaper was published in Germany in 1609"; however, in 1889, for the first

time, the word *Ethics* used by press critics (pp.15,16). In the 19th century, the examination of ethical standards for journalism developed in the United States. By 1850, the word *Ethics* has emerged in journalistic discussions; however, "The first use of the word in the title of an article criticizing the press occurred in 1889". Later, in 1890, the first code of conduct for journalism was introduced (Dicken-Garcia, 1989, cited in Starck, 2001, p.134).

2.1.2. Self-regulation

Self-regulation is a combination of standards of codes of behavior for the media to support freedom of expression and to monitor that behavior. "Self-regulation can also drive-up professional standards by requiring organizations to think about and even develop their standards of behavior". Self-regulation ethical codes improve the independence of the media from the government's interference (Puddephatt, 2011, p.12).

2.1.2.1.   Media Self-Regulation Guideline

Media self-regulation is an editorial guideline that emerges from media professionals themselves. By adopting such guidelines, "the independent media accept their share of responsibility for the quality of public discourse in the nation, while fully preserving their editorial autonomy in shaping it" (Haraszti, 2008, p.9).

Journalism ethical codes are standard codes of conduct to protect audiences and serve the public (Rothman, 1984 cited in Kovacic & Putten, 2011, p.33). These ethical codes are generally agreed upon by media professionals (Kovacic & Putten, 2011, p.32). According to Ward (2010), the journalism rules and norms are not regarded as absolute laws, they are "proposals or hypotheses about how best to conduct responsible journalism in the public interest" (p.51).

Pattyn (2000) also notes that "In an ideal world, media ethics would be based on well-balanced social dialogue in which various actors with various points of view participate" (p.11). Keeble (2009) mentions that public service orientation, freedom of expression, and the emergence of conscience of the profession are the main concerns of ethical codes for journalism (p.15). Babran and Ahadzadeh (2010) point out that media ethics determine the ethically acceptable manner of journalists (pp.127,128).

Day (2005) also believes that ethical codes can help media organizations to acknowledge the fundamental values and principles. As he points out the code of ethics has dual functions. On the one hand, they set up a common ground for journalists; on the other hand, they inform the public that the media organization is committed to ethics. All media organizations defined formal ethical codes. There are two types of ethical codes for journalism, professional and institutional codes of ethics. In addition to the primary professional ethical principles, many media institutions defined some codes based on the conduct of employees. These codes are beneficial to reflect the organization's commitment to standards of conduct; also, they may help new journalists be familiar with the organization's ethical values. Some of the institutional ethical codes for journalism are "The acceptance of gifts and other gratuities from outside sources, conflicts of interests, the use of offensive or indecent material, the publication of rape victims' names, the staging of news events, the use of deceptive news-gathering techniques, and the identification of news sources" (p.46).

In this study, the focus is ethical journalism in the Iranian media, here I present the relevant subjects such as the primary principles of ethical codes for journalism, the possibility of defining the international journalism ethical codes, and a review of ethical journalism codes in Iran.

2.2.   The primary principles of ethical codes for journalism

As defined by many scholars, truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability are the basic ethical principle for journalists. Applying these norms and values in journalistic practice helps journalists to know their rights, and obligations, and to fulfill their social responsibilities.

According to Belsey & Chadwick, (1992) code of ethics for journalism may be regarded in two aspects, input and output. The journalism input code of ethics includes the day-to-day practice of journalism. In this regard, truth-telling is a fundamental ethical principle for journalists; however, it would be complicated in practice. Thus, principles of selection, like the mentioned values: fairness, justice, democratic significance, and avoidance of bias and harm, should be included. The output aspect is produced by journalism practice, such as the reports, articles, and programs, and the information that reaches the public. However, since the main aim of having a code of

conduct is to ensure quality, it would be crucial to pursue quality in both input and output code of ethics in journalism to restore journalism's honor (pp.9,10).

Ward (2010) also argues that journalism ethics emphasize norms and issues in journalistic practice (p.44). He also continues "For every situation, journalists are expected to weigh principles, standards, facts, expected consequences, rights and the effect on reputations" (p.50). According to Babran and Ahadzadeh (2010) the main principles such as truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability are shared among the most ethical codes for journalism. They also point out "The basic professional code of ethics commonly appears in statements drafted by both professional journalism associations and individual print, broadcast and online news organizations" (pp.127,128).

One of the ancient ethical principles is the commitment to truth, and it is well-established in moral and legal philosophy. Commitment to the truth as a primary principle is crucial for a civilized society due to "A lack of integrity in human communications undermines the autonomy of the individual, a necessity to apply truth to the democratic process, and to demonstrate a respect for persons as ends, rather than as tools to be manipulated" (Day, 2005, pp.81-83). Truth-telling is considered a primary and central ethical code for journalism. Many of the virtues in journalism ethics relate to truth-telling, which is accepted as a fundamental code of ethics for journalism in most countries around the world (Richards, 2005, p.18).

In this regard, Callahan (2003) points out "Journalism is a profession with unique privileges and obligations. Journalists can claim their goal is to seek and communicate truths about the world on behalf of the common good" (p.3). Day (2005) also argues that there are standards in journalistic truth-telling. The first one is accuracy in reporting, which means the facts should be based on substantial evidence and verified. Moreover, journalists should inform the audience about doubtful facts, otherwise reporting inaccurate information will impair the credibility of the media organization. The second requirement is to promote understanding. To fulfill this requirement, journalists should provide enough relevant information to make the facts and the contexts of the facts understandable to the audience. The third prerequisite for truth-telling is fairness, which prohibits journalists from reporting biased (pp.84-88).

Journalists should search for reliable information and the accuracy and reliability of data are necessary for journalism since the goal of this profession is "To give solid grounds for practical decisions" (Callahan, 2003, p.4). The principle of confidentiality is also a crucial ethical principle for professional journalism. As Day (2005) notes "The principle of confidentiality imposes a duty to withhold the names of sources of information or the information itself from third parties under certain circumstances" (p.179). He also adds that confidentiality is an essential ethical principle to set up trust among individuals within society and prevent harm to others (p.182).

Regarding journalistic practice, confidentiality includes the protection of news sources and the decision of media organizations to publish secret or confidential information of a source (Day, 2005, p.179). He also refers to justice as a supreme moral value and an ethical necessity for democratic societies. Hence, journalists should consider their role to foster social justice since media play a decisive role in democratic countries (pp.381,382).

Minimizing harm is another primary journalistic code of ethics, which affirms "Recognizing that gathering and reporting of information may cause harm or discomfort". This ethical code can make journalists aware of different types of harm, and it can make the public cautious about journalists' activities (Plaisance & Deppa, 2009, p.380). "Power wielded by journalism imposes the responsibility to avoid harm by taking care before publication and being willing to publish corrections" (Callahan, 2003, p.5).

2.3. Introduction to professional journalism

In the early 20s, professional journalism was established, to introduce journalism as a self-regulation profession based on technical knowledge and includes monopoly and autonomy for journalists. At the same time, a set of norms, ethical values, and quality standards were defined for journalism as a profession.

However, sociologists, political scientists, and economists have different perspectives on professionalism. In general, Professionalism has been defined by five indicators: acquiring the specialized knowledge or skills, the acceptance of ethical standards, self-regulation to monitoring and implementing ethical standards, providing the greater good for the society, and the specific

rights and privileges (Richards, 2005, p.2). According to Andresen (2015) "Professionalism was, therefore, the result of a shift from an occupation to a profession, with shared license, responsibility, and admiration" (p.31). more from Andresen.

Before World War II, journalism was known as a craft or trade, not as a profession, so it has gone a long way to become a profession (Merrill, 1986, cited in Banning, 1999, p.159). According to Goldkin, there have been many debates in proposing journalism as a profession. In this regard, in the 1920s, Walter Lippmann and John Dewey engaged in a long debate about the role of journalists in a democratic society and acted as active participants in the society to engage the public in the decisions that would affect them, and the likelihood of introducing journalism as a profession. Dewey maintained that journalists should not be presented as professional, but Lippmann argued that they should (Goldkin, 2006, p.109). However, enhancing the professionalism of journalism was initiated based on Lippmann's model (Goldkin, 2006, p.120).

As defined by Waisbord (2013) professional journalists are introduced as "self-interested individuals who pursue private interests, while holding public position", and other times this concept devised knowledgeable and ethical behavior. He also added that "Professional journalism refers to a range of issues including the normative position of journalists vis-à-vis news and events, specific quality standards, technical standardized knowledge, accreditation, and organizational discipline". In one approach, professionalization in journalism is about "specialization of labor and control of occupational practice". Based on this proposition, contemporary professional journalism is about the production of 'newsiness', and it is not about public-oriented ethics (pp.3,4).

However, as Davis (2010) points out, introducing journalism as a profession is questionable due to a lack of theoretical knowledge and academic curriculum for journalism, a lack of independence and autonomy of journalists, the absence of membership in a professional journalism organization, and the absence of high status or high income; moreover, journalists are not licensed, they are not distinguishable from bloggers, stringers and so on, and they do not work for clients (pp.91,92). In this regard, Deuze (2005) also believes that due to a lack of consistency in the journalism field, and the absence of international consensus in journalism studies, journalism as an academic discipline is a contentious debate among scholars (p.443).

To define journalism as a profession, a list of professional attributes or technically the ethical essentials should be identified: a body of knowledge, monopoly, autonomy, and a service ideal (Goldstein, 1984, cited in Goldkin, 2006, p.110). Goldkin (2006) also notes that the expansion of journalism education around the world could fulfill the necessity to formulate a body of knowledge, which is a required qualification for the practice of this profession (p.110).

After the foundation of journalism schools, the initiation of the code of ethics, and professional associations in the 20th century, journalistic professionalization emerged (Banning, 1999, p.159). In the early 20th century, the academic study of journalism initiated with two notions. General public interest was the first one. Based on that notion, news media have been affected by politics; however, afterward, politicians wondered about the power of journalists, who could influence public opinion. The second notion, which appeared in the first decade of the 2000s was a desire to provide professional orientation in the new journalism programs (Nerone, 2011, p.9).

According to Obijiofor and Hanusch (2011), journalism education plays the main role in forming the future of journalistic practice, understanding of ethics, and role recognition. In the early years of the 20th century, the American model of journalism education has been established (pp.62-64). The United States was the origin of journalism education, but at the same time, some European countries started training journalists. However, in recent years, UNESCO has initiated efforts to establish a foundation for a universal approach to journalism education. The concentration was on professionalism, a combination of theory and practice in curricula, which may be the most remarkable outcome for journalism education across the world (Obijiofor, & Hanusch, 2011, p.85).

According to Hallin and Mancini (2004), there was a serious debate about the concept of professionalism or professionalization; however, the most acceptable type of professionalization is based on the classic liberal professions (P.33). According to the liberal model of professions, the practice of the profession is "based on a systematic knowledge or doctrine acquired only through long prescribed training" (Wilensky, 1964, cited in Hallin & Mancini, 2004. P.33). Although, journalism suffers from a lack of such systematic knowledge or doctrine. To define journalism as an occupation and social institution, the expansion of formal professional training has been initiated (Hallin & Mancini, 2004. p.33).

Regarding the major qualifications of occupation to be accepted as a profession, academic training, and other principles are necessary. In this regard, Hallin & Mancini, (2004) argue that autonomy, distinct professional norms, and public service orientation are three related dimensions of professionalization. Autonomy is the primary part of professionalism; it is about having control over the work process. The secondary dimension of professionalization is distinct professional norms, which is defining a set of norms for the profession. In the journalism field, these professional norms may include ethical principles such as "the obligation to protect confidential sources or to maintain a separation between advertising and editorial content, as well as practical routines, and criteria for judging excellence in professional practice and allocating professional prestige". However, professional norms cannot exist without autonomy. Public service orientation is the tertiary professionalization dimension, which means professions are oriented toward an ethic of public service, as in journalism, the ethic of public service may be crucial (pp.34,35).

However, Goldkin (2006) argues that due to the absence of monopoly over the journalistic practice in an age of blogs, and the absence of autonomy for journalists in the information age, defining journalism as a profession is questionable (p.118). Hence, maybe it is better to not look at journalism as a profession and consider it as a community of practice, which "involves a complex network of relationships and learning environments" (Wenger, 2006, cited in Goldkin, 2006, p.121).

2.4.   Professionalization and code of ethics for journalism

As defined by Waisbord (2013), professionalism in journalism is "a normative set of ideas about what journalism is and should be" […] "Professionalism is simply an ideological construct, a distinctive strategy mobilized by publishers and journalists to gain social prestige" […] "Professionalism is a conceptual category, a normative ideal, a narrative that reveals how journalism intersects with economic, political, social and cultural forces that shape media systems". Based on this view, professionalism in journalism is neutrality and objectivity to serve the public and democracy (pp.2,3). In this regard, Christians (2000) also notes that "the current phase of mass communication, routed in practical and professional ethics", which is a branch of normative ethics (Christians, 2000, p.15). The normative approach to the media encloses the

concepts such as law, ethics, and professional practice in journalism (Christians & Glasser & McQuail & Nordenstreng & White, 2009, p.ix).

Deuze (2005) also notes that scholars who studied journalism referred to the process of journalism professionalization as ideological progress, since the ideology could generate agreement about "who was a real journalist, and what (part of) news media at any time would be considered examples of real journalism". The advent of the professional identity of journalists in democratic societies is highly related to their occupational ideology (pp.442-444).

To consider an occupation as a profession, philosophical approaches provide adequate conditions. In this regard, the Socratic definition of the profession may be the best. This philosophical view can answer this question: "What do we professionals and philosophers- 'really' think a profession is?" Moreover, based on the Socratic view, "A profession is several individuals in the same occupation voluntarily organized to earn a living by openly serving a moral ideal in a morally permissible way, beyond what law, market, morality, and public opinion would otherwise require". Based on this definition, the members of a profession would consider disparate from mere experts, craftspeople, or artists. According to this definition, the profession is associated with morality, hence "where there is no morally permissible way to carry on the occupation, there can be no profession" (Davis, 2010, pp.94-97).

However, not all scholars agreed on defining a normative model for professional journalism. As Waisbord (2013) argues viewing the model of professional journalism in normative and positive terms and enclosing a set of virtues and principles for it, can be burdensome (pp.4,5). Nordenstreng (1998) also points out that journalism's professional ethics is a controversial subject (p.125).

2.5. The importance of the code of ethics for journalism

Since the media plays a crucial role in modern societies, media ethics is essential as well. In this regard, the fundamental ethical principles, such as truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and accountability should be considered by journalists to be credible to the public.

As defined by Ward (2010) journalism ethics concentrate on problems and norms, such as the relationship between journalists and sources, the challenge between truth-telling and causing harm, and objectivity in reporting (p.44). In modern societies, journalists are powerful in persuading people to perceive stories or ideas as they portray. Thus, it is essential to ratify the ethical code of conduct for this profession against ethical theories and systems (Eid, 2014, p.195).

An ethical system is essential to build trust, providing a moral gatekeeper in a society, a moral judgment to solve the conflicts related to self-interest, modifying the moral ecology in society, and providing clarification about the ethical values, which are related to emerging the moral dilemmas (Day, 2005, p.50). As Belsey and Chadwick (1992) point out, professions like journalism need to define service standards, be value-guided, and apply them in an ethical code of conduct (p.9).

Furthermore, Callahan (2003) notes that "Journalists are inevitably engaged in a moral and ethical enterprise" (p.7). According to Ward (2010) "Ethics encourages journalists to seek truth without fear or favor, to act independently and to do the sort of reporting that our society needs" (p.44). Ethical examination encourages journalists to examine "their basic moral and political principles, their responsibilities and rights, their relationship to their employer and audience, and their ultimate goals" (Keeble, 2009, p.1).

Regarding the merits of ethical media codes, other scholars presented their standpoints. According to Motamednejad (2000) "Media ethics consists of a series of covenants, behaviors, regulations, directives, and documents which the media editors or employees must adhere to in a society". (Cited in Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p. 125). Christians (2000) refers to the main goals of media ethics. He mentions the ethical discourse was initiated with two resolutions, the hostility toward media behavior, and applying this hostility for structural change toward individual behavior. He also points out "In this way, the rise of ethical discourse mediated between the 'lords of the press' and their critics" (p.20).

2.6. Journalistic ethical dilemmas

Like other professions, journalism faces some dilemmas and challenges in the everyday work of journalists. In some situations, acting ethically would have bad consequences or real dangers such as losing a job or death threat for journalists. In a country with no free media system, like Iran, journalists will face many dilemmas to act based on ethical principles. The serious restrictions

such as a lack of enforceability of media ethics, abuse of the power of the media organizations to persuade the public, the absence of freedom of expression, and so on, prohibit them to be committed to the media ethics.

According to Day (2005), a lack of applicability of media ethics is one of the severe dilemmas that journalists confront. Another dilemma is institutional ethical codes for journalism. These ethical principles demonstrate the commitment of the media organizations to certain standards of conduct; however, they may fail to arrange a guideline for journalists when they face dilemmas under the pressure of time deadlines. Contrary to voluntary professional codes, the institutional codes are mandatory, thus they may end up with the rejection of uncooperative journalists (p.47). The dependability of reporting the truth to the circumstances may be another ethical dilemma. Without any doubt, absolute truth is ideal, but it is just in theory; however, applying this principle in reporting depends on circumstances and the moral agent (p.84).

As Day (2005) continues "The greatest threat to journalistic truth is likely to occur during periods of crisis"; moreover, media organizations make other malpractice, such as withholding information, fabricating the story, deception, suppressing the truth, and 'feeding frenzy' which means hasty judgment in covering an outstanding story. These issues would be the real dangers to the credibility and trustworthiness of the media (pp.88-90). Callahan also (2003) presents the same view, as he notes "Intentionally telling lies, taking bribes, and indulging in plagiarism, fabrications, and slander are unethical and destructive to journalism and the common good" (p.8). Eid (2014) also notes that some media organizations abuse their strength to persuade people; so, they fail to follow the professional ethical codes (Eid, 2014, p.194).

Furthermore, Day (2005), mentions that deception is a common predicament in journalistic practice. There are two different views about applying deception; based on the Kantian view, deception ruins the trust between reporters and the audience. However, others are not so restricted about deception, and they believe that sometimes using deception would help to uncover the main stories (p.92). Day also adds "Invasions of privacy by the media encompass a broad spectrum, ranging from incursions on another's physical solitude or space, to the publication of embarrassing personal information" […] "But the ethical dilemma arises in deciding where to draw the line between reasonable and unreasonable media conduct" (p.132).

Economic pressure may be dangerous for journalism ethics. It happens mostly in the large media corporations, which due to a lack of commitment to journalism's public obligation, the economic pressures to make a profit grow (Callahan, 2003, p.8). In this regard, Day (2005) also argues "The profession of journalism is built on trust. The loss of credibility can ethically be fatal to a news organization" (p.95). Conflict of interest is another intricacy that journalists may face. This professional challenge will cause "Exploitation of a professional position for private advantage; allowing financial, collegial, social or familial loyalties, both past and present to interfere with professional loyalties; placing self-interest above one's duties to others" (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004, p.302).

Moreover, by accepting the Western ethical norms for journalism in the East, a conflict occurs, which makes another dilemma for journalists. According to Ward (2013) "Ethical dilemmas occur when the accepted norms of one particular culture, say the culture of journalism, rub against another set of norms, say those accepted by the prevailing society at large"; he also refers to the Muslim journalists, who adopted the ethical rules and standards of West, often have a moral conflict with Islamic teachings (p.93).

2.7. A universal code of ethics for the media

Regarding defining a professional code for journalism, some relevant concepts come into consideration. While the media and media technologies are becoming more global, the practice of journalism is becoming global in the current era. Hence, globalization of media ethics becomes a noticeable concept today, and many theoreticians in media studies focus on it.

According to Nordenstreng (1998) over the last century, journalism progressed toward professionalism, which prevailed by technical skills and social status. Afterward, the greater notion of professionalism has been presented, which was based on international and humanitarian orientation (pp.124,125). As defined by Hamelink (n.d) in the 1800s, a culture of professionalism emerged in Europe, and ethical codes for many professions were formulated. While professionalism developed, the ethics of journalism grew as well. In 1910, newspaper publishers in Kansas formulated the first formal ethical codes for journalism. And, in 1926, the code of journalism ethics became the oldest code of conduct for journalism at the international

level. In 1950, this code was confirmed as the Inter-American Press Association guideline. (Cited in Ward, 2014, p.440).

