

The Algerian media landscape under ethical scrutiny: From the perspective of the academic elite

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Received: 20/08/2025; Accepted: 13/02/2026; Published: 13/04/2026

Abstract

This study explores the views of university professors on the ethics of journalism in Algeria. The main findings are as follows:

- Scoops are pursued at the expense of professional ethics.
- An emphasis on quick profits at the cost of credibility and objectivity.
- Attempting to achieve fame without regard for fundamental journalistic principles.

The study also revealed that, according to respondents, journalists lack sufficient knowledge of journalistic ethics, which leads to ethical breaches, especially in news coverage.

Keywords: ethical principles, The media landscape, reality of journalism, journalist, university professor.

Introduction:

The world today is experiencing an opening up of the media landscape and a transformation in communication due to technological advances and developments in media content and delivery. As the researcher Marshall McLuhan articulated, we have observed the dominance of the medium in various areas, as he stated: ‘The

medium is the message.’ Often, the choice and attention given to the medium is prioritised over the content due to reliance on sophisticated algorithms that captivate audiences. Consequently, Algerian journalists, like their counterparts worldwide, have embraced the innovations presented by modern technology, using these tools to secure exclusives, fame and the rapid dissemination of news without verifying its credibility or considering objectivity. This disregards principles and professional ethics.

Since Algeria’s independence, there have been calls for a code of ethics to regulate media practices across various fields, driven by an intellectual elite consisting of professors, researchers and journalists. A journalistic code of ethics serves as a moral guide that journalists in Algeria are expected to adhere to in order to produce balanced media content.

This field study aims to survey the opinions of a sample of university professors regarding the reality of journalistic practice in Algeria.

First: The methodological part of the study:

Research problem: Through this scientific paper titled *Elite Attitudes towards the Reality of Journalism in Algeria in Light of the Erosion of Ethical Principles: A Field Study on a Sample of University Professors in Algeria*, aims to examine the media landscape in Algeria through the lens of the Algerian elite, specifically university professors. The aim is to present an overview of the extent to which journalists in Algeria adhere to values and ethics in their journalistic practice. We live in an age of communicative revolution, driven and directed by the media. This has transformed human life on multiple levels, especially with regard to media work in the context of the rise of the digital world. This has resulted in competition for scoops, leading to ethical dilution. In this context, the following main question was posed: What are the elite's attitudes towards the reality of journalism in Algeria?

The importance of the study: lies in the crucial role that codes of ethics play in regulating journalistic work in Algeria, where ethical principles are eroded by the relentless pursuit of scoops, competitiveness and the satisfaction of certain parties in exchange for advertising revenue. Technological development has also led to the emergence of new media outlets. This highlights the importance of adhering to codes of ethics and the ethics of the journalistic profession, as this is essential for gaining the public's trust by presenting credible news and information.

Objectives of the study: This paper aims to produce scientific results by addressing the research problem, with the following objectives:

- Answer the question posed in the problem statement.
- Understanding the elite's views on the reality of journalism in Algeria, in light of

the erosion of ethical principles and standards, during the practice of their profession.

- Identify the key ethical standards and principles that Algerian journalists do not adhere to, according to the elite.
- Explore the main reasons why journalists in Algeria do not adhere to ethical standards and principles.

Study population and sample:

For any study to arrive at realistic and objective results, it is essential to accurately define the target population. This allows the sample type to be determined and information and data to be collected from individuals using appropriate research tools. Therefore, the population for this study concerning elite attitudes towards the reality of journalism in Algeria consists of all university professors in Algeria.

Due to time and effort constraints, it was impractical for the researcher to include the entire population in the study. Therefore, a simple random sample of 50 individuals was employed.

Method and tools of the study:

This study adopted a descriptive methodology using a survey approach. Such studies aim to describe a specific phenomenon or topic over a defined period in order to obtain scientific results that are interpreted objectively and in alignment with the data related to the phenomenon.

It is also defined as a method that relies on the analysis of sufficient and accurate information about a specific phenomenon or topic over known time periods, in order to achieve scientific results that are interpreted objectively and are consistent with the actual details of the phenomenon (Abdul Hamid, 1993).

