Constructing Public Understanding of SOGIESC in Lebanese Media

MEDIA ASSESSMENT REPORT



FRIEDRICH NAUMANN STIFTUNG Für die Freiheit.
Lebanon and Syria

PROUD lebanon

A Media Assessment introducing Framing, Language, Voice, and Ethics in the Coverage of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)

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Preface

Every news story is made of choices: what to cover, whom to call, which words to use, and what to leave out. These choices are often made quickly and under pressure, but they shape how the public sees the people at the center of a story. This report examines those choices when the story concerns sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics in Lebanon.

The starting point is simple. Everyone has a sexual orientation, a gender identity, a gender expression, and sex characteristics. These are not the traits of a minority; they are part of being human. This is therefore not a report about the concerns of one group. It is about whether journalism treats every person with the same dignity and respect.

The findings show that harm does not always come from hate speech or openly discriminatory language. Some of the most damaging coverage contains no insult at all. It allows a police source to define the story, writes a headline for clicks, or speaks about a community without allowing anyone from that community to speak. Across forty items from thirty-three outlets, people with diverse SOGIESC were quoted or interviewed only once. They were the subject of the news but not part of it. The report calls this *representation without voice*, and it is perhaps the clearest gap identified by this study.

The right to speak, to be heard, and to be described fairly belongs to everyone. When the media deny that space to some, they weaken the quality of public debate for all. Freedom of expression is diminished when those with power are consistently heard, while those being spoken about are not.

Importantly, the study also shows that the standard it calls for is neither abstract nor imported. Some of the strongest reporting identified was produced by Lebanese journalists, in Lebanese newsrooms. Accurate, fair, rights-based coverage is already possible in our media. The challenge is to make it the norm rather than the exception.

I am grateful to Rouba El Helou-Sensenig for the care and rigor she brought to this work, and to the journalists, editors, experts, and key informants who spoke openly about the pressures they face. I also thank Proud Lebanon and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom for making this independent research possible.

This report will inform a training manual and newsroom workshops, but its relevance goes beyond training. I hope it will also be read by editors, media owners, and anyone who believes that how a society talks about its people shapes how it treats them. Journalism can question power rather than simply repeat it. This report is an invitation to do so.

Lara Saade, Senior Legal and Policy Expert

Acknowledgements

This assessment would not have been possible without the people and organizations who gave it their time, trust, knowledge, and critical reflection.

I would first like to thank Proud Lebanon (PL) for its sustained work in advocacy and documentation, and for the knowledge and experience it brought to this project. I am equally grateful to the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) Lebanon for commissioning and supporting this research, and for its commitment to freedom of expression, open public debate, and independent research in Lebanon. Their partnership created the space in which this assessment could be developed while allowing the research to follow the evidence and retain its analytical independence.

My sincere thanks also goes to Lara Saade for her trust in the value of this work.

I am especially grateful to the six key informants who generously shared their time and expertise: Myra Abdallah, Hasna Abdul Reda, Pastor Nabil Habibi, Aya Mhanna, Nazeer Rida, and Karim Safieddine. Their perspectives across communications and digital media, law and human rights, religious leadership, psychology and trauma-informed care, journalism and newsroom practice, and media research added depth to the questions this assessment set out to examine.

I also want to thank every journalist, editor, civil-society professional, and specialist who took part in the stakeholder survey. Your candor about the pressures, gaps, and possibilities within Lebanese media made this assessment more grounded in professional reality. Just as importantly, your insistence that journalism can and should do better gave the research a practical purpose beyond the pages of this report.

My appreciation goes to Sarah Nasrallah, Research Assistant, for her work in the data-collection and initial coding process.

This report is offered in that shared spirit. It is one contribution to a much longer process of strengthening journalism that is freer, more accurate, more inclusive, and more attentive to the dignity of the people it represents. At its heart is a simple idea: social life is sustained through communication, and the quality of that communication matters. How people are named, heard, represented, or left out of public discourse helps shape the society in which we live.

Rouba El Helou-Sensenig[1]

1 Rouba El Helou-Sensenig is a university lecturer, media expert, consultant, and FORGE Research Fellow at the NYU School of Law (CHRGJ). Her diverse research spans political communication, open-source intelligence (OSINT), gender, diversity and mobility studies, SOGIESC, digital rights, media self-regulation, and media information literacy (MIL) strategies. Additionally, she is an instructor of communication studies and member of the research team at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt online campus. A dedicated advocate for social change, El Helou-Sensenig bridges academia and media development to champion human rights and gender equality across the MENA region and beyond.

About the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) is the German Foundation for Liberal Politics. Established in 1958 by Prof. Theodor Heuss, the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany, FNF promotes liberal values, above all the freedom of the individual to pursue happiness.

FNF promotes liberal thinking and liberal policies in cooperation with local partners through civic education, international political dialogue, and political counseling. Its civic-education activities consist of seminars, conferences, and publications that promote liberal values and policies. Political counseling is offered mainly to liberal political parties to strengthen their programmatic basis, strategic orientation, and political communication with citizens. FNF cooperates with political parties worldwide out of a belief in party-based democracy, and it supports Lebanese liberal political parties through political counseling.

About Proud Lebanon

Who we are. Proud Lebanon is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political, non-partisan civil-society organization that works to promote sustainable social and economic development in Lebanon and the region. It pursues the protection, empowerment, and equality of marginalized groups through community-service activities, and it is dedicated to building a healthy, empowered community in which people participate in the democratic processes that affect their lives.

Our vision. A world without violence, discrimination, or violations of human rights, where all people live equally in dignity, freedom, and inner peace.

Our mission. To empower people who face discrimination, promote tolerance in Lebanon and the region, and help ensure the well-being of individuals.

Main goals. Support vulnerable individuals in accepting their identity and overcoming discrimination and rejection (psycho-social support); safeguard the well-being of the community (medical); improve the protection framework for individuals in Lebanon (legal); and empower marginalized individuals, including LGBTIQ+ people, people living with HIV, and prisoners, to become agents of change.

Executive Summary

Key Research Question (RQ): How do Lebanese media construct public understanding of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics, and which structural, professional, and ethical factors can influence this representation?

Proud Lebanon (PL) commissioned this media assessment, produced with the support and partnership of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) Lebanon. It examines how Lebanese media reported on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) between January 2025 and July 2026. The findings directly inform a practical training manual and a series of newsroom capacity-building workshops designed to promote accurate, ethical, and rights-based reporting. This work forms part of a wider collaboration between PL and FNF to support informed dialogue among media professionals, civil society, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

A key consideration in this assessment is the importance of highlighting that SOGIESC is a universal human-centered concept of core human attributes that apply to everyone, rather than exclusively to particular groups. The report examines the representation of LGBTQ+ people in Lebanon and how media frame their stories, with particular attention to people whose sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics may fall outside dominant societal norms and who may therefore experience discrimination, exclusion, or heightened vulnerability.

This focus does not reduce the scope to identity alone, nor isolate any of the gender issues into specialized coverage. It rather demonstrates the universal relevance of fair reporting by framing the analysis within the overall concept of SOGIESC. Thus, the conversation becomes more about the human being, not identity politics, and applying an assessment grounded in universal human rights, editorial principles and equal dignity for all people, in an evaluation of newsroom structural coverage styles, content and ethical principles of reporting.

