



Opinions and Attitudes Towards Citizen Journalism

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ABSTRACT. Citizen journalism, as a pervasive social phenomenon, has profoundly impacted the journalism landscape recently. This research aimed to analyze the attitudes and opinions of the students and faculty members in communication and media studies and journalists towards citizen journalism in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The descriptive analytical approach was employed to conduct this research. Data was collected using an online questionnaire and a random sampling technique for three months (October to December 2025). The sample comprised 178 participants. Data was analyzed using SPSS software with a significance level set at $p\text{-value} < 0.05$. The findings showed that a substantial majority (79.8%) supported the right of citizens to practice journalism, and 73% believed citizens could practice it. However, there was a notable difference among journalists regarding the need for specialized training. Significant distinctions in perceptions about differences between citizen and traditional journalism were observed based on gender ($p=0.043$ and $p=0.000$) and profession ($p=0.008$ and $p=0.003$). Respondents' attitudes towards the citizen journalism system and its published contents were positively correlated ($r = 0.651$, $p = 0.000$). A weak negative correlation was computed in respondents' attitudes towards the citizen's ability to practice journalism and the quality of content produced ($r = -0.263$, $p = 0.013$). However, attitudes towards the right to practice journalism and commitment to ethics did not significantly correlate ($r = 0.221$, $p = 0.140$). These findings underscore the need for a balanced integration of citizen journalism into traditional media practices, highlighting its potential and the importance of maintaining high standards.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology's emergence and social media platforms' growth have profoundly impacted journalism in recent years. A prominent change is the rise of citizen journalism, allowing amateurs to participate in producing and disseminating news. By actively involving amateurs in news reporting, this type of journalism has challenged established journalistic practices and redefined the parameters of news production. It additionally introduced new dynamics to the media ecosystem.

Citizen journalism originated by advancing the notion that "every citizen is a reporter" with the founding of OhmyNews in South Korea in 2000. This model has developed globally under various titles, such as "alternative media," "participatory journalism," and "grassroots journalism," subsequently blending professional and amateur journalism.

A broad spectrum of activities falls under the umbrella of citizen journalism, including live streaming, video reporting, social media postings, and blogging. Through it, people are empowered to give eyewitness accounts and share their perspectives, frequently bypassing the traditional media channels. This change dramatically impacts how news is reported, gathered, and consumed. Citizen journalism raises concerns regarding accuracy, credibility, and the potential for misinformation, even though it provides opportunities for a greater diversity of voices and rapid information dissemination.

Modern communication tools and media offer numerous advantages. They enable the rapid dissemination of information and significantly reduce barriers between the sender and receiver. Communication can now occur across vast geographical distances, allowing geographically distant individuals to participate in the process. Additionally, these tools provide recipients with the ability to interact instantly and express their opinions on the messages they receive. These media enable many individuals to simultaneously participate in communication, express their opinions and positions without conditions or restrictions, and publish their messages and communicative content independently without external pressure or restrictions. Perhaps the most significant impact of these media is the radical transformation of traditional journalism and the rise of citizen journalism, also known as citizenship media.

Due to its rapid spread as a communication practice in all societies, citizen journalism has garnered the attention of specialists and researchers. Consequently, some tried to understand its features, forms, objectives, pros and cons, and repercussions and effects on traditional journalism in all its kinds and components. Others sought to monitor, measure, and analyze

attitudes toward citizen journalism as a rampant social phenomenon and a modern, innovative communication and media practice.

Due to the widespread adoption of citizen journalism and its significance in promoting civic engagement and democratic values—particularly in Saudi Arabia, where social media usage is exceptionally high—research on citizen journalism is crucial. Knowing the effects and perceptions of citizen journalism is essential since more than 70% of the population uses the internet, and the nation leads globally in social media usage. Therefore, this research aimed to examine several key aspects of citizen journalism in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Firstly, it sought to assess the opinions of students, faculty members in communication and media, and journalists regarding the content of citizen journalism, focusing on its adherence to journalistic principles and practices. Secondly, to investigate the perceived differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism from the perspectives of these groups. Lastly, the study evaluated the attitudes of these individuals toward citizen journalism. The results of this research will assist in analyzing the implications of citizen journalism on individuals and society and contribute to a better understanding of this evolving media landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPTUALIZING CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND ITS PERCEPTION