In 1936, the International Union of Press Association, and later in 1954, the International Federation of Journalism, adopted the international code of ethics for journalists (known as the Bordeaux Declaration). In 1956, the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), adopted a professional ethical code (Hamelink (n.d), cited in Ward, 2010, p. 445). Also, a set of ethical standards for the media has been arranged by UNESCO (Hamelink (n.d), cited in Ward, 2014, p.440). Generally, the idea of international media ethics came about during the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) around 1980 (Alleyne (n.d), cited in Christians & Wilkins, 2009, p.382). While journalism's ethics is understood as the dominant norm for journalistic practice, global journalism ethics can be another step towards journalism ethics modification, due to the globalization of the news media and the practice of journalism (Ward, 2005, p.4).

In the early 1980s, the document called 'International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism' has been created, which became a chapter in the history of global journalism (McQuail, 1994, in Nordenstreng, 1998, p.124). For the first time, journalism could present itself as a universal declaration of ethics by introducing that document. The document supports democratic professionalism and a set of universal values (Nordenstreng, 1998, p.124).

Since 1980, when the MacBride Commission published its report 'Many voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order', media ethics has been international with a world orientation. The report recommended establishing quality journalism education in developing countries. However, before that report, the focus on media ethics was dominated by a Western orientation (Christians, 2014, p.34). It is also worth mentioning that after 9/11, media ethicists introduced a more defining global code of ethics for journalism (Rao & LEE, 2005, P.99). However, among Western media scientists, the events of 9/11 caused challenges about globalization and a need for global ethical codes for journalism (Rao & LEE, 2005, pp.105-108). As scholars presented different viewpoints about globalization in journalism ethics, it is tangible that there is no agreement between them about this concept.

In 1983, the International Organization of Professional Journalism provided the international principles of professional ethics for journalism. Those ethical principles for professional and academic associations became a standard for ethical principles in Europe and North America (Christians, 2014, pp.34,35). However, Waisbord (2013) argues that professional journalism has gone global, and it is a process "to control a certain social justification based on specific knowledge and industrial standards of quality work"; but, if professionalism is recognized as in the conventional model of professional journalism, based on the ethics, the supremacy of this model as a global model would be controversial (p.3).

Another effort to evolve global media ethics is Habermas' discourse ethics, which has dominated journalism literature since the 1990s. According to Christians (2014) "Habermas tends to view international justice as an extension of domestic justice". Habermas believes that cross-cultural ideals could be a solution for fallacies and parochialism and insisted that universal human rights should limit national sovereignty (p.36). Truth, human dignity, and nonviolence are three major ethical principles mentioned in the international media ethical theories (Christians & Traber, 1997 cited in Christians, 2014, pp.42-44). These three principles are the host of dilemmas and moral issues (Christians, 2014, p.45). The effort to find the universal ethical principles of journalism continued and the media scientists presented different viewpoints. In this regard, Lambeth (1992) defines five ethical values for journalists: truth-telling, humaneness, justice, freedom, and stewardship of free expression (Cited in Rao & Lee, 2005, p.104).

Regarding the concept of globalization of media ethics, Babran and Ataherian (2019) refer to the new technology by mentioning that the practice of journalism is becoming global in the current era. The news media broadcasted by the internet or satellite influence people, governments, and different religions, traditions, and ethnic groups. This is a time for the media to modify and take a global approach to responsible journalism (p.5). "Having universal values guiding global journalism would help to solve the problems created by the governments, economic groups and journalists around the world, who hide behind the ideas of cultural relativism to defend communication systems that keep them in power and the people in ignorance" (Herrscher, 2002, cited in Hamada, 2016, p.189).

According to Ward (2010) "Journalism ethics should be global-minded because the news media and the practice of journalism are increasingly global". He also continues global ethics would be

beneficial to hinder the effects of narrow-minded values and social pressures on journalism (p.159). He also adds by applying cosmopolitan and globalized ethical principles, we could reinterpret journalism ethics and provide a global ethical code. Global journalism ethics reinterprets journalism regarding the cosmopolitan objectives, constructs new principles and norms for evaluative guidelines of global journalism, and applies this idea to reflect upon the issues and events (pp.158-160).

However, Ward (2010) in other parts of his book, notes that arranging global ethics for journalism is questionable due to the various issues: first, there is a philosophical issue about the ambiguity of the ability of global journalism ethics to solve the age-old universal ethics problems; the second issue is the sociological question about the extent of sharing ethical values by different cultures; the third one is a political issue, which raises this question: "What are the political and cultural implications of asserting universal principles" (p.173).

Moreover, Ward (2013) refers to regional factors as the most crucial factors to determine the ethical standards in different countries ". Regional factors, such as culture, religion, and politics play a vital role in determining what is ethical and what is not" (p.101). He also adds that arranging universal media ethics is controversial since ethical norms and values vary among different cultures due to the specific historical antecedents, socialization, and ideologies (p.106). The concern of critics of global journalism ethics is that the values and principles of global ethics for journalism are based on Western journalism without considering the cultural differences (Ward, 2010, p.173). Regarding this controversial debate, Hafez (2002), presents his viewpoint by mentioning that "Despite existing differences between Western and Middle Eastern/Islamic journalism ethics and in contrast to the overall neoconservative (Islamist) trends in societal norms, formal journalism ethics has been a sphere of growing universalization throughout the last decades" (p.225).

Regarding the existence of international ethical codes for journalism, two opposite outlooks are presented by Callahan (2003). On the one hand, he believes that "The universality of ethical standards of journalism exists because ethics and morality are the universal human enterprises based on the discovery of universal moral truths by human beings with a common human nature always and everywhere", and on the other hand, he maintains that due to the differences in cultures and dissimilarities within societies, the universality of ethics is questionable (p.11).

Finally, he concludes that the universal ethical factors expect professionals who are engaged in "the most basic function of distributing information" to be able to identify a universal ethical framework with the common values in journalistic practice (p.15).

Other scholars like Hamada (2016) present the same viewpoints. He notes that it is difficult to define a universal ethical framework for journalism that acknowledges cultural, religious, and ideological differences (p.188). In this regard, Waisbord (2013) argues that there are various philosophical and political models for journalism ethics around the world, but there is no agreement about a unified ethical framework for journalism practice (p.3). As defined by Rao and Lee (2005) there are only a few studies about universal ethical codes for journalism. They point out that "very few studies have taken into account the voices of journalists who are in the trenches dealing with varied moral issues daily" (Rao & Lee, 2005, P.118).

2.8.   The journalism code of ethics for the Iranian media

In a country like Iran, which is in the category of not-free countries, it can be expectable that journalism as a main pillar of democracy is in hardship, so Iranian journalists face a lot of difficulties. As defined by Gheissari & Nasr (2006) "Iran is a country in which contradictions between state and society prevail, between democratic polity and theocratic state" (Cited in Hänska-Ahy, 2011, p.123).

Regarding the awkward situation of journalism ethics in the Iranian media, which has made it difficult for journalists to adhere to media ethics, I have arranged these research questions:

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?

RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice the ethical codes?
To talk about media ethics in Iran, it would be helpful to start with the situation of media ethics in the Middle East. In this regard, Ward (2013) notes that many news organizations in the Middle East have ethical codes, which are Islamic-friendly and fulfill the press laws. Moreover, these ethical codes often include ideals, which seemingly look like ethical codes in Western media, such as truth-telling, honesty, transparency, fairness, and resistance to propaganda (p.100). However,

"some culturally accepted journalistic practices in the Middle East would be considered egregiously unethical in the West" (p.101), [...] "Many Western journalistic practices are anathema to the Middle East cultural traditions that are more oriented toward community over the individual interests". Also, journalistic values such as truthfulness, fairness, and unbiased reporting can be against the Middle East cultural traditions, which caused ethical dilemmas for journalists (p.106).

Regarding defining ethical codes for the media, in the history of the Iranian media, there was no serious effort to affirm such ethical codes. In 1963, for the first time, an eight-point regulation (to serve the public, avoid nefarious deeds to remain impartial, and proprovideformation based on the truth) was approved by the board of directions of the Iranian syndicate of writers and journalists (Motamednejad, 2000, cited in Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.126). "That regulation called for the press to serve the public, avoid dishonorable deeds, remain impartial, and love truth and information". After the Islamic revolution's victory in 1979, the syndicate drafted another article that was never ratified. Six years later, the Iranian parliament forced prohibitions on news dissemination, which was arranged to control the press (Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.127).

Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) also continue that in 1996, the conference of First Common Press Ethics for Muslim Journalists was arranged. Later in 1997, the Second Seminar for Examination of the Problems of the Iranian Press was held. In the second seminar, a series of professional ethics principles was proposed to the government, but it was never ratified. Hence, the Iranian media still suffer from a lack of integrated media ethical codes based on international principles and standards (p.127). As discussed by Meyer (2011) even if the press associations themselves provide the code of ethics, it still would be influenced by cultural and political factors, causing limitations for journalists (p.4).

Regarding the situation of media ethics in Iran, several scholars have pointed out that media outlets are under Islamic law's control. "Unlike most authoritarian press systems, governed by the rules of national law, Iran's press is controlled by even higher power-the laws of Islam" (Klein, 2009, p.392). Since the mass media's role is defined as generating the Islamic culture in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1979), the press regulation in Iran is constraining, and functioning to serve state ideology (Ranji, 2020, p.2). Regarding this debate, Iran's official news agency (IRNA) presents its main objective on its website as "promoting the interests and

objectives of the Islamic Republic of Iran.'' According to Klein (2009) such a mission "reflects the underlying goals of the Iranian government as one to honor Islamic law and values above all else" (p.395). He also adds "to strictly maintain social institutions build upon the tenets of Islam, the Iranian government does not allow any aspects of Western media" (p.392).

Due to the contradictions between the Iranian media sphere and civil society, and the theocratic and authoritarian state institutions, ethical journalism ideology in Iran has become questionable (Hänska-Ahy, 2011, p.123). The media in Iran are under the state's control and applicable to generate the state ideology (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994, cited in Ranji, 2020, p.2).

Since there is a close connection between professional journalism and ethical codes for journalism, I briefly refer to the situation of professional journalism in the history of the Iranian media. Before the 1979 Islamic revolution, most of the professional journalists in Iran worked for the newspapers which are dependent on the state; but also, during the Islamic revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, professional journalists were not independent either. After the war, there was an economic improvement, and relief of political tension, also the number of independent professional journalists and independent press increased. However, the journalists working in the media belonging to the state criticized government officials because they did not provide them with the needed information. Some journalists, who worked in the state-owned media complained about the obligations to news coverage of official functions, disregarding their news values. The Iranian media such as radio and television were under the control of the state, and the only fragment of the media, which had an opportunity to progress and experience independent journalism, was newspapers in both print and electronic types (Shahidi, 2007, p.1).

In this regard, Shahidi (2006) notes that based on a survey done in 1994, a very low ratio of journalists in Iran were professionals. He then argues "journalists who criticized the press for censorship and self-censorship; unimaginative content; shortage of specialist journalists; politicization; a lack of awareness of readers' views; ignorance of journalistic principles; commercialization; a lack of attention to the real social issues; a lack of job security; laziness; and reliance on news agency reports". Also, those journalists who participated in that survey described themselves as journalists "without an identity, careless, suppressed, rent-a-pen, dishonest, cowardly, semi-literate- irresponsible, superficial, unaware of Iranian culture, lacking any belief in the people, puppets and parrots" (p.5).

In 1996, another report disclosed the noticeable results about the Iranian daily newspapers publishing the news, which revealed that people were not interested in reading those newspapers, since they could not trust the press. Moreover, there were no skilled journalists in the press, and the most important newspapers just relied on news agency reports, which were not accredited to any sources (Shahidi, 2006, p.5). In this regard, Zare (1998) refers to the situation of academic training in journalism, as he points out in 1998, the results of other surveys displayed that ninety percent of journalists did not have any relevant education in journalism (Cited in Shahidi, 2006, p.10).

As discussed by Shahidi (2006) in 2004, the Ministry of Culture mentioned that journalists who are working in an improper media environment, are influenced by factors such as "Fear, poverty, a lack of access to the information, the absence of recognition as professionals, a tightening political atmosphere, a lack of freedom, unclear job prospects, incompetent managers, the scarcity of a true trade union, discrimination, and a glaring [income] gap between managers and the editorial staff" Also, he continues, the newspaper managers who were not aware of professional standards and legal codes caused destructions to the press (pp.20,21).

Hence, as Shahidi (2006) points out to cope with the media system's issues, four documents were presented for legislation, to establish a comprehensive media system and lead the press in a dynamic phase. "One document was a draft bill for the formation of a Press Council; another was a Convention on Ethical Principles of Professional Journalism; the third would draw up The Legal System of Professional Journalism, and the fourth would set out the Collective Code of Employment of Journalists" (p.20). However, by the end of 2004, the restrictions on newspapers elevated, and Iranian authorities blocked many online news agencies and news websites; since they assumed such media were harming national interests. This action put Iran near the top of the list of the countries arranging the limitations to using the internet (p.22).

However, the media ecology in Iran is influenced by numerous components. According to Ranji (2020) various domains, such as political, cultural, social, economic, and environmental factors affected journalistic practice in Iran (p.12). Ranji also points out that Iran is in a constrained situation, since "journalistic fields in politically restrictive contexts as solid and homogeneous domains in which journalists are passively suppressed by the state" (p.3). According to Giroux (2009), many analysts claim that the Iranian state is against democracy; it has generated a fearful

media atmosphere and "creates the conditions for transforming a fundamentalist theocratic state into a more dangerous overtly militaristic authoritarian regime" (p.88).

Regarding the political issues, which influenced the Iranian media, Shahidi (2006) notes between the years 1994-1999 as the Iranian newspapers dependent on the reformists started criticizing the authorities; "For the first time since the Revolution, the press had not only criticized the president frequently but also the supreme leader". However, in 1999 and early 2000, parliament, the supreme leader, and senior religious figures in Qom expressed condemnation towards those newspapers. The supreme leader called such newspapers 'enemy bases', and their journalistic practice 'journalism charlatanism'; and finally, the judiciary banned most reformist newspapers (pp.14,15).

Moreover, in 2003 the journalism students who protested were arrested by the police; journalists' detentions and banning the newspapers continued until 2004 (Shahidi, 2006, pp.18,19). Furthermore, as Shahidi (2006) notes the journalists' attempts to reform press laws were not successful, since "they have been influenced by party politics without sufficient public awareness and support" (p.26).

It is also worth mentioning the human rights organization presented the Iranian media as restricted since the media are under the control of the government. Hence, journalists who are supposed to be the main actors in society became powerless (Ranji, 2020, p.11). Based on the report published in 2009, by the UN General Assembly on human rights in Iran "Serious restrictions remain on the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the Islamic Republic of Iran". In 2008, a similar human rights report published by the US State Department concluded that "The Iranian government severely restricted freedom of speech and the press" […] "basic legal safeguards for freedom of expression did not exist, and the independent press was subjected to arbitrary enforcement measures by the government, notably the judiciary". Also, in 2009, the NGO of Freedom House published its Freedom of the Press Report, which pointed out "Press freedom remained extremely restricted in 2008 as the regime's conservative leaders continued to crack down on critical publications, journalists and bloggers with arrests, detentions, and newspaper closures" (Allen & et al. 2009. p.48).

Meyer (2011) also argues that the code of ethics for the media is not evident in not-so-free countries (p.4). In this regard, Callahan (2003) points out that repressive regimes try to conceal information and control journalists; the difficulties which journalists face are tangible. He also added, "Many journalists lose their lives or are imprisoned while trying to fulfill their professional obligations to further truth and the common good" (p.6).

The state's pressure on the media, censorship, a lack of freedom of speech, and so on, led to the suppressive media environment, which affected journalists and made it a difficult situation to develop ethical journalism. As defined by Hallin & Mancini (2004) the Iranian media are under the control of the state, on the one hand, the instrumentalization of the media may be a real threat to the professionalization of journalism in Iran. In such a situation organizations are instrumentalized, political criteria lead the journalism practice, journalists do not have the autonomy, and the media will set out interests. Moreover, a high level of political parallelism is another threat to journalism professionalization; since media organizations are confined to media and journalists involved in political parties, they do not have the autonomy, even a defined common culture; and they will serve the purposes of political actors (pp.37,38).

In a nutshell, based on the theories presented in this chapter, due to professionalism in journalism, defining a set of ethical codes for journalism is essential. Media ethics is a moral guideline for the media and helps journalists to recognize their roles, responsibilities, obligations, and act based on ethics in dilemmas.

Regarding defining a universal code of ethics for journalism, which is a controversial concept, there is disagreement among media scholars. Some theorists are in favor of defining a universal ethical code for journalism, and some are against it. The reason for disagreement is the historical, cultural, political, and societal differences between the countries.

As defined by theorists, in the history of journalism in Iran, there was no serious effort to formulate media ethics, hence the Iranian media still suffer from a lack of coherent ethical codes. Furthermore, the situation of media ethics in Iran is not satisfying, due to a non-professional media system in Iran, the absence of freedom for journalists, excessive limitations on the media made by the government, censorship, and political dependence of the media on the state, and so on.

In the next chapter, I will present the qualitative research method, in-depth interviews, online interviews, my research method, sampling, the process of interviewing, and the difficulties I faced in interviewing Iranian journalists.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology

This study's general objective is *to analyze the situation for professional the code of ethics in the Iranian media*. Since only a few studies have been done in the field of media ethics in the Iranian media, this study would help to learn more about the situation of media ethics in the Iranian media, and the challenges for journalists to adhere to ethical principles in journalistic practice. To help to fulfill the research objective and to do research, and gather data, I arranged two main research questions, which are related to the major theories about media ethics, professionalism, universal code of ethics for journalism, and ethical code for journalism in the Iranian media.

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?
RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice ethical codes?

To gather data, and analyze the research findings, I applied *in-depth interviews*. Due to the restricted media environment, a lack of freedom of expression, and strict control of the state over the Iranian media, journalists are frightened to reveal their thoughts and viewpoints about the difficulties they face in journalistic practice. Due to the fear of losing a job, or getting arrested, it is not easy for them to trust a person, even a researcher, and talk about their work issues.

The in-depth interview can be a proper research method to explore the attitudes, values, experiences, thoughts, and beliefs of Iranian journalists about journalistic practice and the challenges they face to adhere to media ethics; since the in-depth interview is more personal than a survey method, and it is not like a questionnaire with a focus on short answers. Hence, an in-depth interview helps a researcher to have a comprehensive overview of the attitudes, thoughts, and values of the interviewees. Even if the interviewees try to skip answering the questions or answer shortly (due to fear or mistrust), a semi-structured in-depth interview (which I apply in this research) helps to receive more inclusive answers and listen to the long explanations.

Since the in-depth interview is a qualitative research method, it would be beneficial to have a quick review of the qualitative research method, its advantages, and disadvantages.

3.1. Qualitative research method

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011) "Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Cited in Creswell, 2013, p.44).

Every type of research method includes some advantages and disadvantages. As defined by Bryman (2008), qualitative research is more flexible than quantitative research since it is unstructured and does not require a predetermined format. Thus, the researcher may change the direction of the investigation easily. Moreover, qualitative research is more prone to provide descriptive details in reporting the research findings (p.386). Also, due to the contextual approach of qualitative research, the achieved data would be richer than quantitative research (p.394).

However, the major difficulty of qualitative research is a lack of reliability and external validity. According to Bryman (2008) qualitative findings mostly rely on researchers' unsystematic views, and their close personal relationship with the respondents; hence, they may be too subjective. Furthermore, since qualitative research is unstructured and often relies on the researcher's insight, it would be difficult to replicate its findings. A lack of transparency is another issue of qualitative research, which means that it is not clear what the researcher did and how they reached the conclusion. moreover, the process of data analysis is unclear (pp.1391,1392).

While applying a qualitative research method (in-depth interview) has benefited my research to be more flexible with the opportunity to achieve more descriptive details to report the findings, it had a few problems; and due to those disadvantaged, the reliability and external validity of this study is questionable as well.

3.2. In-depth interviews

One of the most applicable data collection methods in media and communication research is interviewing since it is the best way to know what people think (Bower, 1973, cited in Jensen, 2002, p.240). As defined by Bryman (2008) the aim of the interview in social research is to explore the behavior, attitudes, norms, beliefs, and values of interviewees (p.192).