In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire, which Qindaliji (2008) defines as 'a set of varied questions and inquiries that are interrelated in a form that

achieves the objectives sought by the researcher in relation to the research topic and the chosen problem'. It consists of pre-prepared questions directed at the study sample for their responses, which may be closed-ended, open-ended, or a mix of both. Questionnaires are one of the most commonly used tools in scientific research within the fields of media and communication.

Operational concepts of the study:

Attitudes:

An attitude is a subjective occurrence originating from the individual and varying according to their nature. Attitudes can be either overt, meaning clearly expressed, or covert, meaning subconscious. This means that an individual may possess an attitude without being aware of it. Nevertheless, it indicates how the person will act when confronted with a specific situation or circumstance (SamsimHamida, 2005).

Awda Mahmoud (1988) defines it as "the position an entity adopts towards a place or situation it wishes to align with; when the alignment process occurs, the attitude fades except for what remains in memory or in the entity's typical state".

In this study, the term 'attitudes' refers to evaluative responses regarding the state of journalism in Algeria in the context of the erosion of ethical principles. Attitudes are an acquired process influenced by experience, regardless of whether the response is one of support or rejection.

Elite (University Professor): Any individual who provides knowledge and information, regardless of its form or content (lectures, practical lessons, etc.), to university students at varying academic levels.

Ethical principles can be described as 'the conduct and actions of a professional during their practice, whether that profession involves writing, teaching,

consulting or other occupations' (SammanFawzi Omar, 2007).

They represent a set of values linked to the daily practice of journalism. These principles often take the form of a code of ethics to which journalists are expected to adhere, ensuring that their work remains consistent with journalistic ethics.

Second: The Theoretical Part of the Study:

The Algerian Journalist and Ethical Principles

Media openness is considered one of the media landscape's achievements, particularly in Algeria. It contributes to a diverse media scene and reinforces the public's right to varied information. However, this has resulted in a departure from the ethics and principles of media practice, exacerbated by the lack of clear legislation and regulation.

The impact of the media on society, especially with regard to economic, political and social development, is clear, particularly given the rise of visual culture driven by technological advancements. This necessitates the establishment of ethical standards and regulations to ensure that the media fulfils its role in accordance with norms and values that respect society's customs and traditions.

In response to political, social and technological transformations experienced by many countries worldwide, Algeria has opened its media sector to private entities. This openness has led to the emergence of numerous media outlets, particularly television channels, in the absence of a clear legislative framework to regulate new media practices.

The competition among Algerian television channels for scoops and fame has put ethical principles to the test. These institutions have shifted from a media-based nature to one that is more akin to commerce. This is characterised by a lack

of objectivity, political allegiance and the pursuit of funding at the expense of fair media practice.

The concept of ethical principles continues to be a topic of much discussion, even among journalists themselves. Many view them as a means of restricting freedom of media practice and constraining the work of journalists and their methods of obtaining information and news. Often, these principles are somewhat ambiguous, creating an impression of flexibility that can be exploited by journalists or political authorities. The closer these principles align with authority, the more they resemble censorship and restrictions on journalists and media personnel. Conversely, if they gravitate towards journalists, they tend to endorse broader freedoms, which can lead to violations of ethical values and principles in the pursuit

Table 1: Distribution of sample members by gender

Distribution	Count	Percentage
Gender		
Male	19	38%
Female	31	62%
Total	50	100%

Prepared by the researcher, 2025

The table above illustrates the distribution of respondents by gender. It shows that 38% of respondents are male and 62% are female. Thus, the number of females exceeds that of males, which may be attributed to the predominance of females

of sensationalism and scoops. This can result in the media becoming a tool for political and economic gain.

Effective media practice requires harmonious and cooperative engagement from the societal, political, cultural and religious spheres to ensure that journalism supports people's issues, reflects their concerns, and earns the trust of all parties (the public, political authorities and media institutions).

Third: the field part of the study

To understand the attitudes of the Algerian elite towards the state of journalism in the country, given the erosion of ethical principles, the researcher selected a random sample of 50 individuals, as previously mentioned. After examining the survey data, the characteristics of the study population are presented as follows:

in the teaching profession in recent years. Additionally, the teaching profession tends to attract and be more suitable for females than for males, who lean towards other professions.