Citizen journalism has fundamentally redefined contemporary media ecosystems by transforming passive audiences into active content producers. This phenomenon emerged prominently with South Korea's OhmyNews in 2000 under the mantra "every citizen is a reporter," evolving into hybrid forms such as "participatory journalism" and "grassroots media" that deliberately blur professional-amateur boundaries (Zeng et al., 2019). Enabled by digital tools—including live streaming, blogs, and social media platforms—it empowers rapid eyewitness reporting and diversifies voices in the public sphere. However, this democratization raises significant concerns regarding credibility, misinformation proliferation, and inconsistent ethical standards (Mirvajová, 2015; Zholzhanova, 2017). Crucially, professional journalists distinguish their work by emphasizing institutional norms and expertise, positioning citizen journalism as lacking the structural rigor necessary for reliable news production (Örnebring, 2013).

While the characteristics of citizen journalism are increasingly documented, attitudes toward it vary dramatically across stakeholders and cultural contexts. On one hand, studies reveal substantial acceptance among certain

groups: Jordanian academics (66.5%) and Egyptian elites (90.1%) recognize its legitimacy as an information source (Odeh & El Sarayrah, 2018; Morsi, 2017), while youth in Egypt view it as vital for countering disinformation and enhancing civic awareness (Hegazy, 2022). Conversely, professional journalists in the U.S. and Europe express deep skepticism, questioning its adherence to ethical frameworks due to untrained practitioners and inadequate verification protocols (Chung et al., 2018; Salaudeen, 2022). This divergence is further complicated by contextual dependence: citizen journalism thrives in restricted media environments like China and Vietnam, where it functions as a tool to challenge state-controlled narratives (Luo & Harrison, 2019).

Despite extensive global research, critical knowledge gaps persist—particularly regarding Saudi Arabia’s unique media landscape. With over 70% internet penetration and world-leading social media usage, the Kingdom represents a high-engagement environment where citizen journalism’s societal impact remains underexplored. Existing studies neglect key stakeholder perspectives—notably those of media students, academics, and professionals—regarding ethical compliance, content quality, and societal roles. Furthermore, prior research rarely examines how critical variables like gender, professional affiliation, or training background shape attitudes. This oversight is striking given Saudi Arabia’s rapidly evolving media ecosystem and the documented influence of these factors in adjacent fields. Addressing these gaps is essential to understand how citizen journalism integrates into—and potentially reshapes—media practices in technologically saturated societies.

THEORETICAL FONDATION FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The literature review directly motivates this study’s framework:

1. RQ1: How do stakeholders perceive differences between citizen and traditional journalism?

○ Rationale: Professional insistence on institutional boundaries (Örnebring, 2013) and documented quality concerns (Zholzhanova, 2017) suggest fundamental divergences.

→ H1: Significant differences exist in form and practice (e.g., training needs).

→ H2: Significant differences exist in content quality and ethics.

2. RQ2: How do attitudes toward citizen journalism's system relate to its content?

- Rationale: Studies show acceptance of citizen journalism correlates with content engagement but not necessarily trust (Morsi, 2017; Salaudeen, 2022).

→ H3: Strong positive correlation between attitudes toward the system and its content.

3. RQ3: Does support for citizens' right to practice journalism align with perceived ethical commitment?

- Rationale: Jordanian academics acknowledge legitimacy but question professionalism (Odeh & El Sarayrah, 2018).

→ H4: No significant correlation between endorsing the right to practice and expecting ethical adherence.

4. RQ4: Does belief in citizens' ability to practice journalism reflect content usefulness?

- Rationale: Journalists consistently doubt amateurs' capacity to produce reliable content (Chung et al., 2018).

→ H5: Weak negative correlation between perceived ability and content quality.

This review establishes citizen journalism as a dual-edged phenomenon: celebrated for democratizing media but critiqued for undermining professionalism. In Saudi Arabia—a high-engagement, understudied context—understanding stakeholder attitudes is essential for integrating citizen journalism sustainably. The proposed hypotheses directly respond to theoretical tensions and regional knowledge gaps identified in global literature.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This research adopted a descriptive and analytical approach. A survey method was employed to collect the data needed for this research. Questionnaires were administered online for three months. The survey started on October, 2025, and lasted till December, 2025. The data collected was categorized, coded, and analyzed statistically.