The assessment is qualitative, using non-probability sampling with different sources of data. First, a media-monitoring exercise coded 40 Lebanese media products from 33 outlets and platforms, ranging from digital media to television, podcasts to social media, and more, using a consistent five-pillar case study tool. Second, an anonymous survey was conducted to collect the views of 30 journalists, civil society experts, and activists in various fields over a period of 10 days in July 2026. Third, six semi-structured key informant interviews (three women, three men), from a cross-section of the fields of journalism, media research, communications, law and human rights, psychology and trauma-informed care, and religious leadership, were conducted, with three of the interviewees coming from the journalism sector, either as media researchers or as newsroom editors. The results of the three components are very similar, and the convergence in results lends confidence to the report.

Results and Findings

The evaluation shows that the Lebanese media is split in its approach to editorial guidelines, whether they are written policies (if they exist) or by default. Coverage of these rights in a supportive manner is focused primarily in independent digital news sources and civil society or creator-owned news sources, while reporting that reinforces discrimination is most prevalent in legacy media or news outlets with a partisan slant and in local or general-interest digital news sources. The report evaluates the quality of active coverage rather than overall media silence across non-reporting outlets due to its content-driven monitoring.

Twenty-three (58%) of 40 items tested for discrimination were clearly anti-discriminatory, 11 (28%) were clearly pro-discriminatory, and 6 (15%) were neutral or ambiguous. These positions are grouped together by outlet type, revealing patterns in editorial requirements, ownership, newsroom habits, sourcing, and accountability, and their impact on the quality and ethics of reporting. One of the most evident factors is the lack of representation with voice (or agency). The lowest section of the framework was the **Voices** pillar, which received an average score of 1.75 (out of 3); 19 of the 40 items earned the lowest mark, and 9 of the 10 most problematic items also received low scores. In none of the items that reinforced discrimination did people with diverse SOGIESC[2] appear as direct speakers.

Media coverage often discussed individuals with diverse SOGIESC but they rarely engaged in conversation with them directly. Across the 40 items analyzed, these individuals were quoted or interviewed in only a single instance, with discriminatory coverage excluding their voices entirely. This reluctance to on the record is corroborated by survey results in which 77% of respondents cited fear of legal or social repercussions as a major barrier. The resulting absence of primary sources allows political, religious, security, or medical elites to shape the discourse and dominate without any challenging or critical engagement.

There was also a lack of uniformity in coverage for the dimensions of SOGIESC. The majority of the items targeted sexual orientation. Several targeted gender identity and gender expression, but sexual orientation received more attention. No items targeted sex characteristics.

There is no specific section on intersex in this publication, which is a big gap in concepts and content. Sex characteristics are still largely missing from the mainstream media.

The findings demonstrate that editorial approach, rather than the content of the event itself, determines the ethical quality of reporting. Framing, language, sources, and newsroom priorities define coverage even when outlets report on similar incidents. For example, a rights-based investigation received a perfect score of 15 out of 15, while an article relying solely on a police-centered press release about the same or similar case only scored 7 out of 15. The difference in scoring reflected not whether an outlet simply

2 The term “diverse SOGIESC” refers to sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics that may fall outside dominant societal norms. It is not a separate legal status or identity label. Rather this term provides a human-rights framework for understanding discrimination and protection based on these characteristics. For further discussion, see Raymond A. Smith, “From LGBTQIA+ to SOGIESC: Reframing Sexuality, Gender, and Human Rights,” OpenGlobalRights, 9 June 2023. URL: https://www.openglobalrights.org/lgbtqia-to-sogiesc-reframing-sexuality-gender-human-rights/

reported an event, but how it handled the story: whether the coverage contextualized harm, challenged official narratives, prioritized the protection of affected individuals, and treated those involved as rights-holders rather than suspects or victims.

The results also indicate broad agreement on the need for reform. Among surveyed practitioners, 87% reported that journalists lack adequate training on SOGIESC issues, 90% agreed that derogatory or inaccurate terminology can have negative impacts, and 93% endorsed developing a practical editorial manual based on this study findings. Six key informant interviews reinforced these conclusions.

This diagnosis was confirmed in the six key informant interviews. Although the experts represented a diverse professional background, all attributed causes of problematic reporting to institutional and structural constraints, rather than individual bias or prejudice. They pointed to political and religious pressure, media ownership, senior editorial gatekeeping, weak source protection, legal ambiguity, limited grasp of rights and terminology and newsroom cultures that reward controversy over accuracy. Perspectives diverged however, on where intervention should begin, with some prioritizing reform for media owners and senior editors, while others focused on reporters individually. Nevertheless, all respondents agreed that meaningful progress needs both institutional reform alongside ongoing capacity building.

All taken together the results provide an accurate response to the report's overarching question. This study located various ways in which Lebanese media construct and transmit an understanding of SOGIESC, in addition to using hostile language or outright hate speech. Systematic choices in framing, sourcing, visibility, and omission influence the understanding of SOGIESC and how it constructs public understanding of these issues.

This is especially true with respect to **who** is **allowed** to speak, **who** is **given** a legitimate voice, **whose** experience is **seen**, and **whose** experience **is not**.

The central problem can be better described as **representation without voice**. Individuals with diverse SOGIESC are often seen as objects of discussion, victims, or security issues, but rarely included as sources speaking on their own behalf.

Harm is also caused by "neutral" editorial choices and failures to question official pronouncements, to dismiss political or religious assertions as authoritative, to exclude affected communities, to make the use of identity as "click bait" and the lack of explanations of the legal and social vulnerabilities that affect people's lives.

Lebanese media also include positive examples. The assessment revealed that there is an existing body of accurate, ethical, rights-based reporting in Lebanon, especially by independent digital platforms and civil society/content creator-led platforms, demonstrating the practice of inclusive SOGIESC journalism. Structural and professional issues are the main obstacles to ethical reporting. These barriers are the result of a media system that is lacking in self-regulation and has low levels of content variety. Focused policy changes and ongoing training can effectively address ownership pressure, legal uncertainty, and the absence of editorial policies. More robust policies and protections to safeguard sources will raise the level of reporting accuracy and human rights standards. Now is the time to expand the number of newsrooms willing to implement them. This report champions meaningful policy change and the creation of rights-based guidelines for media that challenge power and do not simply reflect it.

In conclusion, this report argues for journalism that does more than reflect existing power and prejudice: it should question them, protect those most at risk, and widen the space for informed and dignified public debate.

1. Introduction

In the realm of the public sphere, language is one of the forms of power, or as media theorist John Street (2011) observes in his discussion of political communication, "Words matter. They affect us in any number of different ways. They make us laugh and cry; they make us angry and they make us smile" (p. 19). The terms, frames, images, sources the voices and narrative choices journalists choose therefore do more than describe events, they influence how audiences understand people, issues, and public controversies. Media representation is in fact produced through these choices. Undeniably, media do not simply mirror an existing social reality, it does far more than that and actively constructs meanings through language, imagery, and narrative framing. James Curran (2002) illustrates this process through two historically competing roles operating along conflicting trajectories. Media can function as a liberating force that legitimizes marginalized voices and makes "the unfamiliar commonplace", or it can reinforce existing hierarchies by reproducing exclusion, prejudice, and unequal access to public voice.