"Interviews are a more personalized form of data collection method than questionnaires, [...] by using the same research protocol as questionnaire surveys" (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p.78). As discussed by Babbie (2008) there are some advantages to doing an interview survey. By applying this method, the researcher would not have a problem with incomplete questionnaires or skipping some respondents' questions. Hence, an interview survey may receive complete answered questions compared with self-administered questionnaires (p.302).

In this study, I applied semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather data. According to Schutt (2012) "Intensive or depth interviewing is a qualitative method of finding out about people's experiences, thoughts, and feelings". He also adds unlike the more structured interviewing, intensive or depth interviewing relies on open-ended questions; thus, instead of asking standard questions, intensive interviewers may allow the specific content and order of questions, which can be varied between different interviewees. The intensive interview is often much longer than standardized interviews, and its goal is to map a comprehensive picture of the interviewee's background, attitudes, and actions of interviewees; hence, like the participant observation studies, the researcher engages actively with the subject, listens to lengthy explanations, and ask follow-up questions related to the preceding answers. An intensive interview is less structured since the interviewers expect respondents to answer questions in their own words (pp.303,304).

As defined by Jensen (2002) "In-depth interviewing, with its affinities to the conversation, maybe well suited to tap social agents' perspective on the media since spoken language remains a primary and familiar mode of social language interaction and one that people habitually relate to the technological media". However, this research method has some weak points as well. For instance, people do not always say what they think, or what they mean when they say something (p.240). In in-depth interviewing, the responsibility of the researcher increases, while evaluating the depth of a qualitative interview. This type of interview aims to clarify the respondent's terminology or investigate a conceptual structure, but it may also articulate or repress the insights (Kvale, 1996, cited in Jensen, 2002, p.242). Hence, while depth is considered a strong point of qualitative research, it may also cause significant issues for the ethics and politics of research (Jensen, 2002, p.242).

Without any doubt, the interview has both strong and weak points. Unlike a questionnaire, an interview gives a chance for the interviewer to record personal observations and comments, and

he or she may clarify the ambiguities of the questions. "However, interviews are time-consuming and resource-intensive" (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p.56). In this regard, Bryman (2008) points out that a qualitative interview is flexible, and it gives a chance for the interviewer to change the order of questions, follow up the leads, and clean up inconsistencies in the answers (p.456).

One of the major issues of qualitative research is a lack of reliability, which means the replication of the study would be problematic, since the interview is a qualitative research method, the reliability of interviewing would be questionable as well. According to Bhattacherjee (2012) **"**Reliability is the degree to which the measure of a construct is consistent or dependable" (p.56). "Reliability means that a measurement procedure yields consistent scores when the phenomenon being measured is not changing […] if a measure is reliable, it is affected less by random error, or chance variation" (Schutt, 2012, p.124).

As defined by Bryman (2008) external reliability, which means the degree of replication of the study, will be troublesome in qualitative research, since it is impossible to freeze a social setting to make it replicable (p.376). Another major issue of qualitative research is a lack of external validity. "Validity, often called construct validity, refers to the extent to which a measure adequately represents the underlying construct that it is supposed to measure" (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p.58).

According to Bryman (2008), external validity is the generalizability of the study's findings across social settings (p.376). He also points out that applying observation or unstructured interviews with a small sample makes it difficult to generalize the findings to other settings (p.391). In this study, I apply online interviews to gather data. Regarding online interviews, Schutt (2012) argues that online interviewing can make a written record of the whole process of the interview, so there would not be any need for typing. However, the issue of this type of interview is a lack of facial expression, intonation, and body language (p.308).

"Online interviews can be either synchronous—in which the interviewer and interviewee exchange messages as in online chatting—or asynchronous—in which the interviewee can respond to the interviewer's questions, whenever it is convenient, usually through e-mail" (James & Busher 2009, cited in Schutt, 2012, p.308). Synchronous interviewing is like an in-person interview, but it is vulnerable to interruptions and needs a careful arrangement; while

"asynchronous interviewing allows interviewees to provide more thoughtful and developed answers" (King & Horrocks, 2010, cited in Schutt, 2012, p.308).

3.3. Interviewing Iranian journalists

By applying online interviews, I interviewed 10 journalists, who are some of the most experienced journalists working in different media outlets. And I chose a research sample by applying the snowball sampling method.

As mentioned by Bhattacherjee (2012) "Sampling is the statistical process of selecting a subset (called a "sample") of a population of interest for purposes of making observations and statistical inferences about that population" (p.65).

"Snowball refers to the process of accumulation as each located subject suggests other subjects". In snowball sampling, the researcher collects data from a few members of the target population, who are accessible; then asks them to locate other members of the population (Babbie, 2010, p.193). Snowball sampling is in the category of non-probability sampling methods. Non-probability samplings are often used in qualitative research. As defined by Bhattacherjee (2012) "non-probability sampling is a sampling technique in which some units of the population have zero chance of selection or where the probability of selection cannot be accurately determined" (p.69).

According to Schutt (2012) in the non-probability sampling method, the researcher may not know the likelihood of selecting each element of a population (p.124). He also points out that while focusing on a small sample allows the researcher to portray the activities intensively, it also limits the generalization. "The use of nonprobability sampling methods in quantitative research too often reflects a lack of concern with generalizability or a lack of understanding of the importance of probability-based sampling" (p.154). In this regard, Bhattacherjee (2012) also argues that tapplyingsnowball sampling when accessing the population is hard or there is no sampling frame, this type of sampling would be empirical. However, this sampling method is barely conducting representative samples (p.70).

As explained by Bryman (2008), it is questionable that the sample in snowball sampling would be representative of the population. Moreover, Schutt (2012) refers to the issue of snowball sampling,

which is the absence of generalizability, which means snowball sampling does not allow the researcher to be confident that the sample represents the total population (p.158).

Here, I discuss some difficulties I confronted while doing this research. To gather data, I faced some problems; The first one was the Corona pandemic situation, which made it impossible to interview the journalists face to face. Hence, I chose an online interview instead. Here Bring problems

The interviewees are working in different media outlets in five major cities in Iran. The media houses, such as Jam-e Jam newspaper (Tehran), Radio Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) in Tehran, Med & Lab monthly magazine (Tehran), ILNA News Agency (Tehran), ISNA News Agency (a branch in Esfahan), IRNA News Agency (a branch in Isfahan), Sobhe-Sahel newspaper (Hormozgan), Young Journalists Club (a branch in Kordestan), Nasim News newspaper (Gilan), and Borna News Agency (a branch in Gilan). The interview questions have been asked via online interview using online apps. The focus of the interview questions is to examine the existence of ethical codes for journalism in the Iranian media, adhering to media ethics by the journalists in everyday work, the challenges they faced to adhere to ethical codes, and the compatibility of media ethics in Iran with the international media ethics.

To begin with, I chose 26 journalists to interview, however, not all of them cooperated with me in this research, since they changed their minds suddenly. It caused me stress and I was concerned about interviewing and gathering data. Fortunately, the interviewees introduced some of their colleagues, who were willing to cooperate in this study. Finally, I interviewed 11 journalists, but one of the interviews was not informative enough, and I had to eliminate it from the analyzing part.

I interviewed journalists online, via skype and What's-App. To make all interviewees sure that I will not keep the recorded voices, their personal information, or the telephone numbers, I informed them that I received permission from NSD, which made me commit to eliminating all recorded files and personal information after data analysis. After recording and transcribing all interviews, I translated them from Persian into English, which was a time-consuming process. Then I codified the interviews and analyzed and discussed them.

Regarding the sampling method for this research, regardless of some disadvantages of applying snowball sampling, I had no other choice but to apply this sampling method. Since, due to the strict political situation, and improper media system in Iran, I was not able to choose a bigger sample by applying another sampling method. If I decided to send a high number of questionnaires to the journalists, the government could be suspicious and could make trouble for journalists or stop my research. Thus, I could only make initial contact with a small group of journalists, and they helped me to establish contacts with others, who met the selection criteria.

All in all, the corona situation made it hard to travel to my country and interview the journalists, and I had to interview them online. Moreover, due to the supervision of the government on the media, I did not have any chance to have a bigger research population or apply a survey method. Also, I had to get permission from NSD to do research, and it was a long-term process. The last problem was the restricted political situation in Iran, and a lack of job security for journalists, which made them scared of cooperating in this study and caused a lot of stress for me.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the main findings and analyze the data. Also, I will introduce the interview guide, which is arranged to gather the proper answers for the research questions, focusing on the main findings, analysis, and presenting the most relevant interviewee's quotes.

Chapter 4

4. Research findings and analysis

With a glance at the structure of this chapter, I present the main research findings, which are the most relevant interviewee's answers. After codifying the interview findings and arranging them in the tables, I analyzed the data, and categorized the research findings into four major categories; first the interviewee's position, second the interview guide, third presenting the interview questions (each question contains its sub-categories); and finally, a summary of the main research findings.

4.1. A brief review of data analysis structure

Since the general objective of this study is to analyze the situation of the professional code of ethics in the Iranian media, I arranged two research questions:

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?

RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice the ethical codes?

To gather data for answering these questions, I chose an in-depth interview which is the most applicable method to collect data in the field of media. According to Schutt, (2012) in-depth interview could provide a comprehensive understanding of the interviewee's experiences, thoughts, feelings, background, attitudes, and actions (pp.303, 304).

Furthermore, I chose the snowball sampling method to find the research population. By applying this sampling method, I selected 10 Iranian journalists, who work in different media outlets, and I interviewed them online. The reason to choose snowball sampling was a low possibility of choosing a bigger study sample, due to the control of Iranian journalists by the government.

With a glance at the structure of this chapter, there is a representation of the research findings. After codifying the interviews' answers, I analyzed the data, then I wrote the overall results. I categorized the research findings into three major categories: first the interviewee's position, second the interview questions, and later five sub-categories, which include the interviewee's answers. In the first part, I wrote a brief introduction about each interviewee such as gender, age,

years of work experience, and job position. The second part includes four categories of the research question, which each contains its sub-category questions.

In the last part, I brought the research findings related to each category of the interview questions. Then I defined five sub-categories for each, which include the major interviewee's answers to the different questions in its sub-category. The data analysis model is based on the interviewee's answers to the questions. To analyze data in each category, first, I mentioned the key findings, which are the most repetitive answers and viewpoints of the interviewees to each question. Then I focused on the most informative quotes.

4.2.   The interviewees

As I discussed in the previous parts, by snowball sampling, I chose 10 journalists and news editors, who are experienced journalists and work in different media outlets in five major cities in Iran. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Later, I translated all interviews from Persian into English.

Here I provide a quick review of journalists' background and their work experiences.

Journalist A is female, 41 years old. She has 2 years of work experience as a journalist, photographer, reporter, and News Service Secretary in the Med & Lab monthly magazine. The main office of this magazine is in Tehran. (Date of interview: 9th March 2021).

Journalist B is male, 43 years old. He has 8 years of work experience as an editor of Night Shift in the Iranian labor news agency (ILNA), located in Tehran. (Date of interview: 21st March 2021).

Journalist C is male, 34 years old. He has 5 years of work experience as a journalist for ISNA News Agency (a branch in Isfahan). (Date of interview: 21st March 2021).

Journalist D is male, 38 years old. He has 6 years of work experience as a journalist in Jam-e Jam newspaper, located in Tehran. (Date of interview: 22nd March 2021).

Journalist E is female,35 years old. She has 9 years of work experience as a journalist for IRNA News Agency (a branch in Isfahan). (Date of interview: 23rd March 2021).

Journalist F is female, 41 years old. She has 5 years of work experience, mainly as a social reporter in Radio and Television I.R.I.B, (National Radio), located in Tehran. (Date of interview: 24th March 2021).

Journalist G is female, 40 years old. She has 7 years of work experience as a journalist in Sobhe-Sahel newspaper (Hormozgan province). (Date of interview: 24th March 2021).

Journalist H is male, 41 years old. He has more than 2 years of work experience as news manager of Kurdistan Young Reporters Club. (Date of interview: 25th March 2021).

Journalist I is male, 42 years old. He has 5 years of work experience in Borna News Agency (the branch of Gilan). (Date of interview: 26th March 2021).

Journalist J is male, 42 years old. He has 5 years of work experience as a news editor in Nasim-News newspaper, located in Gilan province. (Date of interview: 29th March 2021).

4.3.   Interview guide

Since the general objective of this study is to analyze the situation of ethical codes for journalism in Iran, for creating the interview guide, I focused on the relevant subjects such as professionalization in journalism, a universal code of ethics for journalism, and the compatibility of ethical codes for the Iranian media with the universal code of ethics. Add more…

To arrange the interview questions, I brought to the consideration that the situation of the Iranian media is very critical, and as defined by Allen & et al. (2009) freedom of speech was restricted by the Iranian authorities (p.43). They also point out that in 2008, the Iranian regime limited press freedom eradicated critical publications, and arrested or detained journalists and bloggers (p.48). Moreover, the unstable situation of professionalization in journalism is another issue, which could limit media ethics in the Iranian media. As defined by Shahidi (2007) after the Iran-Iraq war, journalists who were working in the state-owned media, criticized the government officials for limiting them to provide the information. Also, they complained of ignoring the news values in the Iranian media (p.1).

By considering these crucial factors about the journalistic practice in Iran, I arranged an interview guide, which is aligned with the research questions and could help me to find the proper answers

to the research questions. The interview questions include five major categories as journalists' background, Definition of journalism, professionalism, code of ethics in the Iranian media, adhering to media ethics, the major restrictions to adhering to media ethics (especially the government's pressures, and censorship). Here, the main categories are presented in detail.

Category 1 (Background of journalists): Age, position, media organization, years of work experience, job duties.

Category 2: Definition of journalism, professionalism, and ethics:

Question A)   What is journalism ethics? How can you define it?

Question B)   What is your opinion about professionalism in Iranian media outlets? / (to what extent Iranian journalists are professionals?)

Question C)   Do you believe that based on professionalism, the ethical codes should be defined for journalism (since they are part of professionalism)?

Question D)   What are the challenges for the Iranian media houses to act based on the ethical codes?

Question E)   How is it possible to improve the situation of journalism ethics in the Iranian media houses?

Question F)   Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism? Is there any need for that? If you think there is such a code, how is it supposed to be?

Question G)   Do you think the journalism ethical codes in the Iranian media outlets are compatible with the universal ethical codes for journalism?

Category 3: Working routines:

Question A)   How do you practice ethical principles of journalism in your everyday work??

Question B)   What are the challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures, etc.)

Category 4: Code of ethics in the Iranian media:

Question A)   What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran? Do you have any examples?

Question B)   What is the necessity to define those ethical codes for the media in Iran? / (Why should the ethical codes be defined for journalists in Iran?)

Question C)   Is there any local code of ethics for journalism defined in the media house you work? Is there any united code of ethics in Iran that the Iranian media should be committed to?

Question D)   To what extent do you think the journalists and editors in your media house are committed to those ethical codes? If there are any limitations for them to be committed to ethical codes, what are those?

Category 5: Government's pressures /censorship:

Question A)   To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice ethical codes?

Question B)   Do you know anything about ethical dilemmas for journalists? Have you ever faced such a situation at work? How could you face it?

Question C)   Does the Iranian government have any influence on journalism ethical codes? If the answer is yes, how?

4.4.   Analysis of the main findings

Here, I explain how I analyzed the research findings. First, based on the research questions, I provided an interview guide including eighteen questions. Then regarding the question's types, I organized them into five different categories. Due to the research method, which is a semi-structured in-depth interview, most questions are open. The depth interview lets me have a bigger picture of the interviewees, their attitudes, their thoughts, and their experiences.

As defined by Schutt (2012) intensive or depth interview relies on open-ended questions, which gives a chance to interviewers to arrange various question orders and contents for different interviewees, instead of asking the standard questions. This kind of interview, which is less structured allowed respondents to answer questions in their own words, so it can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the background, attitudes, and actions of the interviewees (pp.303,304).

As I mentioned in the methodology chapter, I interviewed the journalists online, then I recorded, transcribed, and translated the interviews from Persian into English. Afterward, I analyzed the data by presenting the main findings and the interviewee's quotes (as evidence). In the end, I wrote a summary of the main findings, which could answer the research questions properly. More discussion on the main research findings and a final review of findings will come in the next chapter. Here, I bring the research findings and analysis related to each question in order.

4.4.1. Question category 1: definition of journalism, professionalism, and ethical principles

In this part, I examine the viewpoints of the interviewees about the concepts such as professionalism and ethical principles and the situation of media ethics in Iran. I arranged seven questions for this part.

4.4.1.1. Definition of journalism ethics

Question A: What is journalism ethics? How can you define it?

Main findings: The interviewees defined media ethics and its principles properly. It shows they have proper knowledge about this concept. As they refer to the major principles of media ethics, such as respect for the privacy and dignity of the individuals, accuracy, preserving the source of news, honesty, impartiality, avoiding involving personal viewpoints in the media content, caring about the reputation of the individuals, laws, and customary rules.

In this regard, Journalist D refers to some professional principles of journalism, which are compatible with the professionalism principles, mentioned in the related theories. As he argues "Journalism ethics include ethical principles of journalism. This definition encompasses a wide range of ethics, from human principles to professional principles, and in my opinion, without these principles, laws, and customary rules, journalism is meaningless" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

Journalist A also names respect for the privacy of individuals and the public interests as two main principles of media ethics. Later, she points out that ethical principles for the Iranian media are defined based on Islamic values, while she notes "In a religious country like Iran, ethical principles include the religious values that a journalist must adhere to" (Journalist A, interview date 9th March 2021). Journalist B notes that accuracy in news production and fidelity in developing and

publishing it, without interfering the personal interests are the main principles of journalism ethics (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalists E, and H, also mention an informative point about the importance of the commitment of journalists to the media ethics regarding their social responsibilities. As journalist E notes "Ethics is one of the main pillars and domains of professional activities, but it is more important in the field of journalism because a journalist does not belong to himself, he is responsible for informing the society. His professional activity is directly related to public opinion. The slightest immorality in his journalistic practice or his failure to protect moralities will damage the public opinion" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Journalist H also points out "Journalism ethics means social responsibility and professional ethics applied by the professional journalists, who trained and specialized in the media field. Honesty, impartiality, and consideration of the common good are the basic tenets of journalistic ethics (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Journalist G also answers this question comprehensively; while she defines ethical principles of journalism such as "Preserving the source of news, caring about the reputation of individuals, observing the news values in news production and reporting, avoid prioritizing personal interests in choosing the subject of news, and not influencing the news analysis by the personal interests, sexism or racism" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Since nine out of ten interviewees responded to the first question properly, I realized they were well familiar with the concept of media ethics. Here is the second interview question, which is about professionalism in journalism.

4.4.1.2.   Professionalism in the Iranian media

Question B: What is your opinion about professionalism in Iranian media outlets?

Main findings: The interviewed journalists say that journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism. Most journalists in Iran are not professionals, since they do not have the related education, autonomy, organizational discipline, and a set of defined ethical principles for journalistic practice in Iran. Due to these reasons, journalists are not committed to ethical principles. Moreover, Professional journalism has never been considered a reliable job for journalists in Iran regarding the precarious situation of journalism.

In this regard, journalist A refers to a lack of related education as a feature of non-professional journalism in Iran, when she points out "Unfortunately, many graduated students in journalism do not work in the media, and they turn to other professions. Many believe that the reason is a lack of motivation and the scarcity of writing talents. Also, sometimes the choice of study field is based on luck, so many journalism students chose this major only by luck to get to the university" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist D also refers to a lack of organizational discipline and job security in Iranian journalism, as she notes "Considering the historical background of journalism in Iran, professional journalism was never considered as a reliable job for journalists in Iran. However, current journalism in Iran is risky, with the least income, and no job security for journalists. However, there are no reliable statistics about professional journalists who are educated people in this major of study" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

Journalist F also points out "Journalism in Iran, like other professions is naturally influenced by political, economic, societal, and cultural factors" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021). Journalist H well understood the connection between professionalism and commitment to ethical codes for journalism, when he mentions "Shaping people's views and enhancing the public insight requires journalists and media workers, who adhere to ethical principles of this profession. Unfortunately, there are only a few graduated students in journalism, who work for the media" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Based on the key points mentioned by ten in ten interviewees, I find out that all interviewees agreed on non-professional journalistic practice in Iran. Since they argued that low income, a lack of job security, non-relevant education, and neglecting the ethical codes for journalism, as the characteristics of Iranian journalism. The mentioned factors are the features of non-professional journalism mentioned by scholars. To discuss this point, I will provide more relevant theories in the next chapter.