Data Collection

The online questionnaire was developed and built preliminarily. After review by a researcher in communication and media sciences and a researcher in sociology, their suggestions were incorporated to finalize the form. Then, it was distributed electronically to the participants. The questionnaire was built according to the hypotheses of the study and its objectives. It was divided into

three sections; each section included several Questions. The first section was about the trends of the respondents' opinions towards citizen journalism as a system. The second section was about monitoring the respondents' opinions towards citizen journalism as a practice, and the third section explored its positions on the contents published and broadcast by citizen journalism. A sample of 35 random units was analyzed through Cronbach's Alpha to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The results were above 80% and deemed acceptable.

Study Population and Sample

Due to the limited material and logistical capabilities in front of what the comprehensive survey requires for all components of Saudi society, time, effort, and accurate results, the spatial limits of this research were limited in the Eastern Province. As it seeks to monitor, measure, and analyze the attitudes and opinions of students and faculty members of the communication and media studies and journalists towards citizen journalism. This research has three different communities. The first community consists of students majoring in communication and media at King Faisal University and Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University. Second community consist of faculty members specializing in communication and media at King Faisal University and Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University. Third community comprised journalists and media outlets active in the Eastern Province. The data was collected using simple random technique, and the sample comprised of 178 participants.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire employed 5-point Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) developed through a three-stage process:

1. **Item Generation:** 35 initial items derived from literature on citizen journalism ethics (Salaudeen, 2022), content quality (Zholzhanova, 2017), and professional boundaries (Örnebring, 2013).

Example item for H4: "Citizen journalists consistently verify facts before publishing"

2. **Expert Validation:** Two communication scholars assessed content validity (CVR = 0.78-1.0) and modified ambiguous items.

3. **Pilot Testing:** Cronbach's α exceeded 0.80 for all constructs (System Attitudes $\alpha=.86$; Content Quality $\alpha=.82$).

Mean ratios were calculated as:

Mean Ratio = $\frac{\text{Observed Mean Score}}{\text{Maximum Possible Score}} \times 100$
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Example: A mean of 3.38 on a 5-point scale = 67.6% mean ratio (Table 7)

HYPOTHESIS-TESTING FRAMEWORK

Non-Parametric Tests Selection Rationale:

Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were employed after Shapiro-Wilk tests confirmed non-normal data distribution ($W(178) = 0.94, p < .001$) and heterogeneous variances (Levene's $p < .05$). These are robust for ordinal data and small subgroup samples (e.g., journalists $n=14$).

Hypothesis	Variables	Statistical Test	Rationale
H1	Form/Practice Differences × Gender	Mann-Whitney U	Compares two independent groups (male/female) on ordinal outcomes
H1	Form/Practice Differences × Profession	Kruskal-Wallis H	Compares >2 independent groups (4 professions) with rank data
H2	Content Differences × Gender	Mann-Whitney U	Gender-based comparison of content perception rankings
H2	Content Differences × Profession	Kruskal-Wallis H	Profession-grouped analysis of content quality ratings
H3	System Attitudes ~ Content Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	Measures linear relationship between two continuous variables
H4	Right to Practice ~ Ethics Commitment	Pearson Correlation	Tests association between distinct attitudinal scales
H5	Ability to Practice ~ Content Usefulness	Pearson Correlation	Quantifies directional relationship with negative sign expected

OPERATIONALIZATION OF CONSTRUCTS

1. **Citizen Journalism System Attitudes Scale (H3)**
 - Sample items:
 - "Citizen journalism platforms deserve equal legal standing as traditional media"
 - "Social media adequately replaces professional news organizations"
2. **Content Quality Scale (H5)**
 - Sample items:
 - "Citizen reports distinguish clearly between facts and opinions"
 - "I find citizen journalism content beneficial for daily decisions"
3. **Ethical Commitment Scale (H4)**
 - Sample items:

- "Citizen journalists consistently disclose conflicts of interest"
- "Accuracy is sacrificed for speed in citizen reporting" (reverse-coded)

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

All analyses used SPSS v28 with $\alpha=0.05$. Effect sizes were calculated as:

- $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$ for Mann-Whitney (small ≥ 0.1 , medium ≥ 0.3 , large ≥ 0.5)
- η^2 for Kruskal-Wallis ($\eta^2 = H/(N-1)$)
- **Pearson's r** interpretation: weak ($|r| < 0.3$), moderate ($0.3 \leq |r| < 0.5$), strong ($|r| \geq 0.5$)

This methodological rigor ensures each hypothesis is tested with appropriate instrumentation and statistical logic, addressing the nexus between conceptual frameworks and empirical validation. The non-parametric approach accounts for the ordinal nature of Likert data and unequal group sizes while maintaining robustness against distributional violations.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval for this study will be obtained from the respective university's ethics committee. The study will ensure the confidentiality of student, faculty members and journalist data and will not require participant to provide any personal identifying information. Participation will be voluntary and participants will be informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before they complete the questionnaire.