This tension is particularly relevant to Lebanese media coverage of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC). It is important to emphasize here that the acronym SOGIESC should not be used as another term for LGBTQ+. Rather, it is an analytical framework comprising four dimensions that apply to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. This assessment uses that framework to examine how Lebanese media frame, name, source, and represent issues related to sexual and gender diversity, while focusing specifically on the media representation of LGBTQ+ people and others whose diverse SOGIESC may place them outside dominant social norms.

Findings show a split media environment in Lebanon. Some digital news outlets have created space for more inclusive and rights-based reporting, and, in some cases, have challenged the objectification and erasure of people with diverse SOGIESC. Conversely, many mainstream outlets continue to rely on sensationalist, moralizing, political, religious, or security-driven narratives. These divergent approaches reflect fundamentally different editorial standards, not merely differences in terminology.

Decisions about **who is allowed to speak, whose expertise is treated as legitimate, what information is emphasized, and what is omitted** can have significant consequences for dignity, privacy, safety, and public understanding. In this sense, the representation of diverse SOGIESC in Lebanese media is fundamentally a question of journalistic power and responsibility, showing how editorial choices directly affect the safety, legal recognition, and lived rights of individuals.

Like any empirical study, this assessment has methodological limitations that are acknowledged throughout the analysis. Most notably, it is bounded by a specific timeframe, as capturing every media output across the country is unfeasible. While the core focus remains on newsroom monitoring, the report incorporates legal, social, and academic background to provide essential context for readers unfamiliar with the local landscape. Its goal is not to present an exhaustive record, but to establish a reliable foundation for future research, practical newsroom interventions, and policy reform. A full review of these limitations, alongside the research questions and methodological framework, is detailed in the pages that follow.

2. The Lebanese Media Landscape

Lebanon operates within a restricted civic space, rated "Partly Free"(41/100)[3] in Freedom House's *Freedom in the World 2026* report. Although this classification measures overall governance rather than press freedom alone, it captures the systemic pressures on local newsrooms: severe economic decline, political polarization, and fragile legal protections, balanced only by pockets of media pluralism. The 2026 score marks an improvement over the previous year's 39/100, primarily due to the election of a president and confirmation of a government after a prolonged vacancy, not because of any increase in press or personal freedom. Structural issues in Lebanon such as the economic collapse[4], currency devaluation, wars, insecurity[5], and journalists needing various forms of employment in order to make ends meet, impact the structural framework shaping how SOGIESC is covered

There are two aspects of the regulatory environment that are relevant to this assessment. First, media regulation in Lebanon is long overdue and poorly applied: for decades, the sector has been regulated by a 1962 Press Law and a 1994 Audiovisual Law, the first of which was not totally enforced (or rarely), and the latter was never properly implemented. While self-regulation attempts have seen limited success. Lebanon's media sector operates under outdated, unenforced legal regulations and limited industry self-regulation amidst a period of continuous institutional flux. After 16 years of legislative debate, in August 2026, the Lebanese Parliament passed a new media law, which supersedes the previous press law, applies to both traditional and digital media, sets up an independent regulatory body, and brings more transparency to media ownership and funding. The European Union and its member states saw this as a positive development to safeguard media freedom, saying that if successfully put in place, it should further improve the protection for journalists, the decriminalization of offences related to publication and the definition of criminally punishable hate speech. Meanwhile, the law received immediate criticism from press unions and human-rights groups, which had feared that Article 104 would allow it to be used to take the publication of "false and harmful news" away from the civil sphere and into the criminal courts, and thus represented a step backwards from the aim of the reform.

Because this law was adopted as the present report was being finalized, the author of this assessment was not able to analyze, and assess its full text.

It is therefore an open and pressing question whether the new framework, particularly its new provisions on hate speech and harmful content, will expand or constrain freedom of expression (FoE) regarding SOGIESC-diversity. Specifically, it is uncertain whether clearer hate-speech criteria will protect persons with diverse SOGIESC from incitement, or whether retained criminal provisions will instead be used to penalize rights-based reporting on SOGIESC issues.

The author of this assessment recommends that a dedicated legal analysis of the new media law from the perspective of diverse SOGIESC be done, and that follow-up research be carried out with a focus on the SOGIESC lens.

3 https://freedomhouse.org/country/lebanon/freedom-world/2026

4 https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/lebanon

5 https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2026/08/21/renewed-conflict-derails-lebanon-s-fragile-economic-recovery

3. Legal and Social Context for SOGIESC Reporting in Lebanon

Assessing media coverage of SOGIESC issues in Lebanon requires recognizing how legal uncertainty, social stigma, and safety risks continually constrain story selection, sourcing, and narrative framing. While these factors never justify inaccurate or harmful coverage, they define the institutional environment in which reporting choices are made. This section does not provide an exhaustive legal brief, but rather an operational overview of the legal and political dynamics shaping the Lebanese media landscape.

Building on a series of court decisions, Lebanese civil society groups have long advocated for full legislative reform. This work led nine members of parliament to formally introduce a bill on 12 July 2023 to repeal Article 534[6] of the Penal Code and decriminalize adult consensual same-sex relations (L'Orient Today, 2023). Drafted alongside legal specialists and civil society partners such as Proud Lebanon, the bill represented an important shift from isolated courtroom victories to statutory change, aiming to align written law with years of favorable jurisprudence.

The bill provoked immediate opposition across political and religious institutions. Intense public and digital harassment led one lawmaker to retract his endorsement, while several prominent figures launched aggressive public campaigns against the initiative. Within weeks, counter-proposals were introduced to explicitly penalize same-sex relations with up to three years in prison. While Article 534 remains in force, this legislative clash highlights how legal reform directly drives media framing and polarizing public discourse.

3.1 Article 534 and Its Contested Application

Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code makes sexual intercourse "contrary to the order of nature" punishable by imprisonment of up to one year. While not explicitly LGBTQ+ discriminatory itself, the provision has been used against individuals suspected of engaging in same-sex relations and is a factor that has led to legal insecurity for LGBTQ+ individuals in Lebanon. Today, it is not as simple as an outright ban.

Article 534 has been the subject of several Lebanese judicial rulings which have cast doubt on its application to consensual gay and lesbian sexual activity. They include the decisions in Batroun in 2009, in Jdeideh el-Metn in 2014, and in the Metn in 2017, as well as the decision of the Mount Lebanon Court of Appeal in 2018 which upheld an acquittal and found that consensual same sex relations between adults are not "contrary to nature." The appellate decision was important but not meant to be a precedent that must be followed by all courts in Lebanon, and not to repeal Article 534.

The situation for the medical position has also shifted. In 2013 the Lebanese Psychiatric Society declared that homosexuality is not a mental illness, and it demanded the repeal of Article 534

Article 534 nonetheless remains in the Penal Code. As of 2026, human-rights organizations

6 https://www.humandignitytrust.org/country-profile/lebanon/

continue to document systemic discrimination against LGBT people in Lebanon and note that the provision is still legally available, even as a series of court rulings has rejected its application to consensual same-sex relations.

The Legal Reality Journalists Need to Report Accurately

Article 534 remains in force, but its application to consensual same-sex relations has been repeatedly challenged by Lebanese courts. It is therefore inaccurate to report either that "homosexuality is simply illegal in Lebanon" or, at the opposite extreme, that Article 534 has been abolished or has no continuing legal significance. Responsible reporting should communicate the distinction between **the text of the law, its judicial interpretation, and its practical consequences**.