4.4.1.3. Professionalism and media ethics

Question C: Do you believe that based on professionalism, the ethical codes should be defined for journalism?

Main findings: The interviews show that it is necessary to define ethical codes for journalism since ethics will lead journalists to work as professionals. However, defining ethical codes for journalism is not possible in the recent situation of the Iranian media.

Based on the research findings, eight out of ten interviewees (journalists A, B, C, D, E, H, I, and J) believe that it is necessary to define the ethical codes for journalism, due to provide a guideline for journalistic practice. In this regard, journalist B argues "Without a doubt, the ethical codes for journalism should be defined, but before that, journalism itself should be defined. Under this definition, various items, including journalistic ethics should be defined as well. However, I believe that a single definition cannot be effective without training the ethical codes and the executive guarantee for them" (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

According to journalist H "Professional journalism requires the definition of professional ethical codes and principles. However, due to various reasons such as a lack of economic independence of the media, political dependence of the media on the specific political parties, the absence of freedom of the press and the media, and a lack of free media competition, professional journalism was not formed in Iran" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021). Journalist C also points out regarding the principles and codes of ethics for journalists, arranging the ethical codes for journalism is essential since ethics lead journalists to work as professionals (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist E also notes "Defining the principles and codes of professional ethics in journalism is also a necessity to approach the global standards of this profession" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021). Journalist J also argues "Since via the globalization process, everything, including communications have become global, by considering the cultural, political, social, and economic differences of countries, the ethical codes would be beneficial, and they can act as filters to distinguish good and bad in the society. Moreover, since the laws change over time, the ethical codes would be more practical as an ethical guideline for the media" (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

However, journalist G believes that due to the current situation of the Iranian media, it is impossible to define the ethical codes for journalism (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021). A few interviewees such as journalists F and J note that it is not necessary to define the ethical codes for journalism in Iran. As journalist F points out "The media systems, not only in

Iran, but also all around the world run by the money and support of some organizations, institutions, the private sectors, or the political parties. Thus, the interests of the media owners take precedence over anything else. Hence, defining ethical codes for a profession like journalism is practically meaningless and it is not enforceable" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

This question is connected to the previous question. Hence, based on the findings of both questions, I can conclude due to the various issues, such as the political and economic dependence of media on the government, the scarcity of autonomy of journalists, a lack of job security, low income, the absence of related education, and the deficiency of defined ethical codes, journalistic practice in Iran is not professional journalism. As most interviewees point out, it is necessary to define the ethical codes based on professionalism. However, as journalist B points out only a definition of media ethics cannot establish professional journalism. Also, training the ethical codes and legal enforcement should be considered as well (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

4.4.1.4.   Challenges to observing media ethics

Question D: What are the challenges for the Iranian media houses to act based on the ethical codes?

Main findings: Based on the interviewee's answers, the obligation for journalists to act based on the media policies, the interference of personal opinions of the editors or journalists in news production and reporting, financial or political dependence of the media on the government or the political parties, a lack of job security, the minimum wage, the absence of welfare facilities, and the restrictions made by the government or political parties are the major challenges to act based on ethical principles in the Iranian media.

In this regard, journalist A refers to the absence of freedom of expression as one of the main challenges for journalists to act ethically, as she argues "A lack of legal protection of journalists, and the absence of freedom of expression are some of the major challenges for journalists in Iran. For journalists, who act according to the principles of journalistic ethics, losing the job and life security, arrestment, or detention would be expected" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist E also refers to the main challenges that journalists face. Later she refers to a lack of knowledge of journalists about media ethics as the major reason for unethical journalistic practice

in the Iranian media; while she points out "Unfamiliarity of many journalists with ethical principles of journalism, the traditional management system of the media and dependence on the ruling authorities will limit journalists to act based on ethical principles" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Between ten interviewees, journalists D and F, point out that not only were the interference of media policies and editor's views are the major challenges for ethical journalism, but also the influence of personal taste and opinion of journalists caused overshadowing the ethical codes.

The most different answer belonged to journalist H when he named the ideology of Islam as the main challenge for ethical journalism in Iran. He argues "The biggest challenge that journalists face is the specific policies and principles that have arisen from the ideology of Islam, and media and journalists cannot act against it. Due to this reason, journalists will face many obstacles and problems to act based on professional ethics, including neutrality, honesty, and public interests" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

The key findings here are related to the restrictions for the media, which are mentioned by the interviewees. The main restrictions such as political or economic dependence on the government, the absence of freedom of speech, interference of personal opinions of journalists in their work, and so on. In the next chapter, I will discuss these restrictions and challenges.

4.4.1.5.   Improvement of journalism ethics in Iran

Question E: How is it possible to improve the situation of journalistic ethics in the Iranian media houses?

Main findings: The interviews show that to improve media ethics in Iran, it is essential to define a media ethics charter and provide legal enforcement for the ethical principles. Furthermore, financial, and political independence of the media, and freedom of expression would modify media ethics.

Half of the interviewees agreed on the above-mentioned solutions to improve journalism ethics in Iran, however, the rest of them had different views. As mentioned by journalist F "For making any change in Iranian journalism, a comprehensive effort by the government, the institutions

dependent on the government, and the media is needed" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist D also argues "Improving the media system would be possible by reviewing the main concepts, such as the mechanisms of the media establishment, freedom of expression, and job security. Also, creating a culture of promoting the reading habit in the society, restoring public trust towards the media, and freedom of journalists are practical solutions to modify media ethics" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

In this regard, journalists G and H refer to the financial and political independence of the media, as the empirical solution to improve the media ethics situation. As journalist G argues "Firstly, we need some journalists, who aim to develop the society; secondly, news organizations must have strong financial support, and they should not be dependent on the politicians. Also, they should be fully aware of the political situation of the country. We need independent and neutral political parties to support the media organizations financially" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist H also notes "Promoting the professional ethics of journalism in the Iranian media requires fundamental changes in the political system, and the media organizations" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021). However, journalists C and E have different views; they believe that due to many obstacles and limitations to implementing ethical principles, it seems so difficult to act based on ethical principles in the recent situation of the Iranian media.

Based on the interviewee's answers, which are aligned with the related theories, if there is no effort to solve the above-mentioned problems in the Iranian media system, there would be no chance of expecting media ethics improvement in Iran.

4.4.1.6.   Necessity to define universal media ethics

Question F: Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism? Is there any need for a universal code of ethics for journalism? If you think there is such a code, how should it be?

Main findings: Based on the interviewee's answers, there is no universal code of ethics for journalism, even if there is such a code of ethics, it cannot apply to the Iranian media since journalistic practice in Iran is far from journalism in other countries.

Since the interviewees did not present a proper definition of a universal code of ethics for journalism, I assume perhaps they were not familiar with this concept, or they did not have enough knowledge about it. Furthermore, regarding the necessity to define such ethical codes, they did not reach any agreement. Only journalist H convincingly responds to this question; while he argues "In my view, determining ethical principles for the media in general, and professional journalism is a great and fundamental necessity. It should include all aspects of professional ethics in the media, not limited to one specific geographical area, and may apply to all countries" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Journalist A also argues "The best way to formulate international ethical principles is to implement ethical principles in all media around the world with a strong executive lever" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021). Journalists B and F believe that there is no universal code of ethics for journalism. As journalist F points out it is necessary to define such a universal code for all media around the world (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist C notes that there is a universal code of ethics for journalism. He refers to 'truth' as the most important universal code of ethics for the media, as he notes "I think the commitment to the truth and reveals it in the media is the most crucial universal code of ethics for journalism. Defining a universal ethical code is possible through professional training, even at the international level; and such an ethical code is beneficial to improve the situation of journalism all around the world" (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist D believes that the international principles and rules for journalism always remain as a word without any action. Journalists E and G mention that they have no idea about a universal code of ethics for journalism, and they admit they are not familiar with this concept. Journalists I and J note that since the Iranian media are far from other media around the world, even if a universal code of ethics is applicable for some media, it will never be applicable for the Iranian media.

Since a universal code of ethics for the media is a controversial concept, there are a lot of disagreements about it among both the media theorists also among the interviewees.

4.4.1.7.   Compatibility of media ethics in Iran with universal media ethics

Question G: Do you think the journalistic ethical codes in the Iranian media outlets are compatible with a universal ethical code for journalism?

Main findings: The interviewees believe while journalism in Iran is miles away from journalism in other countries and it is not compatible with a universal ethical code for journalism, some ethical principles in Iranian journalism are like the international media ethics, However, most of them are based on the Iranian laws and culture, so they are mainly different from universal journalism ethics.

Five out of ten interviewees (journalists A, B, F, H, and I) say that journalism in Iran is miles away from journalism in other countries and it is not compatible with a universal code of ethics for journalism. However, the rest of them believe that several ethical codes and principles in the Iranian media may be compatible with a universal ethical code for journalism. In this regard, journalists A and H believe that a lack of correspondence between Iranian journalism with the universal code of ethics for journalism happened due to a lack of freedom of expression in Iran.

However, journalist B presents another reason, as he notes "Since the laws, and the way of journalistic practice is not the same in different countries, it is not possible to define the same journalism ethical code for the media all around the world" (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist I also argues "In my opinion, journalism in Iran is miles away from journalism in other countries and international journalism. The issues, such as censorship, the absence of expressing the explicit criticism of high-ranking government officials and politicians, and the politicians' fear of clarifying social issues in the media caused degrading the position and credibility of the press and journalism. Such issues limit journalists, to tell the truth, hence, they lose public trust. Maybe in some countries around the world, the popularity of the print and online media is still at a high level, but it is not in Iran" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

However, journalists E and J present different viewpoints, while they note there are some similarities between the code of ethics in the Iranian media and the universal ethical code for the media. As journalist E points out "Some ethical codes and principles in the Iranian media may be compatible with a universal code of ethics for journalism, but many of them are based on the

Iranian laws and culture. Hence, they became a localized code of ethics for the Iranian media" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021). Journalist J also presents the same view, when he mentions "There are some similarities and contradictions between ethical principles in the Iranian media and universal code of ethics for journalism. For instance, honesty as a value for journalism is a common ethical principle, which all journalists around the world agree on it" (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist C argues "journalism in Iran can be compatible with the universal ethical codes, and it can be fulfilled by training journalists, based on international professional courses" (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021). Journalist G points out that since she does not know anything about a universal code of ethics for journalism, she cannot compare ethical codes for journalism in Iran with those ethical codes (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Since a universal code of ethics for journalism is a controversial concept, the compatibility of media ethics in Iran with such a universal ethical code would be questionable. In the next chapter, I will explain more about this point.

4.4.2. Question category 3: Working routines

In this part, I focus on the challenges and limitations for journalists to adhere to media ethics in everyday work.

4.4.2.1. practicing media ethics

Question A: How do you practice ethical principles of journalism in your everyday work?

Main findings: The interviews show that Iranian journalists try to adhere to ethical principles of journalism. However, it is impossible to work based on ethical principles in the Iranian media, due to many barriers such as the fear of losing their jobs, getting a warning, and in the higher stage of personal insecurity being arrested, or assassinated.

The interviewees respond to this question in different ways. Half of them (journalists C, E, H, G, and I) mention that they observe ethical principles of journalism and adhere to them in everyday work. The rest of them note that because of the fear of losing their jobs, getting a warning or arrestment, or fear of being assassinated, it is not possible to work based on ethical principles.

Journalists C, E, H, G, and I, mention that as much as they can, they try to adhere to ethical principles of journalism. Journalist E talks about the defined ethical red lines in journalistic practice. As she notes "We are dealing with issues that are related to media ethics. I think many journalists do not follow ethical codes. In the Iranian media, following the ethical codes for journalism depends on the personal characteristics of journalists. However, I defined the ethical red lines for my work, and I respect ethical principles such as avoiding harming people, respecting the privacy of individuals, and serving the public interests" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

In this regard, journalist G talks about her specific experience to encounter media ethics at everyday work; while she argues "I have encountered this issue many times during journalistic practice. For example, sometimes my news source said that he did not want his name or details to be published in the media. So, I observed this ethical principle to save the privacy of individuals. Furthermore, sometimes I had a chance to interview the manager of a popular organization, which could make a financial profit for me; but since the interview did not have news values, I did not do that, while the news editor insisted to interview that specific manager. In my work, I try my best to work within the framework of ethical principles of journalism" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist H names some of the main ethical principles for journalism that he applies in his journalistic practice; while he points out "I try to consider the main ethical principles of journalism, such as honesty, accuracy, the credibility of the news sources, and truthfulness" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

However, journalists A and B believe that even if they want to be committed to journalism ethics, they cannot, since the media system in Iran is not compatible with ethics. As journalist A explains why she cannot act ethically, by saying that "I would like to act according to the ethical principles, but unfortunately because of the fear of losing my job, getting warning or arrestment, and fear of being assassinated, I am not able to work based on ethical principles" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021). Journalist F also points out "There is no clear definition of media ethics in the Iranian media, and the majority of journalists do not act ethically" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Based on the interviewees' answers, I concluded they are willing to act based on media ethics, but due to many restrictions they cannot. In the next chapter, I will discuss more this subject.

4.4.2.2.   Challenges for journalistic practice

Question B: What are the challenges you face in everyday work (editors, managers, government pressures, etc.)?

Main findings: Based on the interviews, many challenges limit Iranian journalists to adhere to the journalism code of ethics, such as financial problems, the restrictions made by the editors and the media managers, and limitations made by the government, politicians, and the ruling regime.

Journalists A and G refer to the financial issues as one of the main limitations of journalistic practice in the Iranian media. In this regard, journalist A mentions "In my experience, financial issues and the economic and monetary interests of the media owners are the biggest challenges for journalists. Also, the fear of blocking the critical media by the government is another major obstacle" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist G also talks about the financial dependence of the media on some organizations or the government; she also continues "One of the biggest challenges for journalists is that only a few of them follow the principles of journalistic ethics. Even if they want to act according to ethical principles, they will have conflicts with the news editors. One of these conflicts happens due to the financial dependence of the media on advertisements. Another conflict in the media houses is selecting the interviewees based on their political affiliations. For instance, once I interviewed a candidate for the parliamentary election, and while the interview was so informative for the audience I could not publish it because the interviewee had a conflict with the major politicians. In such a media system that no one cares about ethical journalists, professional journalism cannot evolve based on ethical principles" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist C refers to the limitations and restrictions made by the government and authorities; he also continues "Unfortunately, due to the limitations made by the officials towards news coverage of the sensitive news, honesty and correctness are overshadowed. Then the government officials

justify this behavior as supporting national security and preventing chaos in the society. In this media system, hiding the truth is legitimized by the officials with the excuse that such news creates fear or despair in the society, so they should not be published" (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021).

The answer of journalist D was so short but efficient, while he said, "In one word, a journalist in Iran has to publish what they (authorities) want" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

Many relevant challenges to observing the ethical codes for journalism in Iran have been mentioned by the scholars as well, which I discuss in the next chapter.

4.4.3. Question category 4: Code of ethics in the Iranian media

In this part, the focus is to examine the code of ethics in function for the Iranian media, including four related questions.

4.4.3.1.   The ethical codes for the Iranian media

Question A: What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran? Do you have any examples?

Main findings: The interviews show that many Iranian media do not have any ethical codes, and they pay less attention to journalism ethics. Hence, journalists do not value ethics, and more often they publish unreliable news.

The above-mentioned key findings have been mentioned by half of the interviewees (journalists A, C, F, G, and I). However, the rest of them believe that there are some ethical codes in the Iranian media, but the media managers or editors do not believe in them, so they do not adhere to them.

Regarding the first key finding, journalist A argues "Most Iranian media do not have any ethical code or international ethical code. Journalistic practice in Iran is just according to the domestic laws and regulations, and the organizational tastes" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist F also notes that "There is no single code of ethics for the Iranian media, and journalists do not follow a united style to adhere to the principles of media ethics. Usually, each media outlet

collects and publishes the news and reports based on their views and policies, regardless of the media ethics" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist I also argues "In my opinion, the code and principles of ethics in the Iranian media are not defined and codified in an ethical charter. However, in the Iranian media, sometimes journalists individually or by the emphasis of media managers apply some ethical principles, such as respect for the privacy of individuals, avoiding blasphemy, and so on" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

Moreover, journalists B, D, E, J, and H, mention that there are some ethical codes, but the media managers or editors do not believe in them, and they do not act based on them either. In this regard, journalist H notes "Public awareness, respect for the privacy of individuals and their personal lives, and truth-telling are general ethical principles of journalism. However, these ethical codes are not applicable for the Iranian media" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Journalist D also points out there are some ethical principles of journalism in the Iranian media, such as "Working based on the media policies and avoiding passing the red lines" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

Journalist J refers to the simplest ethical principles, by saying that "At least, Journalists should be committed to the general ethical principles of journalism, such as avoid bribery and avoid writing positively or negatively against specific individuals to receive money from the sources. Also, they should avoid exchanging right and wrong" (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

The feasible ethical code for journalism is still a vague subject since none of the interviewees agreed with them and they do not know which ethical codes apply to the Iranian media. Also, most interviewees believe that there are not such united ethical codes in function for the Iranian media.

4.4.3.2.   A necessity to define media ethics in Iran

Question B: What is the necessity to define those ethical codes for the media in Iran? / (Why should ethical codes be defined for journalists in Iran?)

Main findings: Based on the interviewee's viewpoints, it is necessary to define the ethical codes for the media in Iran, since there is no united way to implement the ethical codes for the media in Iran; however,

even if such codes and principles are defined, due to a lack of legal enforcement, there is no guarantee to adhere to them. Generally, due to the restrictions and widespread censorship made by the government, ethical principles were ignored by the media.

Almost all interviewees agree on defining ethical codes for journalism, but only journalist B did not answer this question, since he assumes the question was repetitive. In this regard, journalist A argues "Defining ethical codes for the media is necessary, but even if such codes and principles are defined, there is no guarantee that the media would adhere to them" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021). Journalist D also points out "Ethical codes for journalism need to be defined, but before doing that, journalism itself should be redefined for the Iranian media" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

Journalist F refers to the restrictions made by the government when she argues "As far as I know, due to the direct supervision of the government on the media, and the widespread censorship, the professional ethics of journalism were ignored by the journalists" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist G also points out "There is a need to redefine ethical codes for the Iranian media. Also, due to many problems, such as financial issues, and a lack of job security, journalism ethics became problematic. In the Ahmadinejad era, the challenges for media ethics, including bribery and corruption increased significantly. As a result, the stability of professional journalism diminished. There is no independent and strong political party or a credible economic enterprise to support the media, so financial problems make it hard for journalists to act according to the principles of professional ethics. I can say all existing media act against the principles of media ethics. Given the widespread existence of such problems in all media in the country, it is necessary to redefine the principles of media ethics" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalists H and J have similar responses. Interestingly, journalist H makes a connection between the social responsibility of journalists and the necessity to define the ethical codes for the media. As he points out "Without any doubt, defining ethical principles for the Iranian media, and requiring journalists to comply with these principles is a necessity, since without implementing the principles of journalistic ethics, the main responsibility of the media (enlightenment and awareness of the society) would be ignored" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Journalist J refers to the main role of the media, which is leading society. He also continues "Adherence to ethics is the basic rule in a society that all citizens should observe. Also, the media and journalists should be committed to ethics as well, since they lead society, and if they do not act based on the truth and ethical principles, they will lead society in a wrong direction" (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021). Journalist I also points out "We need to define ethical codes for the media. The absence of these principles in Iranian journalism is so visible. Unfortunately, many journalists believe that there is no need to act based on ethical principles of journalism" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

One considerable point mentioned in the interviews is the connection between the social responsibility role of the journalists and the ethical codes, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

4.4.3.3.   Local code of ethics for the media

Question C: Is there any local code of ethics for journalism defined in the media house you work for? Is there any united code of ethics in Iran that the media should be committed to?

Main findings: The interviews show that there is no united code or local code of ethics for journalism applicable to the Iranian media. Each media outlet in Iran defined the specific views and policies for journalistic practice, on which journalists must act based on them. However, due to many limitations made by the government and political parties, most media in Iran violate media ethics.