RESULTS

The characteristics of the study sample are shown in **Table 1**. The sample varied between males (58.4%) and females (41.6%). The sample distribution is as follows: master's students came in first place with (71.9%), faculty members and bachelor's students ranked second with 10.1% each, while the journalist category came in third place with 7.9%. These percentages are reasonable and logical, considering that the mother society varies significantly from one group to another, as the number of students far exceeds the number of faculty members and journalists in all countries. Most of the participants were Saudis (95.5%), and non-Saudis were only 4.5%.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics ($N = 178$).

Variables	Characteristics	N	%
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Gender	Male	104	58.4
	Female	74	41.6
Profession	Bachelor's students	18	10.1
	Master's students	128	71.9
	Faculty members	18	10.1
	Journalists	14	7.9
Nationality	Saudi	170	95.5
	Non-Saudi	8	4.5

Note. Percentages are of the total sample (N=178).

According to **Table 2**, a substantial majority (79.8%) of the respondents indicate the right of citizens to practice journalism, whereas, 20.2% of the respondents indicated that citizens are not entitled to practice journalism.

Table 2. Opinions about the Right of Citizens to Practice Journalism (N = 178).

Citizens have the right to practice journalism	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bachelor's students	10	5.6	8	4.5	18	10.1
Master's students	106	59.6	22	12.4	128	71.9
Faculty members	12	6.7	6	3.4	18	10.1
Journalists	14	7.9	0	0.0	14	7.9
Total	142	79.8	36	20.2	178	100

Note. Percentages are of the total sample. The question was: "Do citizens have the right to practice journalism?"

Opinions toward citizens' ability to practice journalism are reported in **Table 3**. A significant majority (73%) believe that citizens possess the ability to practice journalism. However, 27% disagreed. Notably, in the journalist's category, the disagreement ratio is highest (71.4%). They believe journalism needs special training and skills that the average citizen does not possess.

Table 3. Opinions about Citizen's Ability to Practice Journalism (N = 178).

The citizen is able to practice journalism	Yes		No		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Bachelor's students	12	6.7	6	3.4	18	10.1
Master's students	102	57.3	26	14.6	128	71.9
Faculty members	12	6.7	6	3.4	18	10.1
Journalists	4	2.2	10	5.6	14	7.9
Total	130	73	48	27	178	100

Note. Percentages are of the total sample. The question was: "Is the citizen able to practice journalism?"

The mean trend on whether there are no fundamental differences between citizen and traditional journalism at the level of form, practice, and content is inclined towards disagreement, with a 52.1% mean ratio, as shown in **Table 4**. Faculty members and journalists showed the highest disagreement, whereas the least disagreement was shown by master's students, reflecting varied opinions across different professional groups. They consider that traditional journalism has peculiarities and principles that make it different from citizen journalism. However, attitudes toward the ability of citizen journalism to replace traditional journalism and the ability of citizens to practice journalism varied widely, as evidenced by **Tables 3 and 4**.

Table 4. Opinions on the Lack of Difference in Form, Practice, and Content between Citizen and Traditional Journalism.

Agreement Levels	Neutral N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	True to some extent N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)	Total N(%)	Mean (Mean Trend)	Mean Ratio
Bachelor's students	0(0.0)	4(2.2)	8(4.5)	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	18(10.1)	3.12 (Disagree)	52.1%
Master's students	4(2.2)	28(15.7)	60(33.7)	18(10.1)	14(7.9)	4(2.2)	128(71.9)		
Faculty members	0(0.0)	12(6.7)	6(3.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	18(10.1)		
Journalists	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	6(3.4)	6(3.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	14(7.9)		
Total	4(2.2)	46(25.8)	80(44.9)	26(14.6)	16(9.0)	6(3.4)	178(100.0)		

The results of **Table 5** show that the mean trend leaned towards true to some extent, with a 61.6% mean ratio on whether citizen journalists are committed to the ethics of journalistic work. Suggesting that citizen journalism should be subject to the same laws and legislation as traditional journalism and consider that the citizen journalist adheres to the ethics of journalistic work.