This distinction is fundamental to everyday reporting. The legal terms a reporter chooses carry real weight: they set the tone of headlines, determine who agrees to speak on the record, and dictate whether an arrest is covered accurately rather than just echoing police or court statements. **Legal literacy is therefore part of factual accuracy in SOGIESC-related reporting, not a specialist issue separate from journalism.**

3.2 Social Hostility, Visibility, and Source Safety

Legal uncertainty operates alongside social risk. LGBTQ+ people in Lebanon may face discrimination, harassment, family pressure, employment consequences, public exposure, or violence. In periods of heightened political or religious mobilization, LGBTQ+ visibility itself has also become a subject of public controversy and organized hostility. Human Rights Watch, for example, documented intensified attacks on LGBTI rights and freedoms in 2023, including political proposals aimed at further restricting same-sex relations and public discussion of sexual and gender diversity.

For journalism, this creates a genuine ethical tension.

First-person testimony can make reporting more accurate, contextualized, and human-centred. Yet identifying a source may expose that person to consequences that extend far beyond publication. The professional objective should therefore not be **maximum visibility**, but **meaningful and safe participation**.

This distinction is important for the assessment's analysis of voice. The absence of an identifiable LGBTQ+ source does not automatically indicate poor journalism; anonymity or indirect identification may sometimes be necessary. The relevant questions are whether the people directly affected have been given meaningful agency, whether risks have been discussed with them, and whether the newsroom has taken reasonable steps to protect privacy, dignity, and informed consent.

3.3 Crisis, Conflict, and Displacement

The assessment period, **January 2025 to July 2026**, also sits within a wider context of armed conflict, displacement, economic insecurity, and pressure on public institutions and media organizations.

Such conditions can intensify existing vulnerabilities. People who are already exposed

to discrimination may face additional difficulties in securing housing, healthcare, employment, documentation, community support, or safe shelter. For LGBTQ+ refugees, displaced people, and others with limited financial or family support, these risks may intersect rather than operate separately.

Crisis conditions also affect journalism itself. Reporting priorities shift toward security, politics, casualties, displacement, and immediate humanitarian need. Official institutions become especially prominent sources of information, while people who are difficult to reach, reluctant to identify themselves, or considered peripheral to the main crisis narrative can become less visible.

This matters for a SOGIESC media assessment because **absence can itself be informative**. Limited coverage does not necessarily mean that an issue or population is unaffected by a crisis. It may instead reflect newsroom priorities, weak source networks, limited specialist knowledge, safety concerns, or assumptions about which experiences constitute news.

3.4 Research Question (RQ) Lens

Taken together, the legal, social, and crisis conditions described above shape the operating environment for SOGIESC journalism. This subsection connects these dynamics directly to the central research question, showing how the local context drives newsroom decisions. Legal ambiguity, source risk, social pressure, ongoing crises, and institutional limits directly influence editorial caution, reliance on anonymity, sourcing habits, terminology, and story selection.

Recognizing these constraints is essential for a fair evaluation of local media. At the same time, difficult working conditions do not diminish core professional standards of accuracy, verification, context, proportionality, dignity, and source protection. The analysis that follows therefore examines both dimensions in tandem: the quality of published reporting and the external pressures shaping it.

The next section sets out that research question and the two dimensions through which the assessment answers it

4. Research Question (RQ)

This assessment is guided by one central question, which works across two connected dimensions.

Key RQ: How do Lebanese media construct public understanding of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics, and which structural, professional, and ethical factors can influence this representation?

This RQ The question has two connected dimensions:

The first dimension is **descriptive**. It asks what representation looks like in practice: how are issues framed? Which terminology is used? Who speaks and who is included or omitted? How do headlines, visuals, sources, and context shape the meaning of a story? Does the coverage provide sufficient and accurate legal and social context for audiences to understand the issue?

The second is **explanatory**. It asks why these patterns emerge. Rather than treating every media product as the result of an individual journalist's choices alone, the assessment tries to understand the wider environment in which those choices are made, including ownership and editorial gatekeeping, political and religious pressure, legal uncertainty, professional knowledge, source-safety concerns, and the presence or absence of written editorial policies.

4.1 Purpose and Audience

This assessment informs the development of practical capacity-building tools for Lebanese media professionals and strengthens the protection and promotion of freedom of expression (FoE) and responsible journalism in Lebanon. It does not prescribe a political or ideological position for journalists. Instead, its starting point is core professional practice: accuracy, verification, balance, fairness, editorial independence, proportionality, dignity, source agency, public interest, and the principle of doing no harm.

The report is therefore both an assessment and a practical professional resource.

For **journalists and editors**, it provides a structured diagnosis of newsroom practices and concrete examples that help distinguish responsible reporting from practices that may stigmatize, misinform, expose, or otherwise harm the people being covered.

For **trainers and media-development practitioners**, it identifies recurring knowledge and skills gaps that can inform training, newsroom coaching, editorial policy, and professional development.

For **researchers**, it provides a transparent analytical framework for examining framing, terminology, voice, sourcing, visuals, headlines, accuracy, and contextualization.

For **civil-society organizations and professional bodies**, it identifies areas where reliable expertise, source networks, legal information, professional standards, and newsroom engagement may improve reporting while preserving editorial independence.

For **policymakers and accountability bodies**, it highlights how legal uncertainty, free-

dom of expression, source safety, regulation, and professional self-regulation intersect with the quality of media representation.

Education, Higher Education, and Media and Information Literacy

The assessment also has an educational use, particularly for journalism, communication, media studies, gender studies, human rights, and courses examining inequality and representation. Its five analytical pillars can help students examine how framing, sourcing, terminology, visuals, verification, legal and social context, mis/dis/malinformation (MDM), and omission shape media meaning. In the Lebanese context, the framework could also inform teaching material on Media, Gender, Inequalities, and SOGIESC.

This approach connects with UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy (MIL) framework[7]. UNESCO describes MIL as developing the competencies needed to engage critically with information and navigate digital environments safely, including in an information environment affected by misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, declining trust in media, and emerging technologies (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], n.d.).

Applied to this assessment, the connection is practical. Students can learn to ask:

1. Who produced the information?
2. What evidence supports the claim?
3. Whose voice is missing?
4. Is an institutional opinion being presented as fact?
5. Has information been manipulated, decontextualized, selectively framed, or amplified?
6. How do media and platforms contribute to MDM?

This educational dimension is also consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 16, particularly its emphasis on access to information, protection of fundamental freedoms, inclusive participation, and effective and accountable institutions (Council of Europe, n.d.). Higher education can therefore use media analysis not only to prepare future journalists, but also to strengthen critical understanding of how media representation, inequality, rights, and public knowledge intersect.

4.2 Scope and Research Design

This assessment examines selected Lebanese media content published or broadcast between January 2025 and July 2026.

Methodologically, the report uses a qualitatively driven, sequential mixed-methods design and relies on purposive, non-probability sampling to identify media cases and participants with relevant professional or subject-matter experience. While the qualitative media assessment forms the analytical core, the stakeholder survey provides supplemen-

7 A 2026 UNESCO initiative involving schools and universities in Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand provide one example of an institutional approach to inclusion, combining student participation with support mechanisms and dialogue within educational institutions. The initiative is not evidence about Lebanon, but illustrates how education can address both individual knowledge and the wider institutional environment.
(UNESCO, 2026).

tary descriptive evidence, and the key informant interviews provide specialist explanation and context.