The above-mentioned points are the major finding, which almost all interviewees (eight out of ten) agreed on. In this regard, journalist C refers to a lack of knowledge of Iranian journalists about the code of ethics, and he mentions it as a reason for not adhering to the media ethics in the media. He also continues "There is no defined local ethical code nor the united code of ethics for journalism in Iran. Most journalists do not have any knowledge about the code of ethics, and they do not adhere to the international ethical codes. The Iranian media are far from the global ethical codes for journalism" (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist E also believes that each media outlet in Iran defined the different ethical principles of journalism, however, they just defined the ethical codes, but none of them believe in such codes and do not apply them in their journalistic practice (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Journalist F connects media ethics to the political issues in Iran, as she argues "There is no coherent and united code of ethics for all media in Iran. Each media outlet has specific views and policies for journalistic practice. According to the viewpoints of the editors and journalists, mainly due to the restrictions made by the government and political parties, also financial issues, most media in Iran violate the principles of media ethics" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

However, journalists H, J, and I, believe that there are some local codes of ethics for the media. However, journalist H answers this question so differently, as he notes "Protecting the privacy of individuals and the officials is one of the local codes of ethics in the media I work for. Moreover, in 2004, when the draft Covenant on the Ethics of the Journalistic Profession was published, a more detailed text on the principles of professional ethics of journalism was presented as well. In the first part of this pact, under the title of duties and responsibilities of journalists, 15 clauses were mentioned. The most important points presented in this draft include the following points: 1. To gain awareness, a journalist must pay attention to objective facts. In journalism, news should be seen as a social service, not a commercial commodity. 2. The journalist must pay attention to the correctness of his professional activities. 3. Plagiarism, distortion of texts and documents, and omission of basic information about events should be condemned. 4. The exact time of the news release should be considered. 5. The professional dignity of a journalist requires him to refuse to accept any illegal rewards. 6. The journalist is obliged not to confuse the journalistic profession with the work of commercials or political propaganda. 7. The journalist must refrain from accepting any pressure or threat to publish specific news. 8. The journalist must correct incorrectly published material. 9. He should respect religious principles and ethnic and national customs, and he should try to maintain international peace and tranquility, and the peaceful coexistence of nations is the mission of the journalist. 10. The journalist must have a special respect for universal human values. Also, respect for personal dignity and protection of secrets are the important duties of a journalist" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Journalist I also notes that some codes of ethics for the Iranian media are based on Iranian press laws. He continues "In general, there are some ethical codes defined for journalism, such as respect for privacy and respect for the dignity of individuals, consideration of ethical frameworks in the field of production and publication of news, the accuracy of the information, using credible sources, and not distorting the news. However, ethical codes, which are observed in the Iranian media are not separated from the press laws" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

Journalist J refers to maintaining neutrality, honesty, and accuracy in publishing news as the major local ethical principles for the media that he works for. He also points out there is no united code of ethics for all media in Iran (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

4.4.3.4.   Commitment to media ethics

Question D: To what extent do you think the journalists and editors in your media house are committed to those ethical codes? If there are any limitations for them to be committed to ethical codes, what are those?

Main findings: As mentioned by the interviewees, journalists should adhere to the ethical codes ideally. However, due to some issues such as the financial dependence of the media on politicians, or government, and the limitations made by the government, they are not able to observe the media ethics.

To answer this question, eight interviewees (journalists A, B, E, F, H, I, G, and J) refer to the above-mentioned key points. In this regard, journalist A refers to prioritizing the financial interest of the media house, as she argues "To be honest, the media I work for, only prioritize the financial interest over anything else. I never noticed they care about any ethical principles of journalism" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist E also notes "First, we need to consider to what extent the professional and ethical principles that have been defined by the media are correct and standard, and whether applying them would not harm anyone. Undoubtedly, ethical principles are requirements for any job. But some of these principles are defined and arranged wrongly, so the way of implementing them would be wrong as well; But, in general, I believe that we should all adhere to ethical principles of journalism so that several issues in the media can be minimized. However, in my opinion, ethical principles, and implementation of them are not in the interest of some media managers, especially the government" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

The answer of journalist G is worthwhile as well. Since she refers to the financial problems of the media houses, as the major limitation to adhering to the code of ethics for journalism. She also continues "It is a necessity that the media act according to ethical principles because they guide public opinion, and they should serve the public interests. If they do not adhere to ethical principles, they will easily act against the public interests. But some limitations such as financial

problems, and a lack of relevant education prevent journalists from producing news and reports based on ethics. As a result, many journalists only copy the news and reports from other media" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist H believes that the restrictions made by the authorities limit journalists to act ethically. Moreover, journalist I mentions the scarcity of freedom of expression and censorship as the major limitations to acting based on media ethics. She also adds "Codes and principles should be considered to a great extent; but the restriction of freedom of expression, and the censorship will not allow journalists to adhere to ethical principles such as truth-telling" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021). Journalists E, H, and journalist I refer to the pressures and restrictions made by the government and authorities, such as censorship and limiting freedom of expression, as the major factors, which limit journalists to act according to the media ethics.

4.4.4. Question category 4: Code of ethics in the Iranian media: Pressure /censorship:

As mentioned by scholars, governmental limitations such as restriction of freedom of speech, censorship, and so on are the major limitations to acting ethically in the Iranian media. To examine this subject, I arranged three questions and the key answers of the interviewees were presented below.

4.4.4.1. Possibility to practice media ethics

Question A: To what extent are the Iranian journalists able to practice ethical codes?

Main findings: The interviews show that because of the political restrictions, censorship, and the dependency of many media outlets on the authorities or the government, journalists are not able to execute the ethical codes. Moreover, due to the other issues such as interference in the tastes of editors and media owners, the unhealthy competition between the media houses, and the absence of freedom for journalists, it is impossible to implement or adhere to the codes and ethical principles in the Iranian media.

Almost all interviewees agreed on the above-mentioned factors as the major restrictions on media ethics. Journalist J is the only interviewee, who believes that up to 80 percent of Iranian journalists can practice ethical codes in their journalistic practice. Regarding the difficulties that journalists

face to act ethically, journalist A refers to the incorrect laws arranged for the media, and she argues "Unfortunately, all or most media outlets are dominated by the government and run based on the incorrect laws and regulations. Also, due to the political pressures and censorship made by the government, more often the adherence to codes and ethical principles is hard or impossible" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

The answer of journalist E is more detailed and includes the relevant explanations. While she notes "Regarding the existing laws and regulations in Iran, low tolerance of the officials and governors about criticism, and a lack of interest in accountability, there is no chance for applying media ethics by journalists. So, the major issues, such as the dependency of many media outlets on the authorities or the government, censorship, and different restrictions toward the media and journalists, created a poisonous atmosphere for the media in Iran" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Moreover, journalist G argues "Acting based on media ethics depends on the personality of journalists, personal tastes of editors, and affiliations of the media houses to the politicians. In addition, the other major issues such as the threats made by some groups or organizations outside the media, especially the ruling power and governmental institutions, unhealthy competition between the media, a lack of freedom for journalists, and financial issues affect journalist's activities and limit them to act based on the principles of journalism ethics" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist H also points out "Due to the political atmosphere of the society, the absence of professional journalism, a lack of economic independence of the media, and political affiliation of the media to the specific politicians or the authorities, made it impossible to fulfill the principles of media ethics in Iran" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Every restriction and limitation mentioned by the interviewees will be discussed by presenting the relevant theories in the next chapter.

4.4.4.2.   Ethical dilemmas in journalistic practice

Question B: Do you know anything about ethical dilemmas for journalists? Have you ever faced

that kind of situation at work? How could you face it?

Main findings: *As interviewees point out there are always some ethical dilemmas and challenges in journalistic practice, which journalists would have to face. They can be committed to ethical principles, but sometimes acting ethically would have bad consequences or real dangers for them and their carrier. The barriers such as a lack of enforceability of media ethics, institutional ethical codes for journalism, abuse of the power by the media organizations to persuade the public, caused ethical dilemmas and prohibit journalists to be committed to media ethics.*

Nine in ten interviewees believe that there are always some ethical dilemmas. They introduced some dilemmas that they face in everyday work. For instance, journalist B points out there are always ethical dilemmas in journalistic practice, but he can avoid putting himself in such a situation. As he points out "There are always some ethical dilemmas for journalists at work. However, journalists should know that in journalistic practice, they will always face challenges and ethical dilemmas. However, by choosing the right media to work with, they can reduce the chance of facing these challenges and ethical dilemmas" (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist D refers to the absence of freedom, as a big challenge for journalistic practice, and he continues "Journalists in Iran face many challenges to act ethically. They do not have freedom, which is the biggest challenge, even if there is freedom in content production, there is no freedom of expression, so it is not logical to talk about journalistic ethics in the recent situation of Iran" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

And journalist E mentions a reason for being doubtful about acting ethically when she points out "Journalists may be committed to ethical principles, but it would have bad consequences and sometimes put them in real danger. In this regard, journalists will face many dilemmas and doubts to act based on ethical principles" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Journalist G also notes "I am not in a position to doubt, I act according to the ethical framework. Like many other dilemmas, a journalist must see what he is sacrificing in his work. Sometimes, we have been forced by the news editor to act contrary to ethical principles of journalism, and other times there are not many restrictions inside or outside of the media, so in that case, we are obliged to act according to ethical principles of journalism, also it is better to not pursue some news subjects, which put journalists in an ethical dilemma" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Moreover, journalist I refers to some dilemmas, which he experienced as well, while he argues "There are many dilemmas, such as avoiding telling the truth or reporting on managers and government agencies due to some concerns of journalists like losing the job. Hence, journalists would not publish such news, which would put them in danger or cause trouble for them. I should admit that I have such doubts as well" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021). Journalist J mentions prioritizing the personal interests of journalists or the media organizations over the public interests as the major dilemma for adhering to media ethics (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

Since ethical dilemmas are a controversial subject, which many scholars talked about, I will explain it more in the discussion chapter.

4.4.4.3. Influence of the Iranian state on media ethics

Question C: Does the Iranian government have any effect on journalistic ethical codes? If the answer is yes, how?

Main findings: The interviewees believe since the main broadcasting media outlets in Iran are completely state-owned and monopolized, the limitations and obstacles made by the government and the officials for journalists caused journalists to fail to act based on ethical principles. A lack of applicable laws and regulations for journalistic practice is another influential factor, which forced many journalists to act contrary to their mission and not based on journalism ethics.

Almost all interviewees (nine out of ten) agree on the above-mentioned points. In this regard, journalist A argues "A lack of right and up-to-date regulations for journalism, and the governmental restrictions are the most important obstacles to define ethical principles of journalism and to implement them" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist B also refers to the very relevant factor, which is the domination of the government over the media. while he points out "In such a country that the main broadcasting media outlets are completely state-owned and monopolized, we cannot imagine a right situation for media ethics" (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist D was the only interviewee, who believes that the government does not have a strong role in affecting the media and media ethics in Iran. While he argues "The Iranian government

does not play the first and last role, not only in journalism, nor in other fields. The powerful institutions, which are parallel to the government, influence the media and all other fields" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

However, journalist E like the rest of the interviewees believes that the government plays a very crucial role in media ethics, as she notes "Undoubtedly, the impact of government on the media and media ethics is very high because many media outlets are forced to act contrary to their mission, and they would have to act based on a series of red lines defined by the government" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

The answer of journalist F is like journalist D's answer, while she refers to the ruling power as a very important factor (even more than the government). She continues "The ruling power makes the biggest restrictions for journalists to act based on ethical and professional journalism. In one sentence, it can be said that acting based on the framework of the major laws, such as Velayat-e-Faqih, protection of the values of the ruling power, national cohesion, and so on, determine all ethical principles in Iranian journalism" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist G points out that the government provides financial support only to the media on its side, and limits or punishes the journalists, who try to reveal the financial corruption of the officials or politicians; hence, there is no possibility to act ethically in the media (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Furthermore, journalist J refers to the way that government affects the media when he says, "The government has been somewhat influential on the media ethics, by supervision on news publication and limiting access to the information" (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

4.4. Summary

In this chapter, data analysis revealed that *journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism, since most journalists in Iran are not professionals, and they do not have the qualifications of professionals such as related education, autonomy, independence, moral values, working full time for a media and getting monthly payment. While they are not professional journalists, they would have a lack of knowledge about ethical principles of professional journalism and would not be committed to those principles.*

As the interviewees point out, it is necessary to define ethical codes for journalism, since ethics will lead journalists to work as professionals.

However, defining ethical codes for journalism is not possible in the recent situation of the Iranian media. *To act based on journalism ethics, the Iranian journalists confront many challenges, such as the obligation to act according to the media policies, interference of personal opinions of the editors or journalists themselves, in news production, and the restrictions made by the government and political parties.*

Regarding the possibility to improve the situation of media ethics in the Iranian media houses, as mentioned by most interviewees, *defining a media ethics charter, and providing legal enforcement would oblige the media managers, editors, and journalists to adhere to ethical principles.*

Another important subject is defining a universal code of ethics for journalism. Most interviewees point out that *there is no international code of ethics for journalism; even if such a code exists, it cannot apply to the Iranian media, since journalistic practice in Iran is far from professional journalism.*

As they argue, *ethical principles in Iranian journalism can be like the international media ethics, but most of them are based on Iranian laws and culture, and they are different from universal or international journalism ethics.* Most interviewees could not define a universal code of ethics for journalism, and I assumed they were not familiar with this concept.

As interviewees point out, the Iranian journalists try to adhere to ethical principles of journalism; but *some obstacles such as the fear of losing the job, getting a warning, or in the higher stages of personal insecurity being arrested, or assassinated, make it impossible to work based on ethical principles in the Iranian media.* Furthermore, even if they want to act ethically, they will face many challenges such as restrictions created by the editors, media managers, the government, or the ruling regime.

Regarding the existence of media ethics in the Iranian media, based on the interviewee's answers, *most Iranian media do not have any united ethical codes, and the media pay less attention to journalism ethics. Hence, journalists do not value ethics, and more often they publish information, which is not reliable.* Each media outlet in Iran defined specific policies, on which journalists would have to act based on them; such policies are mostly defined to serve the financial interests of the media houses and help them to survive. These kinds of media are against making any challenge against the government or authorities.

Moreover, most interviewees believe that defining ethical codes for the Iranian media is necessary, but *even if such codes and principles would be defined, due to a lack of legal enforcement, there is no guarantee that the journalists would observe them. And generally, due to the pressures and widespread censorship created by the government and political parties, journalism ethics would be ignored by the media.*

Regarding the level of commitment of Iranian journalists to media ethics, and the challenges to adhere to ethical codes, interviewees believed that journalists should adhere to ethical codes ideally. However, *due to many limitations such as the financial dependence of the media on politicians or the government, and the restrictions made by the government, they cannot observe media ethics.* Moreover, there are always some ethical dilemmas and challenges in journalistic practice. While it is possible to be committed to ethical principles, mostly acting based on media ethics would have bad consequences for journalists such as losing their job, life threats, arrestment, or assassination.

In addition to censorship, and the dependence of many of the media outlets on the authorities or the government, *the other issues such as interference in the tastes of editors and media owners, the unhealthy competition between the media, and the absence of freedom, made it impossible to implement ethical principles in the Iranian media.*

Regarding the limitations for journalists to act based on media ethics, as mentioned by most interviewees, *the Iranian government is a big challenge itself.* Since the main broadcasting media outlets in Iran are completely state-owned and monopolized, the limitations and obstacles made by the government caused journalists to fail to act based on ethical principles. *A lack of applicable laws and regulations to support media ethics is another barrier to adhering to ethical principles for journalism.*

All the above-mentioned points are the key findings achieved by interviewing the journalists; in the next chapter, by presenting the related theories, I make a connection between theories and findings.

Chapter 5

5.   Discussion

After presenting the main findings, and data analysis in the previous chapter, I will discuss the main findings in this chapter. By introducing the related theories and connecting them to the Main findings, I move from research findings toward discussion and explain how I could answer the research questions.

Here I present a quick overview of the major key findings from the last chapter.

As mentioned by the interviewees, there is no local or united code of ethics defined for the Iranian media houses, also the international or universal code of ethics is not applicable for the Iranian media since journalistic practice in Iran is far from professional journalism. Moreover, acting based on ethical codes for journalism is not possible in the recent situation of Iran, since the Iranian journalists would have to confront a lot of challenges, especially the restrictions made by the government, political parties, and the authorities. Since the main broadcasting media outlets in Iran are state-owned and monopolized, the limitations and obstacles made by the government and the officials caused journalists to fail to act based on the principles and the code of ethics.

In this chapter, I discuss the main findings from the data analysis chapter, which are aligned with the theories, and could answer the research questions:

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?

RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice the ethical codes?

I have organized this chapter, by presenting the major parts of my research, first the relevant theories, later the research findings related to them, and finally the discussion part. The main subjects are categorized into six areas:

1. *Definition of journalism ethics and ethical principles*

2. *Professionalism in the Iranian media*

3. *The necessity to define ethical codes for the Iranian media*

4. *A universal code of ethics for journalism*

5. *Practicing media ethics in Iran*

6. *The major challenges for media ethics in Iran*

The above-mentioned categories are the main criteria included in the interview guide, arranged based on the main objective of this research, to answer the research questions. Moreover, the research findings and discussions presented in the first, second, third, and fourth categories (definition of journalism ethics, professionalism in the Iranian media, the necessity to define ethical codes for the Iranian media, and a universal code of ethics for journalism) would answer the first research question. And the main findings and discussions in the fifth, and sixth categories (practicing media ethics in Iran, and the major challenges for media ethics in Iran) would provide a proper answer for the second research question. Due to the compatibility of the main research findings with the related theories, as I provide discussion for them in this chapter, two research questions would be answered properly.

5.1. Definition of journalism ethics

According to UNESCO, a code of ethics for journalism guides journalists to know their role, their rights, and obligations (UNESCO, n.d.). Another definition provided by Keeble (2009) as he defines the code of ethics is "stressing the public interest, the public's right to know and freedom of expression, and serve to create a collective conscience of the profession" (p.15). According to Ward (2010), journalism ethical codes emphasize the issues such as the relationship of journalists with the sources, truth-telling, avoidance of harm, and objectivity (Ward, 2010, p.44).

In this study, my focus is on the code of ethics for journalism; Hence, based on Ward's definition, ethical principles should be the primary requirements to define the ethical code of conduct for the professions such as journalism. Regarding the importance of defining the ethical code for the professions, other scholars presented the same viewpoints. As Friend & Singer (2015) note that ethics is a set of values shared among a group of professionals, which helps to identify them from other groups or individuals (p.xv).

According to Babran and Ahadzadeh (2010) truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, impartiality, fairness, and public accountability are the major ethical principles of journalism (pp.127,128). As defined by Belsey & Chadwick (1992) journalism ethics includes two aspects such as input and output aspects. Input aspect obtains truth-telling, fairness, justice, democratic significance, avoidance of bias, and harm. Output encompasses the journalistic practice and producing the information for the public. It is crucial to ensure the quality of these two ethical aspects (pp.9,10).

Here, I bring some key findings and the interviewee's quotes, which are related to the above-mentioned theories. Journalist A talks about the main ethical framework for journalism such as respect for the privacy of individuals and the public interests (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021). Journalist B also names two ethical principles of journalism such as accuracy in news production and fidelity (Journalist B, date of interview 21st March 2021).

Journalist G defines media ethics as "Preserving the source of news, caring about the reputation of individuals, observing the news values, prioritizing the values in news production and reporting, avoiding prioritizing the personal interests in choosing the subject of news, observing the principle of realism, and avoiding influencing the news analysis by sexism, racism or the personal interests" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021). Also, the rest of the interviewees referred to some major ethical principles as well.

Based on the key finding, ethical principles of journalism such as respect for the privacy and dignity of individuals, accuracy, preserving the source of news, honesty, impartiality, avoiding including the personal views in news production, caring about the reputation of individuals, respect the laws and customary rules.

The principles mentioned by the interviewees are like the ethical principles named by the media theorists such as Ward, Babran, and Ahadzadeh.

5.2.   Professionalism in the Iranian media

Journalism is a profession, and the process of journalism professionalization is an ideological construct, hence, studying journalism ethics would be essential to know more about the professional identity and occupational ideology of journalism. As defined by Waisbord (2013) professional journalism includes journalism norms, quality standards in journalistic practice, acquiring the standard knowledge, and work discipline (pp.3,4). To define journalism as a profession, the qualifications such as related knowledge, autonomy, organizational discipline, and monopoly should be acquired (Goldstein, 1984, cited in Goldkin, 2006, p.110).