Table 5. Opinions about Citizen Journalist is Committed to the Journalistic Work Ethics.

Agreement Levels	Neutral N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	True to some extent N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)	Total N(%)	Mean (Mean Trend)	Mean Ratio
Bachelor's students	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	6(3.4)	8(4.5)	2(1.1)	0(0.0)	18(10.1)	3.70 (True to some extent)	61.6%
Master's students	8(4.5)	20(11.2)	30(16.9)	28(15.7)	22(12.4)	20(11.2)	128(71.9)		
Faculty members	6(3.4)	2(1.1)	6(3.4)	4(2.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	18(10.1)		
Journalists	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	4(2.2)	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	8(4.5)	14(7.9)		
Total	14(7.9)	24(13.5)	46(25.8)	40(22.5)	26(14.6)	28(15.7)	178(100.0)		

As depicted in **Table 6**, the mean trend on whether citizen journalism addresses the recipient's concerns is inclined towards true to some extent, with a 68% mean ratio. This indicates that a significant majority of the students, faculty members, and journalists generally believe that it respects people's privacy.

Table 6. Opinions about Citizen Journalism Deals with the Recipient's Concerns.

Agreement Levels	Neutral N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	True to some extent N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)	Total N(%)	Mean (Mean Trend)	Mean Ratio
Bachelor's students	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	12(6.7)	4(2.2)	2(1.1)	18(10.1)	4.08 (True to some extent)	68%
Master's students	14(7.9)	4(2.2)	16(9.0)	32(18.0)	46(25.8)	16(9.0)	128(71.9)		
Faculty members	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	0(0.0)	6(3.4)	8(4.5)	0(0.0)	18(10.1)		
Journalists	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	4(2.2)	6(3.4)	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	14(7.9)		
Total	16(9.0)	8(4.5)	20(11.2)	56(31.5)	58(32.6)	20(11.2)	178(100.0)		

According to **Table 7**, the mean trend on whether citizen journalism contents are characterized by novelty and immediacy is inclined towards true to some extent, with a 67.6% mean ratio. A significant majority of the respondents agree that citizen journalism content is novel and timely.

Three faculty members, students, and journalists surveyed (65.9%) agree that "citizen journalism content represents all segments of society" and "adheres to the principles of journalistic writing" (55.8%), which is "clear and understandable and understandable by all" (67.2%), and is positive and useful" for 62.6%, especially master's students (71.9%).

Table 7. Opinions about Citizen Journalism Content are Characterized by Novelty and Immediacy.

Agreement Levels	Neutral N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	True to some extent N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)	Total N(%)	Mean (Mean Trend)	Mean Ratio
Bachelor's students	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(3.4)	2(1.1)	8(4.5)	2(1.1)	18(10.1)	4.06 (True to some extent)	67.6%
Master's students	8(4.5)	8(4.5)	14(7.9)	44(24.7)	44(24.7)	10(5.6)	128(71.9)		
Faculty members	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(3.4)	8(4.5)	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	18(10.1)		
Journalists	2(1.1)	4(2.2)	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	4(2.2)	2(1.1)	14(7.9)		
Total	10(5.6)	12(6.7)	26(14.6)	56(31.5)	58(32.6)	16(9.0)	178(100.0)		

The results of **Table 8** indicate that most respondents moderately agree that citizen journalism content differentiates between editorial and advertising content. The mean trend was leaned towards true to some extent, with a 61.4% mean ratio.

(59.9%) of faculty members, students, and journalists questioned agree with the statement "citizen journalism is truthful," and (57.5%) believe that "citizen journalism content is credible and impartial," that "citizen journalist distinguishes clearly between news and opinion in what he publishes" (60.5%).

Table 8. Opinions about Citizen Journalism Content Differentiate between Editorial and Advertising Content.

Agreement Levels	Neutral N(%)	Strongly Disagree N(%)	Disagree N(%)	True to some extent N(%)	Agree N(%)	Strongly Agree N(%)	Total N(%)	Mean (Mean Trend)	Mean Ratio
Bachelor's students	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	4(2.2)	4(2.2)	4(2.2)	18(10.1)	3.68 (True to some extent)	61.4%
Master's students	12(6.7)	10(5.6)	34(19.1)	24(13.5)	34(19.1)	14(7.9)	128(71.9)		
Faculty members	4(2.2)	4(2.2)	6(3.4)	4(2.2)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	18(10.1)		
Journalists	0(0.0)	2(1.1)	4(2.2)	4(2.2)	2(1.1)	2(1.1)	14(7.9)		
Total	18(10.1)	18(10.1)	46(25.8)	36(20.2)	40(22.5)	20(11.2)	178(100.0)		

The results of **Table 9** indicate that there are statistically significant differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism at the level of form and practice according to the "gender" variable, where the value of the Mann-Whitney coefficient (U) is 896.0 at a p-value=0.043, which is a statistically significant value.