Table 2: Distribution of sample members by age

Prepared	distribution	Count	Percentage	by the
	Age			
	Under 30	15	30%	
	30 and over	35	70%	
	Total	50	100%	

researcher, 2025

It is clear from this table that sample members are distributed by age as follows: those over 30 years old occupy the first rank with a percentage of 70%, representing the highest proportion. The second position is held by those under 30,

with a percentage of 30%. This distribution is logical when you consider that university professors are selected based on certain criteria, the most important of which are experience, academic qualifications and competency

Table 3: Distribution of the sample by educational level

Distribution	Count	Percentage
Educational Level		
Master's	12	24%
PhD	23	46%
University qualification	10	20%
Professor	05	10%
Total	17	100%

Prepared by the researcher in 2025

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of the study sample according to educational level. It reveals that 46% of the sample holds a PhD, placing them in first position. Those with a Master's degree occupy the second position, constituting 24% of the sample, while those with a university

qualification certificate rank third at 20%. Lastly, those with a professorship (higher education professors) make up the final 10% of the study sample. Considering this, the distribution of sample members based on educational level is reasonable.

Historically, employment criteria were based on a Master's degree in the old system, whereas in the current LMD system, hiring is based on a PhD.

Table 4 shows the distribution of the sample according to their opinions on the media profession in Algeria

Distribution Opinions	Count	Percentage
Job	45	90%
Hobby	03	6%
Service	02	%4
Other (please specify)	-	-
Total	50	100%

Prepared by the researcher, 2025. .

Table 4: Distribution of the Sample According to Their Opinions on the Media Profession in Algeria

The table shows that most respondents (90%, equivalent to 45 university professors) view journalism in Algeria as just another job. The remaining opinions are as follows: 6% (three individuals) view the media profession in Algeria as a hobby, and 4% (two individuals) view journalism as a service.

the journalism profession to be just like any other job. This is a negative indicator, as journalism is characterised by activity, dynamism and curiosity. Ideally, this should remind journalists that they are more than mere employees, contrary to the statements made by the sample members. The other figures only reinforce this point

The results can be interpreted to show that, according to this study, the elite consider

Table 5 shows the distribution of sample members regarding the commitment of journalists in Algeria to ethical principles.

Distribution	Count	Percentage
Opinions on commitment to ethical principles		
To a great extent	01	2%
To some extent	40	80%
Not at all committed.	09	18%
Total	50	100%

Prepared by the researcher, 2025

Table 5 shows how the study sample is distributed according to their views on the extent to which journalists in Algeria are committed to ethical principles when performing their duties. Most of the sample members stated that journalists in Algeria are somewhat committed to ethical principles, with 80% selecting this option. The remaining responses were expressed in low percentages: “not at all committed to ethical principles” was second at 18%,

and “very committed to ethical principles” was third at just 2%. According to the respondents, this may be attributed to the competition for information and the pursuit of scoops, as well as the quest for quick profit at the expense of the ethical standards that govern journalists’ work.

Table 6: Distribution of sample members regarding their opinions on the reasons for journalists’ non-commitment to ethical principles

Degree of agreement	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	T	percentage%	T	percentage%	T	percentage%	T	percentage%	T	percentage%		
Suggestions												
- Personal and material interests	22	44	17	34	09	18	02	4	-	-	50	100%
- Lack of experience and professional	14	28	18	36	13	26	05	10	-	-	50	100%

training.													
- Lack of knowledge of journalistic ethics.	35	70	13	26	-	-	01	2	01	2	50	10	0%
- Competition for scoops.	24	48	20	40	03	6	02	4	01	2	50	10	0%
Pursuit of quick profit	25	50	18	36	05	10	01	2	01	2	50	10	0%

Prepared by the researcher in 2025.