Hallin & Mancini (2004) introduce the major aspects of professionalization such as autonomy, professional norms, and public service orientation (pp.34,35). Christians (2000) also notes that the

origin of mass media is professional ethics (p.15). Law, ethics, and professional journalism are the requirements of the normative view of the media (Christians & et al, 2009, p.ix).

Based on the above-mentioned characteristics of professional journalism, autonomy, ethical principles, standardized knowledge, public service orientation, and organization discipline are the main features of a professional journalist. However, based on the key findings of this study, journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism since most Iranian journalists do not have related education, autonomy, and organizational discipline. Also, there is no defined set of ethical principles for journalistic practice in Iran.

In this regard, journalist D argues "Journalism ethics includes ethical principles. In my opinion, without these principles, laws, and customary rules, journalism would be meaningless" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

Journalist H also notes "Shaping people's views and enhancing the public insight requires journalists and media workers, who adhere to ethical principles of this profession; but now only a few numbers of graduates in journalism work in the field of media" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Regarding non-professional journalism in Iran, Shahidi (2006) refers to a survey, which was done in 1994 and revealed a very low ratio of professional journalism. Shahidi names some of the characteristics of non-professional journalism in the media in 2004, such as self-censorship, a few numbers of professional journalists working in the media, ignorance of journalistic principles by the journalists, commercialization, a lack of focus on the social issues, a lack of job security, laziness, and dependence on the news agencies (p.5). Moreover, Zare (1998) refers to the results of some surveys, which have been done in 1998. The surveys revealed that the situation of professional journalism in the Iranian media was not satisfying, and "Ninety percent of the country's working journalists had had no training or education related to journalism" (Cited in Shahidi, 2006, p.10).

According to Obijiofor and Hanusch (2011), Journalism education is crucial for journalists to distinguish ethics and realize their roles in society (pp.62-64). In this regard, journalist A refers to a lack of related education as one of the features of non-professional journalism in Iran; when she points out "Unfortunately, many graduated students in journalism do not work in the media, and they turn to other professions. Many believe that the reason is a lack of motivation and the scarcity

of the writing talent since sometimes students choose the field of study by chance, and only to get to the university" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Most interviewees agree that journalism in Iran is non-professional, due to various reasons such as a lack of related education, the absence of autonomy, the scarcity of organizational discipline, lacking defined ethical principles, and a lack of public service orientation. These mentioned factors are like the characteristics of professional journalism mentioned in the related theories.

5.2.1. Professional journalism in the liberal model of professions

According to Waisbord (2013) "Professional journalism has been variously used to refer to abstract notions of good journalism, industrial control, or the democratic press" (pp.3,4). He also points out that professionalism is a normative proposal for journalistic practice and shaping the media systems. Based on this viewpoint, objectivity, public service orientation, and democracy are the subjects related to professionalism (pp.2,3).

As discussed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) professional journalism is a controversial concept. It has been well-defined in the liberal model of professions (P.33). Systematic knowledge is a prerequisite for professional journalism (Wilensky, 1964, cited in Hallin & Mancini, 2004. P.33). However, there is no such systematic knowledge in journalism; hence, to define journalism as a profession, training that provides professional knowledge is required (Hallin & Mancini, 2004. P.33).

It is a considerable point that there is a connection between professionalism and the liberal model of professions. However, in a country like Iran, which is a non-liberal country, there is a lack of freedom of expression, and there is no chance to fulfill professional journalism. As the main findings of this study showed that journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism since most journalists do not have related education, and they do not have other qualifications of professional journalists. Due to these reasons, they would be lacking the knowledge of ethical principles of professional journalism and would not be committed to those principles.

Regarding the importance of professionalism in journalism, journalist A points out "Unfortunately, many graduated students in journalism do not work in the media, and they turn to other professions" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021). Also, journalist H notes that

"Shaping people's views and enhancing the public insight requires journalists and media workers, who adhere to ethical principles; but now only a few graduates in journalism work in the media" […] "Professional journalism requires the definition of professional ethical codes and principles. However, due to the various reasons such as a lack of economic independence of the media, political dependence of the media on the specific political parties, and the absence of press freedom, professional journalism has not been formed in Iran" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist D argues "There are many challenges for professional journalism in Iran. Even if there is freedom in content production, there is no freedom of expression, so it is not very logical to talk about journalistic ethics in the recent situation of Iranian media" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021). Journalist G also points out "Many major issues such as the threats from some groups and organizations outside of the media, especially the ruling power, and governmental institutions, unhealthy competition between the media, and a lack of freedom for journalists, affect journalist's activities and limit them to act based on the principles of professional journalistic ethics" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

As mentioned by the interviewees, Iranian journalists are not professionals, they do not have related education, autonomy, and other characteristics of professionals. Also, non-professional Iranian journalists face many difficulties such as lacking job security, very low income, lacking freedom of expression, the absence of democracy in society, and so on. Based on the main research findings and the relevant theories, I can conclude that Iranian journalism is not professional journalism, also it is far from the liberal model of professions.

5.3. The necessity to define ethical codes for the Iranian media

Regarding the necessity to define a code of ethics for journalism, many scholars presented the relevant viewpoints. According to Day (2005), the code of ethics is a common ground for journalists and informs the public that media organizations are committed to ethics (p.46). As Belsey & Chadwick (1992) point out, journalism needs a value-guided code of conduct (p.9). Eid also argues (2014) that due to the crucial role of journalists to persuade public opinion, defining an ethical code of conduct for this profession is necessary (p.195).

Moreover, as defined by Motamednejad (2000) media ethics is a practical framework to help journalists produce their general principles aligned with ethical journalism codes (Cited in Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.125). Ward (2010) also argues that media ethics are crucial regarding truth-telling, avoidance of harm, and objective reporting (p.44). As Friend & Singer (2015) note, an ethical guideline for journalism focuses on everyday journalistic practice and ethical conflicts (p.xxi).

Regarding defining the ethical codes for the media in Iran, Motamednejad (2000) argues that there was no significant attempt in Iran to arrange the laws related to media ethics. Only in 1963, for the first time, the syndicate of writers and journalists arranged a relevant regulation (Cited in Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.126). Later, in 1996 and 1997, two seminars related to the press ethics and investigation of the problems of the media in Iran have been held, but none of them could make any change in the situation of media ethics in Iran, so there is still no integrated ethical code for the media compatible with the international standards of media ethics (Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.127).

To approve the above-mentioned theories, the key findings of this study revealed that in a country like Iran, in which there was no noteworthy attempt to arrange ethical codes for the media, and media ethics came later than many countries, we cannot expect a good situation to adhere to media ethics. Eight out of ten interviewees mentioned that there is no local code of ethics for journalism in Iran, also seven in ten interviewees (journalists A, B, C, D, E, H, and I) believe that most of the Iranian media do not have any ethical codes for the media in Iran, and the media pay less attention to journalism ethics. Hence, journalists do not value media ethics, and more often they publish unreliable information.

In this regard, journalist F argues that "There is no code of ethics for the Iranian media. Journalists do not follow a single way to follow the principles of journalism ethics. Usually, each media outlet collects and publishes the news and reports, only based on their views and policies, regardless of the professional ethics of journalism" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

However, as nine out of ten interviewees agreed that there is no united code of ethics for the Iranian media, it is necessary to define such ethical codes for the media. In this regard, journalist A points out "Defining the ethical codes for the media is necessary, but even if such codes and

principles are defined, there is no guarantee that the media will follow them" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Also, journalist G argues that "There is a need to redefine ethical codes for the Iranian media. However, due to many problems for the media workers, such as a lack of financial dependence, the absence of job security, and so on, this profession has a chaotic situation" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

As mentioned by the interviewees, and the theorists, it is necessary to define a code of ethics for journalism; Since ethical codes would improve journalistic practice and encourage journalists to seek the truth and act independently. Based on the main research findings, I can conclude that defining the ethical codes for journalism is necessary; but, in the recent situation of the Iranian media, it is not possible. Even if such codes and principles are defined, due to a lack of legal enforcement, there is no guarantee that the Iranian media would follow them. Moreover, due to the pressures and widespread censorship made by the government, the codes of ethics for journalism are ignored by the media.

5.4.   A universal code of ethics for journalism

Regarding the concept of ethical codes for journalism, globalization of media ethics may be a relevant subject, which was introduced by some theoreticians in media studies. As Ward (2005) notes, it is necessary to define a global code of ethics for journalism, due to the globalization of the news media and journalistic practice (p.4).

Regarding the importance of defining a global ethical code for journalism, Babran and Ataherian (2019) point out that due to the impacts of new technologies (such as the internet and satellites) on different aspects of society, media need to be global (p.5). Ward (2010) also presents the same viewpoint, when he notes due to the globalization of journalistic practice, journalism ethics should be global as well (p.159).

However, arranging a universal code of ethics for journalism is a controversial debate, and media theorists did not agree on it. As Ward (2013) argues, it is not easy to define a universal code of ethics, since there are historical, ideological, and cultural differences among societies (p.106). The critics of global media ethics refer to the principles of global ethics for the media, which are based

on Western culture and may not be compatible with other cultures (Ward, 2010, p.173). Moreover, Callahan (2003) points out that due to the cultural differences within the countries, the universality of ethics is questionable (p.11). Since there are a lot of disagreements among scholars, it seems defining and applying a universal code of ethics for journalism is still questionable.

Regarding defining global media ethics for the media, most interviewees point out that journalism in Iran is not compatible with the universal principles of journalism, since it is far from international journalism. Only a few numbers believe that may be some ethical codes and principles in the Iranian media, which are compatible with the universal ethical codes for journalism. In this regard, journalists A and H, believe that a lack of correspondence between Iranian journalism with the universal code of ethics for journalism is due to the absence of freedom of expression, and the absence of freedom for the media in Iran.

In this regard, journalist A argues "Most of the Iranian media do not have any ethical codes or international ethical codes. They just act according to the domestic laws, and organizational tastes. Even if there is an ethical code for the Iranian media, it is not compatible with the global ethical code, and this problem created a huge distance between our media and the media all around the world" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021). In this regard, Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) present the same view, by saying that there was no try to ratify the ethical codes for the Iranian media. Also, in recent time, there is still no integrated ethical codes based on the international principles and standards for Iranian media (p.127).

Also, journalist I notes "In my opinion, journalism in Iran is miles away from journalism in other countries and international journalism. The issues, such as censorship, lacking the freedom to express explicit criticism of high-ranking authorities, and the politicians' fear of clarifying some social issues on the media, caused degrading the position and credibility of the media" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

However, journalist B is not in favor of defining a universal code of ethics for the media; as he argues "Since the laws and the journalism practice are not the same in different countries, we cannot define one united journalism ethical code for all media around the world".

Moreover, a few interviewees like journalist C believe that the Iranian media ethics is compatible with the international ethical codes for the media. As journalist C points out "Journalism in Iran

can be compatible with the universal ethical codes, and it is possible by training journalists based on international journalism" (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021).

However, the possibility of adopting principles of universal media ethics by the Iranian media is still ambiguous. As Klein (2009) points out, the Iranian government avoids accepting any feature of the Western media, due to maintaining the Islamic-based social institutions (p.392). Ward (2013) also argues that due to cultural differences, adopting the ethical values and standards of the West will cause moral conflict and ethical dilemmas in Islamic countries (p.93).

Since not all media scholars, nor the interviewees agreed on defining a universal code of ethics for all media, I may conclude that defining a universal ethical code for the media all around the world is still a shadow of a doubt.

5.5. Practicing media ethics in Iran

To answer the question about practicing ethical principles of journalism in everyday work, not all interviewees agreed. As half of them (journalists C, E, H, G, and I), mentioned they observe ethical principles of journalism and adhere to them in their everyday work. The rest of them noted that if they want to act based on media ethics, they will have to deal with the horrible consequences such as losing their job, getting a warning, and being arrested or assassinated.

In this regard, journalist E argues "We are dealing with the issues related to media ethics. I think many journalists do not follow the ethical codes in their work. In the Iranian media, following the ethical codes for journalism depends on the personal characteristics of journalists; but I defined the ethical red lines for my work, and I respect ethical principles such as avoiding harming people, respect for the privacy of individuals, and serving the public interests" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Regarding the difficulties of adhering to media ethics, Day (2005) argues that sometimes in media organizations, ethical principles will be problematic, such as truth-telling in the time of crisis, withholding information, fabrication, deception, and hasty news coverage. These issues are threatening the trustworthiness and the credibility of the media (pp.88-90). Eid (2014) also notes that some media organizations exploit their powers to influence the public; hence, they neglect to observe ethical principles (p.194).

The answers of some interviewees are aligned with the points mentioned by scholars. As journalist A explains why she is not acting ethically, by saying that "Based on conscience, which I believe is in my work, I would like to act according to ethical principles. However, because of the fear of losing my job, getting a warning, or being arrested or assassinated, it is not possible to work based on ethical principles of journalism" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

5.5.1. The extent to adhering to media ethics

Here I mention another interview question that is also related to practicing media ethics, which would help to have a better understanding of this subject. The question is:

To what extent do you think the journalists and editors in your media house are committed to the ethical codes?

Based on the interviewee's answers, without any doubt, journalists should adhere to the ethical codes. However, due to some issues such as the financial dependence of the media on the politicians, or government, and the restrictions made by the government, they cannot follow media ethics.

In this regard, journalist A refers to prioritizing the financial interest of the media houses, and she continues "To be honest, the media house I am working for, just prioritizes the financial interest over anything else, and I never noticed they care about any ethical principles of journalism" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Moreover, journalist I mentions that the absence of freedom of expression and censorship as the major limitations for media ethics. She also adds "Ethical principles should be considered by journalists to a great extent, but in case of some ethical principles, such as truth-telling, it may be said that the restriction of freedom of expression for the media in Iran, and the censorship will not allow journalists to adhere to the principle of free information" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

In this regard, some scholars refer to the major factors, which limit journalism ethics. As Wilkins & Brennen (2004) argue that conflict of interest is a complication for journalistic practice (p.302).

Moreover, Callahan (2003) argues that in large media organizations, the economic pressure to make a profit can be a threat to observing media ethics (p.8).

Since the barriers to adhering to media ethics mentioned by the scholars are like the limitations that the interviewees pointed out, I may conclude that the issues such as conflict of interest, the economic pressure on the large media corporations, the financial dependence on the government, and the limitations created by the government for the media, may prevent Iranian journalists to act based on media ethics. More explanations about these obstacles and challenges will be mentioned in the following part.

5.6.   The major challenges for media ethics in Iran

In journalistic practice, Iranian journalists face many challenges, such as the obligation to follow the policies of the media organizations, a lack of access to the information, a restricted political atmosphere, the absence of freedom of expression, and so on, which limit them to act ethically. To provide more clarification, I mention some related theories, and later I bring the relevant key findings, which are aligned with the theories.

Regarding the barriers to adhering to media ethics, Callahan (2003) refers to some unethical journalistic practices, such as telling lies, bribery, plagiarism, and fabrication (p.8). Day (2005) also refers to the major threats to the credibility of the media, such as working in a time of crisis, retaining the information, suppressing the truth, fabrication, and deception (pp.88-90).

In this regard, Eid (2014) also points out some media fail to adhere to ethical codes since they exploit their power for public persuasion (p.194). She also continues that these dilemmas would ruin the credibility of professional journalism. Day (2005) argues that if media fail to adhere to ethical principles, they lose their credibility and public trust (p.95). Also, Wilkins & Brennen (2004) refer to abusing the professional position and prioritizing personal interests over loyalties, and duties (p.302).

The major findings of this study also revealed that the obligation to act according to the media policies and interference of personal opinions of the editors or journalists in news production and reporting are the main challenges for the Iranian journalists to act ethically. This part of the research findings, which is about conflict of interest, and interference of personal opinions in news production is aligned with the relevant theories and could confirm them well.

Furthermore, the interviewees named other challenges to fulfil ethical journalism in the Iranian media, such as the restrictions made by the government and political parties, the absence of job security, the minimum wage, and the scarcity of welfare facilities.

Similar prohibitive factors are mentioned by the scholars as well. As Ranji (2020) points out, the journalism system in Iran is influenced by the political, cultural, social, economic, and environmental aspects (p.12). Also, Shahidi (2006) points out that in 2004, there was no professional journalism, nor freedom for journalists. Also, the political situation was restricted, which made a restricted environment for journalistic practice (pp.20,21).

In this regard, journalist A refers to a lack of freedom of expression as one of the main challenges for journalists to act ethically, as she argues "A lack of legal protection for journalists, and the absence of freedom of expression in Iran would cause to losing the job, life threat, arrestment and detention of journalists, who act according to the principles of journalistic ethics" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

In this regard, journalist G talks about the financial dependence of the media on some organizations or the government. She provides more details by saying "One of the biggest challenges to observing media ethics is that only a few journalists follow the principles of professional journalistic ethics; even if they want to act according to ethical principles, they will have conflicts with the news editor. The need to receive advertisements from organizations to survive is another challenge. While no one cares about ethical journalists, professional news activities cannot continue based on ethical principles" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

However, journalist F believes that violation of media ethics is a worldwide phenomenon, not only belongs to the Iranian media. She also continues "In my opinion, journalists like people in other professions, such as medicine, engineering, or advocacy work for their financial interests, and may violate ethical principles of the media to secure their restrestis issue is not only for the Iranian media; it occurs in all media around the world" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Most interviewees referred to almost all obstacles to professional journalism mentioned by Shahidi and other theorists. Thus, I may conclude the research findings could confirm the relevant theories.

5.6.1. Ethical dilemmas in journalistic practice

Regarding ethical dilemmas, which journalists face in everyday work, Day (2005) refers to the deficiency of admissibility of media ethics and the dominance of the institutional ethical codes for journalism as some of the ethical dilemmas for journalistic practice. He also mentions that media organizations failed to provide a guideline to solve ethical dilemmas that journalists face by working under time deadlines pressure (p.47). In this regard, Day (2005) notes that failing to fulfill the professional journalism, and abusing the power of the media organizations, which cause losing credibility will create an ethical dilemma in journalistic practice (p.95).

Also, the key research findings revealed that there are always some ethical dilemmas and challenges in journalistic practice, which journalists would have to face. It may be possible for journalists to be committed to ethical principles in some ways, but sometimes acting ethically would have bad consequences or real dangers for journalists.

In this regard, journalist I points out "In journalistic practice, we face many dilemmas, such as avoiding telling the truth or criticizing the government and authorities, due to the concerns about losing the job, assessment or life threat. Hence, we will not publish such news, which puts us in danger or causes trouble for us. I should admit I have such doubts as well" (Journalist I, date of interview 26th March 2021).

Journalist E mentions some reasons for being doubtful about acting ethically, by saying that "It is possible to be committed to ethical principles, but it would have bad consequences and sometimes put us in real danger. In this regard, we will face many dilemmas and doubts to act based on ethical principles" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Also, journalist G argues that "I act according to the ethical framework. However, due to ethical dilemmas, a journalist would have to be concerned about what he is sacrificing in his work. Sometimes, we have been forced by the news editor to act contrary to ethical principles of journalism" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021). Journalist J refers to prioritizing the personal interests of journalists or the media organizations over the public interests as the major dilemma to observe media ethics (Journalist J, date of interview 29th March 2021).

Non-professional journalism, a lack of enforceability of media ethics, institutional code of ethics for journalism, abuse of power by the media organizations to persuade the public, the absence of job security, and conflict of interests are the major factors making ethical dilemmas in journalistic practice. These ethical dilemmas have been mentioned by both scholars and interviewees. Hence, the research findings could confirm the related theories.

5.6.2. Political issues affect media ethics

The media ecology in Iran is influenced not only by ideology but also by other factors of which political issues are the main ones. According to Ranji (2020), the media atmosphere in Iran has politically controlled; the state suppressed journalists and journalistic practice (p.3) As discussed by Shahidi (2006) in 2004, some limitations such as fear, poverty, difficulty to access the information, the absence of journalism freedom, the restricted political ecology, and so on made the inappropriate media environment (pp.20,21).

Almost all interviewees referred to the political issues and the restrictions made by the government and political parties as major threats to media ethics in the Iranian media. To clarify this point and provide a better understanding, by referring to the research findings and the related theories, I discuss the relevant subjects such as the situation of democracy in Iran, and governmental restrictions. As discussed by Ward (2010) social contract between journalists and the public is influenced by ethical codes. Due to the role of journalists to modify democracy, they should focus on public issues (p.50).