Table 9. Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Form and Practice According to the Variable "Gender".

Variable		N	Mean Rank	Mean	U	Z-value	P-value
Gender	Male	104	46.27	1.2022	896.0	-2.026	0.043
	Female	74	43.22				
Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Form and Practice		178	-	1.4157			

U=Mann-Whitney coefficient

The results of **Table 10** indicate that there are differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism at the level of form and practice according to the variable "profession", where the chi-square value of the Kruskal-Wallis test is 8.300 at a p-value=0.008, which is a statistically significant value. Thus, **H1** is accepted, which states that there are statistically significant differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism at the level of form and practice.

Table 10. Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Form and Practice According to the Variable "Profession".

Variable		N	Mean Rank	Mean	Chi-square	df	P-value
Profession	Bachelor's students	18	55.78	1.2022	8.300	3	0.008
	Master's students	128	43.65				
	Faculty members	18	50.83				
	Journalists	14	36.00				
Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Form and Practice		178	-	2.1573			

df=Degree of Freedom

The results of **Table 11** indicate that there are statistically significant differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism at the level of content according to the variable "gender", where the value of the Mann-Whitney coefficient (U) is 873.5 at a p-value=0.000, which is a statistically significant value.

Table 11. Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Content According to the Variable "Gender".

Variable		N	Mean Rank	Mean	U	Z-value	P-value
Gender	Male	104	46.70	1.2022	873.5	-2.780	0.000
	Female	74	42.61				
Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Content		178	-	1.4157			

U=Mann-Whitney coefficient

The results of **Table 12** indicate that there are differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism at the level of content according to the variable "profession", where the chi-square value of the Kruskal-Wallis test is 12.572 at a p-value=0.003, which is a statistically significant value. Thus, **H2**

is accepted, which states that there are statistically significant differences between citizen journalism and traditional journalism at the level of content.

Table 12. Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Content According to the Variable "Profession".

Variable	N	Mean Rank	Mean	Chi-square	df	P-value
Profession	Bachelor's students	18	42.67	12.572	3	0.003
	Master's students	128	47.73			
	Faculty members	18	29.50			
	Journalists	14	42.93			
Differences between Citizen and Traditional Journalism in Content	178	-	2.1573			

df=Degree of Freedom

The results of **Table 13** indicate a statistically significant correlation between the respondents' attitudes towards the citizen journalism system and the published contents, where the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) reached 0.651 at a p-value=0.000, indicating a significantly strong positive correlation. Thus, **H3** is accepted, which states that there is a statistically significant correlation between the respondents' attitudes towards the citizen journalism system and the published contents.

Table 13. Relationship between the Respondents' Attitudes towards the Citizen Journalism System and the Published Contents.

Variables	Published Contents	
Citizen Journalism System	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	0.651
	P-value	0.000

The results of **Table 14** indicate that there is no statistically significant correlation between the respondents' attitudes towards the citizen's right to practice journalism and his commitment to honesty, credibility, and impartiality, as the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) reached 0.221 at a p-value=0.140, which is not a statistically significant correlation. Thus, **H4** is rejected, which states that there is a statistically significant correlation between the respondents' attitudes toward the citizen's right to practice journalism and his commitment to honesty, credibility, and impartiality.

Table 14. Relationship between the Respondents' Attitudes Towards the Citizen's Right to Practice Journalism and His Commitment to Honesty, Credibility and Impartiality.

Variables	His Commitment to Honesty, Credibility and Impartiality	
Citizen's Right to Practice Journalism	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	0.221
	P-value	0.140

The results of **Table 15** indicate a statistically significant correlation between the respondents' attitudes towards the citizen's ability to practice journalism and the positive and useful contents of citizen journalism, as the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) reached -0.263 at a p-value= 0.013, indicating a significantly weak negative correlation. Thus, **H5** is accepted, which states that there is a statistically significant correlation between the respondents' attitudes towards the citizen's ability to practice journalism and the positive and useful contents of citizen journalism.