Table 6: Distribution of Sample Members Regarding Their Agreement or Disagreement with Suggestions Related to Reasons for Journalists' Non-Commitment to Ethical Principles

This table shows how much the study sample agrees or disagrees with suggestions about the reasons why journalists do not adhere to ethical principles. Their responses were as follows:

Regarding the reason of 'personal and material interests', 44% of respondents 'strongly agreed', the highest percentage. 34% of respondents "agreed", while 18% remained "neutral". Only 4% of respondents "disagreed", a minimal percentage, and no respondents "strongly disagreed". Combining the "strongly agree" and "agree" responses yields a total of 78%, indicating that the majority of respondents believe that "personal and material interests" are among the main reasons why journalists do not adhere to ethical principles, according to the study sample.

For the reason related to 'lack of experience and non-professional certification of journalists', 36% of respondents agreed, placing it in first

place, while 28% strongly agreed. "Neutral" responses reached 26%, while "disagree" responses were at 10%. No answers were given for "strongly disagree".

- The statement 'the journalist's lack of knowledge regarding journalistic ethics' received the highest percentage (70%), represented by those who 'strongly agree'. 'Agree' responses made up 26%, while there were no 'neutral' responses. The 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses were limited to 2% each, with only one person expressing these views.

- On the topic of 'the competition for scoops', a common concern in journalism, 48% of the sample 'strongly agreed' with this statement, while 40% 'agreed'. The percentage of 'neutral' responses did not exceed 6%, while 'disagree' responses were estimated at 4%. Finally, one respondent strongly rejected this proposal, accounting for 2%.

As for 'the pursuit of quick profit', 50% of respondents 'strongly agreed', while 'agree' was expressed by 20 individuals, representing 40%. The percentages for 'neutral', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree' were 6%, 4%, and 2%, respectively.

The table's results can be explained as follows:

Looking back at the previous table, it is evident that the majority of respondents agree with the suggestions representing the main reasons why, according to the study sample, journalists transgress ethical principles. On the one hand, these suggestions reflect the concerns of journalists striving to achieve them while disregarding ethical and societal standards. It could be argued that media work in Algeria often surpasses journalistic ethics for a variety of reasons, the most significant of which is the explosion of information. This has led to the development of artificial intelligence techniques that seek to establish themselves at the expense of the ethical standards of the profession.

Study results

Based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the tables, the following results can be summarised:

- The study revealed that the percentage of females exceeds that of males, although this indicator is not statistically significant. It also showed that most respondents are over the age of 35, which theoretically qualifies them to evaluate the state of journalism in Algeria, particularly given the erosion of ethical principles.

The study revealed a relatively diverse educational background among the sample. Notably, the study sample specialised in 'Media and Communication Sciences', ensuring the researcher included individuals familiar with the reality of the Algerian media, including journalists from various outlets.

Respondents perceive the media profession in Algeria as just another job, which is a negative indicator given that journalism is characterised by dynamism, activity and curiosity.

This study indicated that the individuals in the sample believe that journalists in Algeria are somewhat committed to media principles while performing their duties, with 80% of total responses indicating this belief. This percentage contradicts the sample's opinions regarding the reasons for journalists' non-commitment to ethical principles.

- The study revealed many significant reasons for transgressing ethical standards in Algerian journalism, primarily the pursuit of scoops, quick profit and fame, and a lack of knowledge regarding journalistic ethics.

Regarding the suggestions, most answers on the proposed hindrances indicated agreement when we revisited the results and combined the "strongly agree" and "agree" responses. This supports our initial hypothesis. The 'neutral' responses also received considerable percentages. We conclude that these reasons reflect the reality of journalism in Algeria, where, according to the study sample, ethical standards are often disregarded in the quest for scoops and fame.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study, titled 'Elite Attitudes towards the Reality of Journalism in Algeria in Light of the Erosion of Ethical Principles: A Field Study on a Sample of University Professors in Algeria', indicates that, from the perspective of the Algerian elite, journalists often exceed ethical standards and principles, neglecting the ethics of their profession in pursuit of scoops, profit and competition. This leads them to disregard the professional code of ethics. Therefore, it is essential to coordinate efforts to curb these transgressions. The following recommendations can be proposed:

- Training journalists through regular courses focused on journalistic ethics.

- Providing media institutions with studies and academic research prepared in various Algerian universities.

It is crucial to ensure that journalists possess the necessary scientific skills, talent and sincere desire to practise journalism before granting them a licence to work in the field.

Invest in reputable media and professional unions that can regulate journalists' work.

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