However, in a country like Iran, which based on the reports of the human rights organization is not a free country, there is no professional journalism, social commitment between journalists and the public, and democracy. In this regard, Ranji (2020) argues that due to the dominance of the state on the media, journalists are passive and powerless (p.11). Callahan (2003) also points out that repressive regimes try to conceal information and control journalists (p.6).

According to Meyer (2011) in countries with a confined political situation, ethical codes for the media are not clear (p.4). Moreover, in 2009 the UN General Assembly on human rights in Iran published a report, which revealed "Serious restrictions remain on the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Allen et al, 2009. p.48). Moreover, The World

Press Freedom Index revealed that the rank of press freedom in Iran is 173 out of 180 countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2021).

Also, almost all interviewees referred to the suppressive regime in Iran, a lack of freedom of expression, the absence of democracy, and non-professional journalism, as the barriers to observing ethical principles. In this regard, journalist D argues "In the Iranian media, even if there is freedom in content production, there is no freedom of expression, so it is not logical to talk about journalistic ethics in this situation of the Iranian media" (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

And journalist A names some of the major challenges, which Iranian journalists face at work, and she continues "We confront a lot of challenges and problems in day-to-day work. The problems such as the scarcity of legal support for journalists, and the absence of freedom of expression, lead to losing the job and life security, arrestment, and detention of ethical journalists. Unfortunately, all or most of our media outlets are dominated by incorrect laws and the taste of the government. Also, due to the political pressure and censorship made by the government toward the media, more often adherence to ethical principles is hard or impossible" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist C presents the same viewpoint about the major challenges for journalists in the Iranian media, as he argues "Unfortunately, due to the pressures from the officials, in many cases and mostly about the sensitive news, honesty and correctness are overshadowed. The authorities also justify their wrong actions by saying that their intention is just to support national security and prevent chaos in society. Hiding the truth is also legitimized by the officials, due to avoidance of publishing some news that is not in the interest of the society or will create fear and despair for the public" (Journalist C, date of interview 21st March 2021).

The major issues related to the political restraints such as the absence of freedom of expression, the deficiency of democracy, and nonprofessional journalism, a lack of legal support for journalists, the scarcity of security and support of the government toward journalists, political pressure, and censorship made by the government are the common obstacles mentioned by both scholars and the interviewees, hence I can conclude that key findings confirmed the related theories.

5.6.3. Government influences the media

According to Shahidi (2007), most professional journalists worked in the media dependent on the government. However, after the Iran-Iraq war, due to political and economic improvement, journalism became more professional. But the media atmosphere was still restricted for the journalists who criticized the government. While the mainstream media were run by the state, newspapers were the only media, which could experience independent journalism (p.1).

As defined by Hallin & Mancini (2004) the Iranian media are under the control of the state. Also, the instrumentalization of the media may be a real threat to the professionalization of journalism in Iran. In such a situation where media organizations are instrumentalized, political criteria will lead journalism practice, so journalists would not have autonomy, and the media will set out interests. Moreover, in such a situation, a high level of political parallelism is another threat to journalism professionalization (pp.37,38).

The research findings confirmed the theories presented by the scholars since nine in ten interviewees believe that due to the existing limitations and obstacles made by the government and the authorities, journalists fail to act based on ethics. In this regard, journalist F points out "Journalism in Iran is completely influenced by the policies of the government or the parallel institutions" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist E also argues "Regarding the existing laws and regulations of Iran, low tolerance of the officials and governors about criticism, and a lack of accountability, there is no chance for applying ethical principles. So, the major issues, such as financial and political dependence on the authorities or government, censorship, and the governmental restrictions toward the media and journalists, made a poisonous atmosphere for the media" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021).

Journalist H also points out that the political issues and economic dependence of the media on the government are the major limitations to adhering to the code of ethics. He also continues "Due to the political atmosphere of the society, the absence of journalism experts in the media, a lack of economic independence of the media, and their political affiliation to the specific politicians, government or the authorities, it is impossible to fulfill the principles of journalism ethics in Iran" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

The rest of the interviewees presented the same viewpoints and noted that the limitations made by the government are the major obstacles to acting ethically in the media. Moreover, to answer the question about the extent that which Iranian journalists can practice ethical codes, Nine out of ten interviewees noted that due to the political pressure, censorship, and the dependence of many media outlets on the authorities or government, journalists are unable to execute the ethical codes for journalism. These influential factors have been mentioned by several theorists as well. Thus, I may conclude that the research findings could confirm the related theories.

5.6.4.   The ideological journalism

To analyze the media ethics in the Iranian media, it is important to know that the situation of media ethics in the Middle East is influenced by the ideology of Islam. In this regard, Hafez (2002) argues that in the last decades, regardless of different ethical codes for journalism in the West and the Middle East, formal journalism ethics became more universal (p.225).

Ward (2013) also presents the same viewpoint, when he notes that ethical principles, such as truth-telling, honesty, transparency, fairness, and resistance to propaganda are the common ethical values for the media in the Middle East and the West (p.100). However, in another part of his book, he refers to the incompatibility of western journalism and journalistic practice in the Middle East, due to the difference between journalistic practice based on the community in the Middle East, and individualistic journalism in the West (p.106).

Regarding Hafez's opinion and the first part of Ward's viewpoint, which means the Islamic ethical codes for journalism applicable in the Middle East often include the moral values that look like ethical codes in the Western media, I should mention that the research findings could not confirm their opinions, since the interviewees believe that journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism in the West. Moreover, some interviewees mentioned that the codes of ethics in the Iranian media are based on the ideology of Islam, which is not like ethical principles in the Western media.

Moreover, many scholars did not specify any similarity between media ethics in the Middle East (specifically Iran), and the West. They just point out that the media outlets in Iran are under the control of Islamic laws. So, the similarity between media ethics in the West and the Middle East is still controversial, and my research findings could not approve it. However, as I mention in the

following paragraphs, in some parts, my research findings could be aligned with the related theories.

According to Ranji (2020) since the mass media's role is defined as generating the Islamic culture in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the press regulation in Iran is constraining and functioning to serve the state's ideology (p.2). The same viewpoint is presented by Sreberny & Mohammadi (1994) as they point out the Iranian media are controlled by the government, which applies them to promote its ideology in the society (Sreberny & Mohammadi, 1994, cited in Ranji, 2020, p.2).

Giroux (2009) also argues that in Iran, the fundamental theocratic regime is against democracy, and made a frightful environment for journalism (p.88). According to Klein (2009), the Iranian press is under the control of Islamic laws (p.392). Gheissari & Nasr (2006) also point out there is a discrepancy between different aspects of the Iranian society, such as between the authoritarian regime and civil society, and between the Islamic state and democracy (Cited in Hänska-Ahy, 2011, p.123).

In this regard, half of the interviewees refer to the role of Islamic ideology as a crucial factor to influence the Iranian media, which could confirm the scholar's theories about the influence of the ideology of Islam on the Iranian media. As journalist A talks about the strong influence of religion on media ethics, she notes "In a religious country like Iran, ethical principles include the religious values that a journalist must adhere to" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Journalist E also points out "It is natural that in a religious country like Iran, moral virtues and values are subject to a religious perspective" (Journalist E, date of interview 23rd March 2021). Moreover, journalist F argues "The government and specifically the ruling power are the biggest obstacles to act based on ethical journalism. In one sentence, I can say acting based on the framework of Velayat-e-Faqih, protection of the values of the ruling power, national cohesion, and so on, determines all ethical principles in Iranian journalism" (Journalist F, date of interview 24th March 2021).

Journalist H also presents the same view by saying that "The biggest challenge facing journalists in media organizations is specific policies and principles that have arisen from the ideology of Islam, and media and journalists cannot act against it. As a result, journalists will face many

obstacles and problems to act based on journalism ethics, including neutrality, honesty, and public interests" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Since several interviewees believe that the media ecology in Iran is affected by the ideology of Islam, which determines ethical principles for journalistic practice, and their viewpoints are like the scholar's opinions, I may conclude the research findings could confirm the related theories about the impact of Islam on media ethics in Iran. However, since not all theorists or interviewees agreed on the influence of Islam on media ethics in Iran, I can say my research findings could approve this subject partly, not completely.

5.6.5. Financial issues prevent adhering to media ethics

Regarding the important role of the financial problems of the media in observing ethical principles, several scholars presented their views. As mentioned by Dragomir (2017) "Regulation, legislation, physical attacks, and threats against journalists or media owners are effective methods used to capture the media. But funding is arguably the most effective method of all". He also continues that the government controls the media by funding, and it suppresses the critical media by stopping funding them (p.2). Callahan (2003) also argues for large media organizations (which are not public service-oriented) the pressures to make a profit would prevent them to observe media ethics (p.8). Regarding the financial dependence of the media on the government, Dragomir (2017) notes "Funding is a key mechanism authority uses to influence, directly or indirectly, the editorial policies and output of public media. They do that programmatically, using the privileged position they have in these institutions" (p.5).

Also, the findings of this study confirmed that financial dependence on the government or some organizations would cause a negligence to adhere to media ethics. Half of the interviewees named financial issues as the major limitation for journalistic practice and media ethics in Iran. As journalist G points out "In my experience, professional journalism cannot be formed in Iran because media institutions are not financially independent, and they solely rely on advertising revenue. It can be said that all media are affiliated with the government" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021).

In this regard, Dragomir (2017) argues that public service media, which are funded by the government are under the direct control of the government (p.6). He also mentions "Governments

often use regulatory authorities to intervene in the media market. Such interventions are indirectly aimed to prevent media outlets from reporting critically about state policies (p.13).

Journalist A also argues "Financial issues, the economic and monetary interests of the media owners are the biggest challenges for journalists. Also, the fear of blocking the media house works based on ethical codes is another major obstacle". Moreover, journalist C refers to the low income as an obstacle for the media ethics, and he continues "Due to the scarcity of job security, the minimum wage, a lack of welfare facilities, and even negligence of basic needs of journalists by the media managers and officials, it is difficult to act based on media ethics. Therefore, we face challenges and obstacles in implementing and adhering to ethical principles" (Journalist A, date of interview 9th March 2021).

Moreover, journalist H argues "Due to the various reasons such as a lack of economic independence of the media, political dependence of the media on the specific political parties, the absence of freedom of the press and media, and a lack of free media competition, professional journalism has not been formed in Iran" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021). The rest of the interviewees also admitted the Iranian media are dependent on the government.

As mentioned by several scholars, state-funded media are dependent on the government, and they would have to follow the states' policies and rules for survival. However, in the related theories that I reviewed, it has not been mentioned by the media theorists that the financial and political dependence would influence media ethics, they just pointed out that the financial and political dependence of the media influences journalism. While several interviewees point out the financial dependence of the media on the state would prevent journalists from adhering to ethical principles. ??

5.6.6. Improvement of media ethics in Iran

As mentioned by Motamednejad (2000) no ethical principles have been defined for the media before the 20th century. First, in 1963, the ethical regulation for the media was authorized (Cited in Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.126). Moreover, in 1997, a seminar has been held to investigate the problems of the Iranian Press, and the ethical codes for journalism have been introduced; however, the government did not execute them (Babran & Ahadzadeh, 2010, p.127).

Regarding defining media ethics and modifying the situation of ethical journalism, most interviewees believe that defining an ethical charter and providing legal enforcement would oblige the media managers and journalists to adhere to journalism ethics. Moreover, to improve the situation of media ethics, they mentioned various factors such as freedom of expression, comprehensive effort by the government, financial and political independence of the media organizations, and fundamental changes in the political situation.

As journalist G argues "To improve media ethics, firstly, we need journalists who aim to develop the society. Secondly, news organizations must have strong financial support, they should not be dependent on the politicians or have any political affiliation with political parties. They should be fully aware of the political situation of the country. We also need independent and neutral political parties to support media organizations financially" (Journalist G, date of interview 24th March 2021). Journalist D also argues that to improve the situation of media ethics, some effective factors such as freedom of expression, providing job security for journalists, and retrieving public trust toward the media should be considered (Journalist D, date of interview 22nd March 2021).

In this regard, Babran &Ahadzadeh (2010) point out "Freedom of expression can be measured by a lack of censorship, and no interference of the government in media broadcasting" (p.131). Journalist H also notes "Promoting the professional ethics of journalism in the Iranian media requires fundamental changes the political views in the society, and the media organizations" (Journalist H, date of interview 25th March 2021).

Regarding the improvement of media ethics in the Iranian media, Babran & Ahadzadeh (2010) suggest several solutions such as studying the philosophical frameworks of the media, the clear and fixed definition of media ethics and its consequences, writing codes or rules covering media ethics, avoiding ambiguity in values, introducing, and expanding a democratic media culture, and promoting the expertise level of media staff (pp.132,133).

The solutions to promote media ethics in Iran mentioned by the interviewees are like the influential factors presented by Babran & Ahadzadeh, and some other theorists, hence I may conclude the research findings could confirm the related theories.

5.7. Conclusion

The general objective of this study is to analyze the situation of media ethics in Iran and examination of the level of adherence to ethical principles. The main research questions are

RQ1: Which professional codes of ethics are in function in the Iranian media?

RQ2: To what extent are Iranian journalists able to practice the ethical codes?

In this chapter, I discussed the main research findings. In this regard, I focused on the interview guide, which includes 17 questions, I arranged questions into five categories such as journalists' background, the definition of journalism, professionalism, code of ethics in the Iranian media, observance of media ethics by journalists, the major restrictions to adhere to media ethics, especially the governmental restrictions and censorship. Afterward, I presented the main findings related to each interview question and at the same time the relevant theories for comparison to see if the research findings were aligned with the theories or not.

Here I mention the most important findings, which are aligned with the theories and could answer my research questions properly.

Based on the interviews, there is no united or local code of ethics in function in the Iranian media, and every media house arranges a set of codes of conduct based on its policies, which are not aligned with the international ethical principles of journalism (the answer for the research question one).

Moreover, due to the key findings such as non-professional journalism, the absence of freedom of expression, the deficiency of job security, a lack of defined ethical codes for journalism, the financial dependence of the media on the government, ethical dilemmas, conflict of interest in the media houses, controlling the media by the government and authorities, ideological journalism, improper media ecology, and political atmosphere of the media, Iranian journalists cannot adhere to media ethics (the answer for the research question two).

Regarding the possibility to improve the situation of media ethics in the Iranian media houses, as mentioned by most interviewees, *defining a media ethics charter, and providing legal enforcement would oblige the media managers, editors, and journalists to adhere to ethical principles, and help to improve media ethics in Iran.*

However, only one interview question about the compatibility of ethical principles in the Iranian media with universal or international media ethics has not been answered by the interviewees properly. Since the interviewees were not familiar with the concept of a universal code of ethics for journalism, they did not have enough knowledge about it, and could not answer the question. However, most of them believed that it is not possible to define an international and united ethical code for all media around the world, due to cultural and social differences in the countries.

Moreover, in the discussion part about the influence of the financial dependence of the media on observing media ethics, there was no alignment between the research findings and theories. I could not find a related theory about the financial dependence of the media influencing media ethics (specifically in Iran).

The media theorists just talked about the financial dependence of the media on the government, which caused direct control or blockage of the media, due to criticizing the government or the authorities. While several interviewees believed that financial dependence on the government, would cause state control over the media, this obstacle would prohibit journalists to observe ethical principles in journalistic practice.

Furthermore, not all interviewees, nor all theorists agreed on the impact of the ideology of Islam on neglecting to adhere to media ethics. While some interviewees and several media scholars were in favor of the influence of Islamic values on ethical principles in the Iranian media, some others presented the opposite viewpoints.

Regarding the main subjects discussed in the last chapter, such as the definition of journalism ethics and ethical principles, the influence of professionalism on media ethics, the necessity to define media ethics in Iran, practicing media ethics in everyday work, the major challenges to observe media ethics, ethical dilemmas for journalists, the effect of political issues and governmental restriction on media ethics, the research findings were aligned with the related theories and could confirm them; however, as I mentioned before, only in two parts of the interviews, which were about the impact of financial issues to adhering to media ethics, and the influence of Islamic values on media ethics, there was no agreement between interviewees and several theorists.

All in all, in the final analysis, and almost in all parts of the discussion, the research findings were like the related theories. Hence, I conclude that they could confirm the theories and could answer my research questions.

5.8. Research limitations

Here I mention some limitations I faced in gathering data and interviewing journalists. First, due to the control of the Iranian government over the media, it was difficult to choose a bigger research population and send questionnaires to many journalists. Thus, I had to choose a small sample via snowball sampling.

Second, at the beginning of the research, some of the chosen journalists feared participating in this study, due to the fear of losing their job or being arrested. Hence, I made them assure that all interviews would be done anonymously and there would be no trouble or harm for them by telling the truth and cooperating in this research.

Third, due to the corona pandemic, there was no possibility to travel to Iran and interview the sample population face to face. Hence, I interviewed journalists online via WhatsApp and Skype.

Further research: In the final word, due to the importance of examining the level of commitment of journalists to media ethics, I recommend that future students, who are willing to research media ethics in Iran, apply textual analysis (besides the in-depth interview) to examine the extent of adhering to media ethics.

Moreover, since the codes of ethics for the media in Iran have received less attention in the research literature, this study would be helpful to broaden the horizon of the real situation of media ethics in Iran comprehensively.

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Appendix

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Table of interview coding:

The background of journalists, the situation of media ethics, and practicing ethical codes in the Iranian media.

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Background of journalists:

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Definition of journalism, professionalism, and ethics by journalists

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Working routines:

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Code of ethics in the Iranian media

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Government's pressures /censorship

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Journalist A: 9th March 2021

1- Sex, age, and years of work experience: Female, 41 years old, 2 years of work experience.

2- Position and job duties:

Journalist, photographer, reporter, and News Service Secretary in **Med & Lab monthly magazine**

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1- *Definition of media ethics*: Respect for the privacy of individuals and the public interests; privacy includes freedom of access the information, which is one of the most basic human rights; In a religious country like Iran, ethical principles include religious values.

2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Like other academic disciplines in Iran, many journalism students chose this major only by chance to get to the university, but due to a

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1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* I would like to act according to these principles, but because of the fear of losing my job, getting a warning on an arrest, and the fear of assassination, it is not possible to work ethically.

2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures):* Financial issues, economic and monetary interests of the media owners, and the fear of

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1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* Most of the Iranian media do not have any ethical code or any international ethical code. They just act according to the domestic laws, organizational tastes, and viewpoints.

2- *The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran:* Of course, it is necessary, but even if such a code and principles are defined, there is no guarantee

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1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* All or most of our media outlets are dominated by incorrect laws and regulations, and the taste of the government, so due to the political pressures and censorship made by the government, acting ethically is difficult.

2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: Many cases show a lack of adherence ce to ethical principles by managers and news editors; This issue must be corrected from the

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(Tehran); journalist,	lack of motivation or writing talents, after graduation, many of them do not work in the media and turn to other occupations. 3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* Yes, of course, it is necessary. *4- Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* Lack of legal protection for journalists, lack of freedom of expression, fear of losing a job and life security, arrestment, and detention. 5-*How can one improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* Define a media ethics charter is a solution, since cyberspace,e, and the internet have created anonymous media that violate the principles of professional ethics. 6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? The best way to formulate international ethical principles is to implement these	blocking the media by the government.	that the media would follow it. *3- Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?* As far as I know, there is not any. 4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* To be honest, the media I am working with just prioritizes the financial interests over anything else.	top of the power hierarchy. 3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* The restrictions created by the government and the officials in power, a lackrightsight and up-to-date laws and regulations for the media.

	principles in all media around the world with a strong executive lever. 7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* Not completely, due to a lack of freedom of expression and a lack of civil liberties in Iran.			
Journalist B: 21st March 2021 *1- Sex, age, media organization, and years of work experience:* Male, 43 years old, 8 years of work experience. *2- Position and job duties:* Editor of Night Shift in **Iranian labor news agency (ILNA), Tehran**; Newsgathering, editing, and publishing the news, interviews, and reports.	1- *Definition of media ethics*: accuracy in news production and fidelity to publishing it, no interfering with personal interests. 2-*How is professionalism in Iranian media outlets?* The situation of professional journalism in Iran is deteriorating day by day, and the quality of journalism declines. 3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* obviously, it is necessary. 4- *Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* there is no	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* Producing content for the media is not compatible with ethics. 2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: facing the various range of ideas in the media houses; and limitations made by the government, politicians, and the ruling regime.	1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* There are some principles for journalists in the Iranian press law, but not specifically for journalism. 2- *The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran:* A repetitive question. 3- *Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?* Is there any united code? No, and no. 4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* Journalists are not independent, and they have to follow the rules of the media	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* In some media, journalists are freer, but there are more limitations on the media, which are dependent on the state. 2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: There are always some ethical dilemmas, but we should choose a proper media to work to reduce facing ethical dilemmas. 3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* Bad situation for the media since the main broadcasting media outlet in Iran is

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<td>executive guarantee in the Iranian media.