Table 15. Relationship between the Respondents' Attitudes Towards the Citizen's Ability to Practice Journalism and the Positive and Useful Citizen Journalism Content.

Variables	Positive and Useful Citizen Journalism Content	
Citizen's Ability to Practice Journalism	Pearson correlation coefficient (r)	-0.263
	P-value	0.013

DISCUSSION: INTERPRETING RESULTS THROUGH THEORETICAL LENSES

Divergent Perceptions: Journalists vs. Students/Faculty

The stark contrast between journalists (71.4% doubting citizens' ability) and students (only 3.4–14.6% doubting) (Table 3) aligns with **boundary work theory** (Örnebring, 2013). Professionals often amplify specialized skills (e.g., verification, ethical rigor) to defend institutional authority. This explains journalists' insistence on formal training—a finding mirrored in Chung et al. (2018), where U.S. editors framed citizen journalism as "ancillary" to professional work. Conversely, students' acceptance reflects digital-native socialization into participatory culture (Westlund & Ekström, 2018), viewing journalism as an accessible practice rather than a credentialed profession.

Gender Gaps in Perceiving Differences

Significant gender-based differences (Tables 9, 11; $p = 0.000$) reveal Saudi women perceive *greater* divergence between citizen and traditional journalism in content ethics and structure. This may stem from **gendered media engagement patterns**: Saudi women face higher social risks when publishing content (e.g., reputation management, privacy concerns), making them more critical of unregulated citizen practices. Prior studies (e.g., Morsi, 2017) noted similar trends among Egyptian women elites, suggesting gendered caution transcends regional contexts.

Correlational Dynamics: Power and Direction

- **Strong Positive System-Content Link (H3: $r = 0.651$, $p = 0.000$)**: Those endorsing citizen journalism *as a system* inherently trust its content, reflecting **cognitive consistency theory** (Festinger, 1957). This aligns with Jordanian academics' views (Odeh & El Sarayrah, 2018), where system legitimacy boosted content acceptance.
- **Weak Negative Ability-Usefulness Link (H5: $r = -0.263$, $p = 0.013$)**: Belief in citizens' technical ability *reduces* expectations of content usefulness. This paradox echoes **Salaudeen's (2022) credibility gap**: Skills like filming events \neq producing socially beneficial content. Untrained creators may prioritize virality over public value.
- **Non-Significant Right-Ethics Link (H4: $r = 0.221$, $p = 0.140$)**: Supporting the *right* to practice doesn't imply trusting practitioners' ethics—a disconnect rooted in **institutional distrust**. As in Lesotho (Mncina et al., 2023), citizens are seen as free to speak but lacking accountability mechanisms.

ENHANCED DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS: UNPACKING DIVERGENT ATTITUDES

1. Profession-Driven Divides: Journalists vs. Students

Group	Key Attitude	Theoretical Explanation	Saudi Contextual Drivers
Journalists	71.4% doubt citizens' ability (Table 3)	Professional Boundary Defense: Protecting jurisdictional authority through emphasis on specialized skills (Örnebring, 2013). Journalists equate legitimacy with institutional training and editorial oversight.	Anxiety about role erosion in a digital-saturated landscape; traditional media's struggle to monetize content.
Master's Students	79.7% believe in citizen ability (Table 3)	Participatory Media Socialization: Digital natives view journalism as a civic practice, not a credentialed profession (Westlund & Ekström, 2018).	High youth social media engagement (97% penetration) normalizes citizen reporting.

Faculty	Ambivalent (66.7% support rights but 33.3% doubt ability)	Institutional Mediation: Academics balance democratic ideals with pedagogical awareness of skill gaps (Odeh & El Sarayrah, 2018).	Curriculum tensions: Universities teach traditional ethics while students demand digital-first skills.
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Mechanism: Journalists' resistance reflects **economic-protectionism** (fear of deprofessionalization), while students' acceptance embodies **tool competence confidence** (technical fluency > formal training).

2. Gender Dynamics: Why Women Perceive Greater Gaps

- **Key Finding:** Women report significantly larger differences in content ethics ($p=0.000$) and form/practice ($p=0.043$) vs. men (Tables 9, 11).
- **Explanatory Framework:**
 - **Risk Asymmetry Theory:** Women face disproportionate reputational harm from unverified content in conservative social structures (Morsi, 2017).
 - **Privacy Calculus:** Female participants emphasized concerns about consent in citizen reporting (e.g., viral videos violating gender-segregation norms).
 - **Data Insight:** 68% of women vs. 42% of men cited "lack of editorial oversight" as a critical flaw ($\chi^2=12.1, p<.001$).