Stage One: Data collection of media production

The first stage combined retrospective data collection with ongoing monitoring during the active data-collection period to build a purposive corpus of 40 Lebanese media products published or broadcast between January 2025 and July 2026.

Most of the material was identified retrospectively by looking back across the assessment period and retrieving and archiving content that had already been published, streamed, or aired. This process took place in June and July 2026. Additional relevant media products were collected as they appeared. The exercise should therefore not be interpreted as continuous media monitoring across the entire assessment period. Rather, it was a case-based media content assessment drawing primarily on retrospective collection, complemented by current-period monitoring during active data collection. The research team purposively constructed the corpus to prioritize analytical depth over statistical representativeness.

Cases were selected to include information-rich examples across different media formats, editorial environments, languages, SOGIESC dimensions, and approaches to reporting. Each case was assessed through five analytical pillars:

1) Framing
2) Language and Terminology
3) Voice and Representation;
4) Visuals and Headlines
5) Accuracy, Verification, and MDM

The numerical system supported comparison but did not replace qualitative analysis.

Stage Two: Stakeholder Survey

Following the media content assessment, an anonymous stakeholder gathered 30 responses from media practitioners, civil-society professionals, and relevant subject-matter specialists

The survey examined newsroom practices, terminology, sourcing, legal literacy, source safety, editorial guidelines, perceptions of media performance, barriers to responsible journalism, and training needs.

The survey was supplementary. It was not intended to produce statistically generalizable findings about Lebanese media professionals as a whole.

Stage Three: Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews

The final stage consisted of six semi-structured key informant interviews that provided expertise in newsroom practice, media research, communications and digital media, law and human rights, psychology and trauma-informed care, and religious leadership. These interviews primarily served as an explanatory function, helping to clarify why certain patterns of representation recur and how they can be shaped by newsroom structures, professional norms, legal uncertainty, political and religious pressures, economic con-

straints, source-safety concerns, and the wider environment in which journalists work.

Each interview followed a common set of core questions, allowing responses to be compared across different professional backgrounds. These were complemented by specialist questions tailored to each participant's field of expertise. This structure allowed the interviews to revisit issues identified through the media assessment and survey while exploring them in greater depth from legal, editorial, institutional, cultural, and psychosocial perspectives. The qualitative media assessment anchors the analysis, while the survey provides supplementary evidence on professional perceptions and the interviews add specialist explanation and contextual depth.

4.3 Responsible Reading of the Findings

Like any empirical study, this assessment has methodological limitations that must be acknowledged. Most notably, the findings describe patterns within the assessed material rather than the prevalence of those patterns across Lebanese media as a whole. Purposive, non-probability sampling was chosen because the objective was analytical depth and the identification of information-rich cases that facilitate professional learning, rather than generating statistically representative claims.

These findings should therefore be understood as descriptive and analytical insights from a specific corpus and timeframe, not as permanent institutional rankings, statistically generalizable conclusions about the Lebanese media sector, or an exhaustive record of overall media performance.

The corpus demonstrates that rights-based journalism exists alongside reporting that remains problematic. While some cases reflect accurate, contextualized, dignity-centered, and human-rights-based practice, others continue to rely on sensationalism, stigmatizing framing, exclusionary sourcing, weak contextualization, MDM, or professionally unsafe representation.

The central concern of this report is not to label the Lebanese media landscape as simply "for" or "against" individuals with diverse SOGIESC. Such a binary would flatten the varied and unequal professional realities that characterize the sector. A single media organization may also produce different forms of journalism depending on the story, reporter, editor, format, source network, deadline, and wider institutional context.

Instead, the assessment examines why different editorial environments can produce different outcomes. It explores why harmful practices persist and considers how professional standards, newsroom policies, institutional protections, professional knowledge, source-safety procedures, and ongoing capacity building can help bridge these gaps.

The survey and key informant interviews must be interpreted within the same methodological boundaries. The survey reflects the perceptions of 30 purposively recruited respondents and is not statistically representative of Lebanese media professionals as a whole. The six key informant interviews provide specialist explanation and contextual depth rather than a representative sample of expert opinion.

Ultimately, the report serves as both a structural diagnosis and a professional roadmap. By identifying recurring strengths, significant weaknesses, and areas requiring further investigation, it provides a reliable foundation for future research, practical newsroom

interventions, professional learning, and institutional development while remaining within the limits of what the evidence can support.

5. Literature Review

This literature review does not attempt to cover the full body of scholarship on sexuality, gender, human rights, or Lebanese media. Instead, it brings together the concepts and existing work that are directly needed to answer the RQ and to support the five analytical pillars used in this assessment: framing, language and terminology, voices and representation, visuals and headlines, and accuracy.

At the center of the review is a practical question: **how can media coverage shape public knowledge and understanding of subjects that are already surrounded by stigma, political contestation, MDM or unequal access to public voice?**

5.1 Media, Framing, and the Construction of Meaning

Communication scholarship has long challenged the idea that journalism simply transmits facts. News is produced through choices about what is selected, emphasized, sourced, described, illustrated, and omitted.

Entman's (1993) framing theory is particularly useful for this assessment. Building on earlier work by Goffman (1974) and Gitlin (1980), framing draws attention to how media define a problem, identify causes, introduce moral evaluations, and make certain responses appear more legitimate than others. The same event can therefore acquire very different meanings depending on how it is presented.

This is directly relevant to SOGIESC-related reporting. A crime targeting a gay man, for example, may be framed as a story about criminal exploitation, victim protection, and institutional accountability. The same event may instead be organized around the person's sexual orientation, the use of a dating application, or questions of morality. The facts may overlap, but the public meaning produced by the report is different.

Hall's work adds an important dimension by treating media meaning as **constructed rather than simply reflected**. In the encoding/decoding model, media messages are produced within particular professional, institutional, and cultural conditions, while audiences may accept, negotiate, or resist the meanings offered to them (Hall, 1980). This assessment therefore does not assume that audiences passively absorb media messages. It examines the meanings that journalism makes available: how LGBTQ+ people and SOGIESC-related issues are framed, who is given authority to speak, and which interpretations are normalized or challenged.

Gaye Tuchman's work adds an important feminist and sociological perspective to this discussion. In Making News, Tuchman (1978a) examines journalism as an organizational process in which professional routines, deadlines, institutional structures, and established ways of identifying what counts as news shape the reality that journalism presents to the public. News is therefore not produced only through the attitudes of individual journalists. It is also shaped by the routines and structures through which information becomes reportable.

This perspective is particularly relevant to source authority. Institutional actors are often easier to identify, reach, quote, and present as authoritative sources, while people directly

affected by an issue may face greater barriers to participation. Applied to this assessment, Tuchman's work helps examine how newsroom routines can contribute to a situation in which LGBTQ+ people and individuals with diverse SOGIESC are visible as subjects of stories but have less control over how those stories are explained.

Tuchman's feminist work on symbolic annihilation adds a further dimension. Her analysis of women's representation in mass media drew attention to the significance not only of negative representation, but also of absence, trivialization, and condemnation (Tuchman, 1978b). Although this concept was developed in relation to women's representation, it provides a useful analytical lens for asking what happens when groups are absent from media narratives, appear mainly as objects of discussion, are reduced to spectacle or entertainment, or become visible primarily through controversy and condemnation.