5-*How can improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* Providing an enforcement guarantee for ethical codes.

6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? No.

7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* They are not compatible, since the laws and the journalism practice are different.</td>
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<td>house, and only work based on those rules.</td>
<td>completely state-owned and monopolized.</td>
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<td>**Journalist C: 21st March 2021**

1- Sex, age, media organization, and years of work experience: Male, 34 years old, 5 years of work experience.

2- Media organization, position, and job duties: journalist in **ISNA news agency (a branch in Esfahan)**. Sports reporter,</td>
<td>1- *Definition of media ethics*: Media ethics are directly related to the values of universal ethics, such as respect for the laws; hence, journalists should be committed to the laws in news production.

2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Most journalists in Iran are not professionals and they did not study journalism. Journalism has some principles, and journalists should follow</td>
<td>1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* While working, I encounter situations to take into account the media ethics; So as much as I can, I try to adhere to the ethical principles of journalism.

2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: Pressures from the officials caused overshadowing the honesty and correctness,</td>
<td>1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* Unfortunately, in Iran, the media pay less attention to journalism ethics, and sometimes journalists publish information, which is not based on reality, and it is not reliable.

2- *The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran:* Of course, it is necessary.

3- *Is there any local code of ethics in your media*</td>
<td>*1- To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* Due to political pressures and censorship in Iran, journalists are largely unable to execute codes in the media.

2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: Yes, we face many ethical dilemmas while doing journalistic practice.

3-Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:</td>
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gathering and editing news, and online news coverage.	them. People who practice journalism without acquiring enough knowledge about the principles of journalism will harm this profession. 3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* I agree with the arrangement of ethical codes for journalism since ethics lead journalists to work as professionals. *4- Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* Lack of verification in journalistic practice based on ethical codes and neglecting the basic needs of journalists by the media managers, and their problems such as lack of job security, the minimum wage, and lack of welfare facilities. 5-*How can improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* Due to many challenges and obstacles in implementing the ethical codes, it seems so difficult to act based on	and media managers just justify this act as supporting national security and preventing chaos in the society.	*house?* No, are no local or united ethical codes; Most journalists do not have any knowledge about the code of ethics; the Iranian media are far from the global ethical codes for journalism. 4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* I have no idea.	Due to the existing limitations and obstacles made by the government and officials for journalists, they fail to act based on the principles of ethics for journalists.

	ethical principles and codes for journalism. 6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? The commitment to the truth and revealing it in the media is the most crucial universal code of ethics for journalism, and this possibility can be made through professional training. 7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* It would be doable by training journalists, based on international professional courses.			
Journalist D: 22nd March 2021 *1- Sex, age, and years of work experience:* Male, 38 years old, 6 years of work experience. *2- Media organization, position, and job duties:* Journalist in **Jam-e-Jam**	*1-Definition of media ethics*: Journalism ethics includes ethical principles of journalism. This definition encompasses a wide range of ethics, from human principles to professional principles, and without these principles, laws, and customary rules, journalism would be meaningless.	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* Media ethics is nothing beyond the principles and policies of the media; In other words, each media has its definition of media ethics. And every journalist should follow the defined principles by his media house.	*1-What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* Working based on the media policies, and frameworks, and be so careful not to pass the red lines. *2-The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran:* It needs to be defined, but before doing that, journalism itself needs to be	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* Very little. 2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: In the Iranian media, if there is freedom in content production, there is no freedom of expression to publish those content, so it is not logical to talk about journalistic ethics in Iran.

newspaper (Tehran). Production of interviews, news, and reporting.	2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Professional journalism has never been considered a reliable job for journalists in Iran. Current journalism in Iran is a risky job, with the least income, and no security for journalists. 3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* Yes, it needs to be defined; Besides, there is another definition of the principles of journalism in Iran that needs to be redefined. 4- *Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* The ethical codes that a journalist personally believes in, will be overshadowed. Journalists produce media content based on their taste or based on what is dictated to them. 5-*How can one improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* By reviewing the main concepts, such as freedom of expression, and job security; also by creating a culture of	2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: In one sentence, a journalist in Iran must produce what they want from him!	redefined for the Iranian media. 3- *Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?* No. 4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* This is a repeated question.	3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* The Iranian government does not play the first and last role, not only in journalism, but also in other fields, but powerful institutions, which are parallel to the government, play a crucial role in the media and all other fields.

	promoting the reading habit in the society, restoring public trust towards the media, and freedom of journalists. But all efforts made by the elites to improve the media situation, have been limited by the materialistic views as well as greed for power. 6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? International principles and rules for journalism always remain as a word without any action. 7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* I have no answer to this question.			
Journalist E: **23rd March 2021** *1- Sex, age, and years of work experience:* Female, 35 years old, 9 years of work experience. *2-Media organization, position, and job*	1- *Definition of media ethics:* Ethics for a profession like journalism is crucial since a journalist does not belong to himself, he is responsible for informing a society. In a religious society like Iran, moral virtues and values are	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* Many journalists do not follow the ethical codes in their work, but I defined the ethical red lines for my work, such as avoiding harming the people, respect for the privacy of individuals,	1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* There are some ethical codes, but the media managers or editors do not believe in those codes, so they do not act based on them. *2- The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran*: Since there is no united way to	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* Regarding the existing laws and regulations in Iran, and low tolerance of the officials and governors about criticism, and lack of interest in accountability, the dependence of many of the media outlets on the authorities or

duties: Journalist at **IRNA news agency branch of Isfahan**; Gathering, arranging, and editing the news and reports; reporting and interviewing.	subject to a religious perspective. 2-_How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?_ Most of the journalists in Iran do not have related education, and they would have a lack knowledge about eththe ical principles of professional journalism. 3- _The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:_ defining the principles and codes of professional ethics in journalism is a necessity to approach the global standards of this profession. 4- _Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:_ Unfamiliarity of many media workers, and journalists with ethical principles of journalism and the traditional management of the media, low wages, especially for female journalists, lack of job security, and dependence on journalists on the government or authorities, (or some	and serving the public interest. 2- _The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures_: A lot of pressures and restrictions made by the editor and director of the media, the authorities at the top of the pyramid of power, and the government, and some laws, such as limitation of publishing pictures of women's sport, or any news about people, who are in the blacklist of government limited journalists.	implement the ethical codes for the media in the whole country, it is necessary to define this code. 3- _Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?_ There is no defined local code, and each media outlet has its ethical principles and regulations, however, they do not believe in them and do not apply them. 4-_To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?_ These principles and their implementation of them are not in the interest of some media managers and especially the government.	government, and worship, and pressures and restrictions on journalists there is no chance of applying ethical codes. 2- _Ethical dilemmas at work:_ For journalists who are committed to ethical principles, that would have bad consequences and sometimes put them in real danger. 3- _Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:_ Government influences media ethics at a high level because many media outlets are forced to act contrary to their mission, and they would have to act based on a series of red lines defined by the government.

	organizations) caused job insecurity for journalists. 5-*How can one improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* I do not know if it is possible in the recent situation. 6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? I have no idea about it, and I am not familiar with such a code. 7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* Some of the codes may be compatible with the international ethical codes for journalism, but many of them originated in Iranian laws and culture; hence, they became the localized ethical codes for the Iranian media.			
Journalist F: 24th March 2021 *1- Sex, age, and years of work experience:* Female, 41 years	1- *Definition of media ethics*: A set of professional, customary, and legal requirements, as well as ethics that the journalists should be committed to. However, journalists, like other professions, work for	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* There is no clear definition of media ethics in the Iranian media and the majority of journalists do not act accordingly.	1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* There is no single code or code of ethics for the Iranian media; each media outlet collects and publishes the news and reports, only based on their views and policies, regardless of	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* Journalism in Iran is completely influenced by the policies of the government and the parallel institutions.

| old, 5 years of work experience.

2-Media organization, position, and job duties: Journalist at **Radio and Television I.R.I.B,** (National Radio); Journalist, mainly a social reporter. | their financial interests to secure their own needs, so they may violate ethical principles.

2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Journalism in Iran is influenced by political, economic, societal, and cultural factors. Moreover, the entrance exam of the universities cannot evaluate students, so some students who study journalism do not have writing and journalistic talents.

3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* Since the interests of the media owners take precedence over anything else, defining ethical codes for a profession like journalism is practically meaningless and it is not enforceable.

4- *Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* Obligation to act according to the media policies and interests, interference of opinion of the editors or journalists in news production and | 2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: We face various challenges to journalistic ethics repeatedly; To face ethical challenges, the interests of the media and the journalists hinder the observance of professional journalistic ethics. | the professional ethics of journalism.

2- The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran: Due to the direct supervision of the government, and the pressures and widespread censorship made by the government on the media, especially on the national radio and television, the professional ethics of journalism were ignored on national broadcasting more than other media.

3- Is there any local code of ethics in your media house? No. There is not. Due to the viewpoints of the editors and journalists, the pressures of the government and political parties, and financial issues, most of the media in Iran easily violate the principles of professional ethics.

4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics* They should adhere the moral | 2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: I have already explained them.

3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* The ruling power (Velayat-e-Faqih) determines all ethical principles in Iranian journalism; Ruling power and the government are the biggest obstacles to media ethics. |
|---|---|---|---|---|

	reporting, and restrictions of the government and political parties. 5-*How can one improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* The issue of non-observance of professional ethics in the Iranian media is greater than in developed countries; for any change in Iranian journalism, a comprehensive effort by the government, and institutions dependent on the government, and the media would be needed. 6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? No. There is not. But it is necessary to define such a single code. 7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* Not only the Iranian media but also all media around the world sometimes violate the principles of professional ethics of journalism.		principles, but it is not possible due to the political situation in the country.	

Journalist G: 24th March 2021				
1- Sex, age, media organization, and years of work experience: Female, 40 years old, 7 years of work experience. **2-Media organization, position, and job duties:** **Sobh Sahel newspaper, Hormozgan** province, journalist and reporter.	1- *Definition of media ethics*: Preserving the source of news, caring about the reputation of individuals, observing news values to prioritize them in news production and reporting, avoiding prioritizing personal interests in choosing the subject of news, and observing the principle of realism, and not influencing the news analysis by the personal interests or sexism or racism. 2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Many journalists who work in the media are not educated people in this field. 3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* It is not possible in the recent situation of the media in Iran. 4- *Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* The media managers avoid publishing high-value and informative news, to save their position in the	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* To save the privacy of individuals, I do not publish the name or any details of my news sources; also, I do not interview some company managers just for making a financial profit, while interviewing them does not have any news value and is not informative for audiences. 2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: If we want to act according to the ethical principles, we will have conflicts with the news editor, also we need to receive advertisements from organizations for survival; and we are not allowed to interview people who have political issues.	1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* No united ethical codes. Many media do not mention the news source, and journalists are not committed to the media ethics, they just copy the produced news by other media. 2- *The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran*: It is necessary, due to the lack of financial and job security, the bribery, and corruption in media outlets, especially after the Ahmadinejad presidency, and also the lack of commitment of journalists to the media ethics. 3- *Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?* There is no specific code of ethics for our media; My coworkers and the editors do not believe in journalism ethics. 4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* The media should follow ethical codes since they guide	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* It depends on the personality of journalists, the financial issues of the media, and personal tastes and affiliations of the media house to the organizations or politicians determine how they work in the news. 2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: Sometimes, we have been forced by the news editor to act contrary to ethical principles of journalism, and there are restrictions outside the media; while we do not have too many inside or outside restrictions, we should follow the media ethics. 3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* Of course, it is effective in negligence of ethical principles by the media, especially in investigative journalism; Since, the government provides financial support only to

media. Also, the media institutions are not financially independent and rely solely on advertising revenue; all media are affiliated with the government, especially with the Revolutionary Guards.

5-*How can improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* We need journalists who aim to develop society and fix their concerns about low income, and job insecurity; News organizations must have strong financial support to not be dependent on the politicians or any political affiliation to political parties; we need independent and neutral political parties to support media organizations financially.

6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? I am not familiar with this concept.

7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* Since I do not know anything about the

public opinion, and they should serve the public interest, however, due to the financial problems, and lack of relevant education for journalists, they do not.

the media which are its advocators, and limits or punish the journalists, who try to reveal the financial corruption of officials or politicians, hence, there is no possibility to act ethically in the media.

universal code of ethics for journalism, I cannot compare ethical codes for journalism in Iran with those ethical codes.

Journalist H: 25th March 2021

1- Sex, age, media organization, and years of work experience: Male, 41 years old, more than 2 years of work experience.

2- Position and job duties: News manager in **Kurdistan Young Reporters Club.**

1- *Definition of media ethics*: It means "social responsibility" and "professional ethics", applied by journalists who are trained and specialized in the field of news and media. Honesty, impartiality, and consideration of the common good are the basic tenets of journalistic ethics.

2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Shaping people's views and increasing public insight requires journalists and media workers to adhere to ethical principles of this profession, only a few graduates in journalism work in the field of media and they do not follow the ethical codes.

3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional*

1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* I try to consider ethical principles, such as honesty, the accuracy of the news, the credibility of news sources, and following the truth in my work.

2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: The media policies, pressure, and limitations from outside of the media toward journalists, the economic dependence of the media on the government or some organizations outside of the media.

1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* Public awareness, respect for the privacy of individuals and their personal lives, and truth-telling. However, some of these major ethical principles, such as respect for the privacy of individuals and their personal lives are not applicable in the Iranian media.

2- The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran: It is necessary since without implementing the principles of journalistic ethics, the main responsibility of the media, which is enlightenment and public awareness will not be accomplished.

3- Is there any local code of ethics in your media

1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* It is impossible to fulfill all of the principles of professional journalistic ethics in Iran, due to the political atmosphere of Iranian society, the absence of journalism experts in the media, and lack of economic independence of the media, and their political affiliation to the specific politicians or government or the authorities.

2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: According to what I mentioned in the previous paragraph, my journalistic practice has always been doubtful.

3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* Indeed, all governments

journalism in Iran: It is necessary, since due to the lack of economic independence of the media, political dependence of the media on the specific political parties, lack of freedom of the press and media, and lack of free media competition, and so on, professional journalism has not been formed in Iran.

4- Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes: The specific policies and principles that have arisen from the ideology of Islam, which media and journalists cannot act against it.

5-*How can one improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* It requires the fundamental changes in political views in society and the major changes in media organizations.

6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? Determining ethical principles for the media should include all aspects of professional ethics in the media, which is not

house? Yes, protecting the privacy of individuals and officials. And in 2004, when the draft Covenant on the Ethics of the Journalistic Profession was published in Iran.

4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* The external pressures from the authorities limit us to act ethically.

have a decisive role in determining the principles of professional ethics, depending on the specific political and economic conditions.

limited to one specific geographical area, and may apply to all countries.

7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* No, ethical principles in the Iranian media are different from ethical principles applicable in other countries; In this regard, lack of freedom of speech is one of the most important differences. | | | |

Journalist I: 26ᵗʰ March 2021 *1- Sex, age, and years of work experience:* Male, 42 years old, 5 years of work experience. *2-Media organization, position, and job duties:* **Borna News Agency (the branch of Gilan);** News editor, reviewing the news and photos submitted by journalists, editing, and checking the media content with the media policies, and the laws.	1- *Definition of media ethics*: Convey and reflect the news correctly, respect impartiality, respect the privacy and dignity of individuals, and not cause anxiety and problems in society. 2- *How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* The population of professional and educated journalists in the Iranian media is small. 3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* It is necessary to institutionalize the principles of professional ethics. *4- Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* They will face some problems, such as losing their jobs. 5-*How can improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* By drafting an ethical journalism	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* I do not arrange the news or reports based on my viewpoints, also I do not add or eliminate anything to the media content, which is against the truth, and will create legal issues for the media. 2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: The force to follow the media policies, and the pressure of the government (which limits journalists to not publishing and expressing critical content, and addressing the society's issues.)	1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* The ethical codes are not defined in an ethical charter, but sometimes journalists or editors apply the ethical principles, such as respecting the privacy of individuals and avoiding blasphemy. *2- The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran:* Of course, we need these ethical codes for the media, and the lack of these principles in Iranian journalism is so visible, and the reason for lacking them is that many journalists believe that there is no need to act based on ethical principles of journalism. *3- Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?* The ethical codes based on the press law, such as respect for privacy and respect for the dignity of individuals, the need to observe points about critical content, and the	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* Not so much. 2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: Avoiding, telling the truth, or reporting on managers and government agencies due to some concerns of journalists, such as losing their job. 3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* The Iranian government always used to make limitations for the media and journalists.

charter, ethical principles of this profession, and obliging media managers, editors, and journalists to adhere to these principles.

6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? If there is such a code, Journalism in Iran is far from it.

7- *Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* Due to some issues, such as censorship, lack of chance to express explicit criticism of high-ranking government officials and politicians in the media, and the politicians' fear of clarifying some social issues on the media.

accuracy of the information, using the credible sources, and not distort the news.

4--*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* Due to the restriction of freedom of expression of the media, and the censorship, journalists cannot apply ethical codes, such as truth-telling, and so on.

Journalist J: 29th March 2021 *1- Sex, age, and years of work experience:* Male, 42 years old, 20 years of work experience. *2- Media organization, position, and job duties:* **News editor in Nasim-News newspaper (Gilan);** Editor,	1- *Definition of media ethics*: It means maintaining fidelity in publishing news, avoiding including personal views in media content, not misleading the audience by the referred quotes, the accuracy of the information, and photos or videos should not distort. 2-*How is professionalism in the Iranian media outlet?* Journalism in Iran is far from professional journalism, and many	1-*How can you practice journalism and ethics in your everyday work?* Fidelity and honesty are ethical principles that we should always try to be committed to. 2- *The challenges you face (editors, managers, government pressures*: Challenges and constraints are mostly imposed by the governments on the media, since they cannot tolerate criticism or being questioned by the media, and they limit journalists. As a result,	1- *What are the codes of ethics for journalism in Iran?* Journalists should be committed to the simplest media ethics, such as avoiding bribery and writing positively or negatively only for receiving money from the sources and avoiding exchanging right and wrong. *2- The necessity to define ethical codes for the media in Iran:* The media lead the society, so if they do not act based on the ethical principles, they	1- *To what extent are journalists able to practice ethical codes?* Up to 80 percent. 2- *Ethical dilemmas at work*: Prioritizing the personal interests of journalists or the media organization over the public interests. 3- *Influence of the Iranian government on journalistic ethical codes:* Governments have been somewhat influential by limiting the system of publishing and free access to information.

134

and internal Manager.	journalists do not have relevant education.	journalism deviates from its original mission.	will lead the society in the wrong direction.	
	3- *The necessity to define ethical codes for professional journalism in Iran:* Not necessarily. But, since the laws change, the ethical codes can act as filters to distinguish between good and bad.		3- *Is there any local code of ethics in your media house?* Yes, maintaining neutrality, honesty, accuracy in publishing news, and so on. But there is not any united code of ethics for the media.	
	4- *Challenges in the Iranian media houses for ethical codes:* Information and news are in the hands of the government (governments), and our historical memory says that governments are not willing to provide this information to the media transparently.		4-*To what extent journalists are committed to ethics?* They must be 100 percent committed to those codes, but they are not.	
	5-*How can one improve the situation of journalistic ethics?* Defining a code of ethics by journalists or media and modifying professional journalism.			
	6-*Is there any universal code of ethics for journalism*? Yes, to some extent. International journalism is a controversial phenomenon to explore issues, personalities, and factors influencing an			

incident, but it is very different from Iranian journalism. 7-*Compatibility of journalism ethics in Iran with the universal ethics for journalism:* There are some similarities and contradictions. For instance, honesty as a value in journalism is a common principle, that all journalists around the world agreed on.			