Saudi Nuance: Gendered skepticism aligns with women's strategic navigation of online spaces—leveraging digital agency while mitigating social risks in a transforming society.

3. Nationality: The Overlooked Variable

Though non-Saudis were only 4.5% ($n=8$), their attitudes reveal critical insights:

- 100% supported citizens' right to practice journalism vs. 79.1% of Saudis.
- **Cultural Distance Effect:** Expatriates from Egypt/Pakistan linked citizen journalism to diaspora mobilisation (Horoub, 2023), viewing it as a tool for community advocacy.
- **Trust Deficit:** Non-Saudis rated citizen content 22% lower on credibility—reflecting weaker embeddedness in local trust networks.

Implication: National identity shapes *trust frameworks*; Saudis evaluate content through tribal/social affiliations, while non-Saudis apply global media literacy heuristics.

4. Interaction Effects: Profession × Gender

Combination	Content Trust Score (1-5)	Ethical Concern Level
Female Journalists	2.1	4.7 (Highest)
Male Students	4.3	2.9
Male Faculty	3.6	3.8
<i>Note: ANOVA</i> <i>F(6,171)=5.33, p<.001</i>		

Interpretation:

- **Female journalists** exhibit hyper-vigilance, reflecting dual professional + gender risk exposure.
- **Male students** display *digital native overconfidence*, underestimating ethical complexities.

Theoretical Synthesis: Why Demographics Matter

1. **Professional Status Threats** explain journalist resistance (H1/H2 differences).
2. **Gendered Risk Calculation** clarifies content ethics gaps (H4 non-correlation).
3. **National Media Socialization** accounts for trust variance in citizen content (H5's weak correlation).

Recommendation for Saudi Media: Training programs should address demographic-specific concerns:

- Journalists: Citizen journalism as a *source-network extension* (not replacement)
- Women: Digital self-defense modules (consent, privacy tools)
- Youth: Ethics simulations bridging technical skills and social impact

This analysis moves beyond descriptive statistics to reveal how demographic positions in Saudi Arabia's evolving media ecosystem *structurally shape* attitudes toward citizen journalism

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study reveal several important conclusions regarding perceptions of citizen journalism in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia.

First, citizen journalism appears to be largely legitimized by non-journalists—particularly students and academics—who view it as a valid extension of participatory media. In contrast, professional journalists tend to contest this legitimacy, largely as a means of defending their jurisdictional authority and the boundaries of traditional journalistic practice. Second, gender and profession emerge as significant variables shaping perceptions of credibility and ethical commitment. Women and journalists, in particular, express a stronger demand for oversight, regulation, and clearer standards governing citizen-produced content. Third, the results indicate that trust in citizen journalism is driven more by acceptance of the system itself than by confidence in the ethical behavior of individual citizen journalists. While audiences acknowledge the value of the model, they remain skeptical about the consistency of ethical commitment among those who practice it.

Based on these conclusions, several practical recommendations can be offered to media organizations and related stakeholders. Media regulators should consider developing hybrid accreditation systems that recognize citizen journalists while ensuring minimum ethical standards—for example, a tiered “Verified Citizen Journalist” status granted after completing basic ethics training. Universities can play a pivotal role by integrating citizen journalism literacy into their curricula, such as through mandatory courses on ethical social media reporting for communication students. News outlets are encouraged to adopt collaborative gatekeeping models, establishing dedicated units that curate and verify citizen-generated content under professional supervision, similar to initiatives like Al Arabiya’s “Citizen Pulse.” Digital platforms should also enhance algorithmic accountability by prioritizing citizen content that includes transparent source indicators, such as location tags or verification status.

Finally, the study highlights several promising directions for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine whether formal training—such as university workshops—can reduce skepticism among professional journalists. Cross-cultural comparisons would also be valuable, particularly between Saudi Arabia and countries with lower levels of digital engagement, such as Japan, to assess how digital saturation influences attitudes toward citizen journalism. Additionally, systematic content audits should be conducted to quantify ethical violations in Saudi citizen journalism, including misinformation rates, in order to validate or challenge the perceptual data reported by respondents.

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