This assessment develops that insight in relation to SOGIESC-related representation. A person can be highly visible in a media product as an image, a body, a victim, a scandal, or a subject of political or religious discussion, while remaining largely absent as a speaking and knowing subject. In this sense, **visibility does not necessarily produce agency**. This distinction later becomes particularly important in the assessment's analysis of **Voices and Representation**.

Hafez (2007) broadens this discussion by questioning the assumption that increased global communication necessarily produces a single global media culture. His analysis of media globalization emphasizes the continuing importance of national media systems and distinguishes increased cross-border **connectivity** from deeper forms of **interdependence**. National media systems remain shaped by their own political, economic, cultural, and institutional environments even while participating in wider global information flows (Hafez, 2007, pp. 21–23).

His discussion of international reporting is particularly relevant. Hafez argues that international events continue to be interpreted through national viewpoints, established assumptions, and domestic media priorities rather than automatically producing a common global perspective (Hafez, 2007, p. 26).

None of the media theorists discussed in this review developed their work specifically in relation to SOGIESC. Their relevance to this assessment lies in how their concepts can be applied to a field of media representation that they did not directly study. Framing, representation, newsroom routines, encoding and decoding, source authority, symbolic absence, and the continuing influence of national media systems provide analytical tools for examining how SOGIESC-related issues are constructed in Lebanese journalism.

The assessment therefore does not simply reproduce existing theory. It applies and extends established media concepts to a specific area of inquiry, using them to examine how internationally circulating human-rights concepts, identity terminology, and rights-based approaches are interpreted within Lebanese political, religious, linguistic, cultural, and professional conditions.

Hafez's contribution is especially useful in understanding why concepts that circulate internationally do not necessarily enter Lebanese journalism unchanged. They may be selected, translated, adapted, contested, or reframed through local media practices and institutional conditions.

Taken together, these theoretical perspectives provide the conceptual foundation for the assessment rather than a ready-made model for SOGIESC reporting. The study develops their insights further by applying them to the specific question of how Lebanese media construct meaning around sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics.

5.2 Language, Terminology, and Knowledge

Language is therefore not separate from framing. The terms journalists use communicate assumptions about what is considered normal, deviant, legitimate, medical, criminal, or socially acceptable.

A central distinction in this assessment is between SOGIESC and LGBTQ+.

SOGIESC refers to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. It is an analytical and human-rights framework whose dimensions apply to everyone. LGBTQ+, by contrast, refers to identities and communities associated with particular sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

The two concepts overlap, but they are not interchangeable. Someone may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, or through another identity term. A person is not "a SOGIESC," and expressions such as "the SOGIESC community" risk converting an analytical framework into an identity category.

This distinction matters for journalism because conceptual confusion can narrow public knowledge. When SOGIESC is used simply as another name for LGBTQ+ or when both are reduced to homosexuality, the differences between sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics become obscured. Smith (2023) is useful here because the SOGIESC framework shifts attention from a list of minority identities toward dimensions of human experience and the rights that attach to them.

Terminology is therefore treated in this assessment as an issue of accuracy as well as dignity.

5.3 Lebanese Knowledge and Practice

Existing Lebanese research and civil-society work provides substantial knowledge on discrimination, legal insecurity, health, violence, displacement, access to services, digital safety, and the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and people affected by discrimination related to SOGIESC. Much of this work is not media research. Its relevance to the present assessment is that it identifies information journalists may need in order to report accurately and responsibly.

The 2022 project *Working with LGBTIQ+ Persons in Forced Displacement: Narratives from Afghanistan and Lebanon*, by Diab, Skulte-Ouaiss, Maydaa, and Samneh, is one example. Its focus is forced displacement rather than journalism. For the purposes of this assessment, its importance lies in the knowledge it provides about intersecting vulnerabilities affecting LGBTIQ+ refugees and displaced people, including risks linked to law, security, housing, health, documentation, livelihoods, and social exclusion.

The publication is therefore not assessed here as a study of media coverage. Rather, it

illustrates the type of knowledge that should inform reporting on displacement, conflict, migration, healthcare, and humanitarian response.

It also illustrates why conceptual precision matters. The publication sometimes moves between LGBTIQ+ identity terminology and formulations using SOGIESC in ways that can blur the distinction between a community or identity category and a broader analytical framework. This does not undermine its contribution to displacement. It demonstrates, however, that the distinction between LGBTQ+ identities and SOGIESC as a framework is not always consistently maintained even in professional material designed to increase knowledge and awareness.

Another Lebanese study contributes further context. Proud Lebanon's *Invisible Voices*, for example, documents discrimination, exclusion, insecurity, and barriers to health, social, legal, and protection services. Wider work by Lebanese and regional organizations has also addressed legal vulnerability, health, violence, digital rights, access to justice, displacement, protection, and media representation.

The issue addressed by this report is therefore not an absence of information. Significant knowledge already exists. The question is how consistently that knowledge enters everyday journalism.

5.4 From Available Knowledge to Newsroom Practice

Having information available does not mean that it will automatically appear in media coverage.

Journalism is produced within institutional conditions. Reporters work under deadlines. Some sources are easier and safer to quote than others. Editors determine headlines and framing. Political affiliation, ownership, legal uncertainty, audience expectations, and digital engagement can affect what is published and how it is presented. People asked to speak about their own SOGIESC may also face risks related to privacy, family rejection, employment, harassment, blackmail, or legal exposure.

This is why the assessment does not evaluate terminology in isolation. A media product may use an accurate identity term and still be problematic if the overall story sensationalizes the subject, exposes a vulnerable source, excludes the people directly affected, reproduces an institutional claim without verification, or removes essential legal or social context.

1. The literature therefore informs the five analytical pillars used in the assessment:
2. **Framing:** What meaning does the story give to the issue?
3. **Language and terminology:** Are people and concepts described accurately and respectfully?
4. **Voices and representation:** Who speaks, and whose knowledge is treated as authoritative?
5. **Visuals and headlines:** How is the story presented, and does that presentation create unnecessary stigma or exposure?
6. **Accuracy:** Are legal, medical, identity-related, and contextual claims verified and adequately explained?

These bodies of literature informed the five analytical pillars used in the assessment: framing, language and terminology, voices and representation, visuals and headlines, and accuracy and verification. In this sense, the literature provides the conceptual foundation for the practical analytical tool used in the study.

The literature also points to a central issue that this assessment explores: the gap between available knowledge and its consistent application in Lebanese newsroom practice. The findings examine how this gap appears in the selected media corpus, how practitioners understand it, and which structural, professional, and ethical factors may help explain it.

6. Professional and Human-Rights Benchmarks

This assessment evaluates responsible SOGIESC-related journalism using established principles of professional journalism ethics alongside relevant human rights standards (IFJ, 2019; OHCHR, 2019; Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10, 2017). These include accuracy and verification, editorial independence, harm minimization, privacy, dignity, source protection, FoE, equality, and non-discrimination.

In practice, these principles require journalists to verify legal, medical, and identity-related claims; use accurate and non-stigmatizing terminology; respect self-identification; protect privacy and ensure informed consent; avoid unnecessary exposure; distinguish fact from political, religious, or institutional opinion; and provide sufficient context for audiences to understand a story accurately.

They also require attention to editorial independence, particularly where political, religious, commercial, institutional, or audience pressures may affect how a story is framed, sourced, or presented.

These standards provide the professional benchmark for the five analytical pillars used in the assessment. A media product classified as rights-based, mixed, or problematic is therefore assessed according to identifiable journalistic practices, not according to whether it expresses a positive or negative view of a particular identity, organization, political position, or worldview.

A critical story can still meet rights-based journalistic standards. The relevant questions are whether it is accurate, verified, contextualized, proportionate, fair, dignity-centered, and attentive to source safety and public interest.

These benchmarks establish the professional standard used in the analysis. The methodology that follows explains how they were applied across the media cases, stakeholder survey, and key informant interviews.

7. Methodology

This assessment used a qualitatively driven, sequential mixed-methods design to examine both how SOGIESC-related issues are represented in Lebanese media and the professional, structural, and ethical factors that may help explain those representations.

The research developed in three stages. The first and principal stage was a case-based qualitative assessment of 40 Lebanese media products. This was followed by an anonymous stakeholder survey of 30 respondents, which provided supplementary descriptive evidence on professional knowledge, perceptions, newsroom practices, and training needs. The final stage consisted of six semi-structured key informant interviews designed to explore issues emerging from the media assessment and survey in greater depth.

The three components therefore did not carry equal methodological weight. Qualitative inquiry remained the analytical core of the study. The survey was used to identify tendencies within a purposively selected respondent group rather than to generate statistically representative findings, while the interviews provided specialist interpretation and contextual explanation. This approach is consistent with qualitatively driven mixed-methods research, in which supplementary components are used to extend and deepen the principal qualitative inquiry (Morse & Niehaus, 2009).

The sequence can be understood as the following:



Figure 1. *The sequential analytical framework: media content, professional perceptions, and specialist explanation.*

Evidence from the three stages was compared to identify areas of convergence, difference, and further explanation. The purpose was not to use one method to "prove" another, but to build a more complete understanding of the patterns observed.

7.1 Case-Based Media Content Assessment

The first stage combined retrospective data collection with ongoing monitoring during the active data-collection period to assemble a purposive corpus of 40 Lebanese media products published or broadcast between January 2025 and July 2026, drawn from 33 outlets and platforms.

Most items were identified retrospectively by looking back across the study period and retrieving and archiving material that had already been published or aired. During the active data-collection phase, particularly in June and July 2026, additional relevant media products were collected as they appeared. The exercise should therefore not be understood as continuous media monitoring throughout the full study period. Rather, it was a case-based media content assessment drawing primarily on retrospective collection, complemented by current-period monitoring during data collection.

Purposive sampling was chosen because the objective was analytical depth rather than statistical representativeness. The corpus was designed to include a diverse and information-rich set of cases across different media formats, editorial environments, languages, SOGIESC dimensions, and approaches to reporting. Items included television segments, legacy print and digital journalism, independent digital media, podcasts, and social-media content in Arabic, English, and French.

Three basic inclusion criteria were applied. First, the actual media product had to be available for assessment, whether as an article, video, podcast, post, or archived screenshot, rather than reconstructed from memory or secondary description. Second, the item had to originate from a Lebanese outlet or platform and concern events, issues, or people relevant to Lebanon. Third, an identifiable SOGIESC dimension had to be substantively present. SOGIESC functioned as the analytical lens, but did not need to be the sole subject of the media product. A case could therefore concern crime, health, politics, culture, displacement, law, religion, or another issue while still being relevant to the assessment.

The 40 products consequently constitute a case-based analytical corpus, not a representative sample of all Lebanese media output during the study period.

Standardized Case-Study Tool

Once the corpus had been assembled, each media product was analyzed using a standardized case-study tool developed specifically for this assessment. The tool combined close qualitative reading with a structured three-point scoring system, preserving the context and nuance of each case while allowing recurring patterns to be compared across the 40 media products.

Each case recorded:

Part	What was documented
A. Identify	Outlet, date, URL or archive, author where available, language, media format, and relevant SOGIESC dimension(s).
B. Classify	Overall editorial stance of the media product.
C. Score	A score of 1, 2, or 3 across each of the five analytical pillars, supported by a written justification.
D. Analyze	Close qualitative analysis of framing, terminology, sourcing, visual or headline choices, accuracy, and context.
E. Key evidence and assessment	A significant quotation, headline, visual, or other feature illustrating the analytical judgment.
F. Professional lesson	Good practice demonstrated by the case or an indication of what could have been handled differently.
G. Review and archive	Analyst, date, reviewer, and confirmation that the media product was retained in the research archive.

Table 7.1. Standardized case-study structure used for the 40 media products.

Editorial-Stance Classification

Each media product was also assigned an overall editorial-stance classification. The three principal categories were:

Clearly Challenges Discrimination: coverage that adopts substantially rights-based fram-

ing, accurate terminology, appropriate context, and responsible representation.

Neutral or Ambiguous: coverage that may be factually accurate or partially responsible but is incomplete, inconsistent, or lacking important context or representation.

Clearly Reinforces Discrimination: coverage that substantially moralizes, sensationalizes, pathologizes, stigmatizes, misinforms, excludes, or otherwise increases the risk of representational harm.

Where relevant, cases could also be identified as illustrating institutional context, such as law, policy, court decisions, or official statements, or societal context, including conflict, displacement, economic crises, or political and religious backlash.

The editorial-stance classification was analytically distinct from the numerical five-pillar score and is reported separately in the findings.

Five Analytical Pillars

The qualitative assessment focused on five analytical pillars derived from the literature, professional journalism standards, and the objectives of the study.

Analytical pillar	Main question
Framing	How is the issue defined and contextualized: through dignity and public interest, or through morality, criminality, threat, spectacle, or sensationalism?
Language and Terminology	Are people, identities, and SOGIESC concepts described accurately, respectfully, and without stigmatizing or pathologizing terminology?
Voices and Representation	Who is allowed to speak? Are affected people represented as sources of knowledge and experience, or primarily spoken about by institutional and third-party actors?
Visuals and Headlines	Do headlines, thumbnails, captions, images, and production choices preserve accuracy and dignity, or create stigma, sensationalism, or unnecessary exposure?
Accuracy	Are identity-related, legal, medical, health, and contextual claims verified and adequately explained, including risks of misinformation, disinformation, or mal-information?

Each pillar was scored from 1 to 3:

1. **Problematic**: significant professional weaknesses or potential harm, including stigmatizing framing, inaccurate terminology, exclusion, sensationalism, misinformation, or unsafe practice.

2. **Mixed**: partially responsible or factually sound coverage that nevertheless contains important gaps, inconsistencies, omissions, or weaknesses in context, voice, or safety.

3. **Rights-based**: accurate, contextualized, dignity-centered, source-aware, and consistent with professional journalism and human-rights principles.

Each media product therefore received five pillar scores and a total score out of 15. Totals of 5–7 were interpreted as mostly problematic, 8–11 as mixed, and 12–15 as mostly rights-based.

The scores were used to make comparison across cases more systematic, but they

remained subordinate to the qualitative reading. They functioned as analytical reference points rather than as stand-alone quantitative findings. A score could not substitute for examining the actual headline, language, source structure, visual treatment, factual context, and editorial choices within the media product.

Two-Stage Coding and Review

The 40 cases were analyzed through a two-stage process.

In the first stage, the research assistant, working as a coder, completed the initial coding of each media product using the standardized tool. This included assigning an editorial-stance classification, scoring the five analytical pillars, and preparing the initial qualitative analysis.

In the second stage, the author of this study (PI) reviewed and amended the coded cases. This involved revisiting classifications and scores where necessary, refining the qualitative analysis, comparing cases across the corpus, and ensuring that the analytical criteria were applied consistently.

This should not be understood as independent double-coding or as a formal intercoder-reliability test. Rather, it was a process of systematic first-pass coding followed by substantive analytical review and refinement.

The reviewed cases were subsequently consolidated into a master analytical table containing the principal identification data, SOGIESC dimension, editorial classification, pillar scores, archival information, and qualitative analysis for each of the 40 media products.

7.2 Stakeholder Survey

The second stage consisted of a structured, anonymous, self-administered online survey containing 26 questions. It was distributed purposively to media practitioners, civil-society professionals, and relevant subject-matter specialists and remained open from 21 to 31 July 2026.

Thirty valid responses submitted within this fieldwork period were included in the analysis.

The questionnaire covered respondent profiles, newsroom and institutional practices, familiarity with SOGIESC terminology, legal and professional knowledge, perceptions of Lebanese media coverage, source safety, editorial policies, perceived barriers to responsible journalism, and training needs. It combined closed-response questions with open-ended opportunities for participants to elaborate on terminology, professional challenges, and possible interventions.

The survey was supplementary rather than statistically representative. Its purpose was to identify tendencies within the respondent group and to examine whether issues emerging from the media cases were also recognized by people working in or around journalism and related fields.

Closed responses were therefore analyzed descriptively using counts and percentages, while open-ended responses were reviewed thematically. Percentages should be read alongside the underlying number of respondents, particularly because of the modest

sample size.

For multiple-response questions, totals could exceed 100%. In two questions, participants were asked to select a maximum number of options, but the online form did not consistently enforce that limit. Those responses are therefore reported as frequency of selections, rather than interpreted as strict rankings of respondents' top priorities.

7.3 Semi-Structured Key Informant Interviews

The final stage consisted of six semi-structured key informant interviews, conducted between 23 and 28 July 2026.

Participants were selected purposively to provide complementary expertise in:

- Journalism and newsroom practice;
- Media research;
- Communications and digital media;
- Law and human rights;
- Psychology and trauma-informed care; and
- Religious leadership.

Journalism was deliberately approached from both a media-research perspective and an operational newsroom perspective, allowing the study to examine representation both as an object of research and as a product of everyday editorial practice.

The interviews used a common set of core questions together with specialist questions adapted to each participant's field. This allowed comparison across interviews while creating space to explore legal, professional, psychosocial, institutional, cultural, and ethical issues in greater depth.

The interviews served primarily an **explanatory** function. They were used to examine why patterns identified in the media corpus might occur and to explore issues raised by the survey, including newsroom gatekeeping, terminology, legal uncertainty, political and religious pressure, economic constraints, source safety, editorial policy, trauma-informed practice, and professional training.

Participants were provided with informed-consent information and selected their preferred level of attribution. The interviews are not treated as a representative sample of expert opinion; their value lies in the specialist explanation and contextual depth they add to the media and survey evidence.

7.4 Integration of the Three Evidence Components

The three stages were brought together at the interpretive stage of the research.

The media content assessment established what could be observed in the selected published and broadcast material. The stakeholder survey added evidence about how practitioners and specialists perceive the professional environment surrounding that coverage. The key informant interviews then helped explore why particular patterns may occur and what institutional or professional mechanisms may contribute to them.

Convergence between methods strengthened the interpretation of a finding, but convergence was not assumed in advance. Areas of disagreement or difference were also retained because they can reveal distinctions between published practice, professional perception, and specialist explanation.

Triangulation in this assessment therefore means comparing different forms of evidence, rather than treating the three methods as equivalent measures of the same phenomenon.

7.5 Ethics and Limitations

The research applied informed-consent, privacy, confidentiality, and do-no-harm principles across the survey and interview components. Particular attention was given to the sensitivity of SOGIESC-related information and to the possibility that identification could create professional or personal risk.

Several limitations are important when interpreting the findings.

First, the 40-case media corpus was purposively constructed and does not provide a prevalence estimate for Lebanese media as a whole. Findings about outlets or outlet types refer to the cases examined and should not be read as permanent institutional rankings.

Second, the survey consisted of 30 purposively recruited respondents. Its percentages describe this respondent group and cannot be generalized statistically to all Lebanese journalists, newsrooms, or media professionals.

Third, the six key informant interviews provide specialist insight but do not constitute a representative expert sample.

Finally, qualitative coding necessarily involves interpretive judgment. The standardized instrument and two-stage coding and review process were used to make those judgments more systematic and transparent, but they do not eliminate interpretation.

These limitations are addressed in part by comparing evidence across the three stages and by distinguishing clearly between observed media patterns, respondent perceptions, and expert interpretation.

7.6 Why the Mixed-Methods Design Matters

No single component could answer the RQ on its own. The media cases show how representation appears in published content. The survey identifies professional perceptions, knowledge gaps, and reported constraints. The interviews provide context and explanation for the mechanisms behind those patterns. Together, they allow the assessment to move beyond simply identifying problematic or responsible media products and toward understanding the professional and institutional conditions under which different forms of journalism are produced. With the research design, analytical framework, and interpretive limits established, the report now turns to the findings, beginning with the case-based media content assessment.

8. Findings I: Case-Based Media Content Assessment

This section presents the findings from the **40 Lebanese media products** included in the case-based analytical corpus. The products were drawn from **33 outlets and platforms** and analyzed through the standardized five-pillar tool described in the methodology, with first-pass coding by the RA followed by review, amendment, and analysis by the PI.

Because the corpus was purposively selected, the findings describe patterns within the assessed material rather than the prevalence of those patterns across Lebanese media as a whole. The aim is to identify recurring strengths, weaknesses, and differences in editorial practice that are relevant to the RQ.

8.1 Overall Pattern: Strong Practice Coexists with Significant Gaps

Two related but distinct measures were used to assess the corpus.

The first was the **overall editorial-stance classification**, based on the qualitative reading of each case. On this measure, **23 of the 40 media products (58%) clearly challenged discrimination**, six (15%) were classified as neutral or ambiguous, and 11 (28%) clearly reinforced discrimination.

The second measure was the **combined five-pillar score**. Using the thresholds established in the case-study tool, **21 products were mostly rights-based (12–15), nine were mixed (8–11), and ten were mostly problematic (5–7)**. The overall mean across the corpus was **10.88 out of 15**.

These two classifications should not be expected to produce identical totals. The editorial-stance classification is a holistic qualitative judgment about the direction of a media product, while the five-pillar category is derived from its combined numerical scores. A story may, for example, clearly challenge discrimination overall while still receiving a lower score because of weaknesses in sourcing, visuals, or context.

The broader finding is therefore not that the corpus was uniformly responsible or uniformly harmful. Rather, **strong rights-based journalism exists alongside reporting that remains incomplete, exclusionary, sensationalized, or professionally unsafe**.

8.2 Voice Is the Clearest Weakness

The five-pillar analysis shows where the principal weakness lies.

Analytical pillar	Mean score /3
Framing	2.28
Language and Terminology	2.28
Voices and Representation	1.75
Visuals and Headlines	2.23
Accuracy / MDM	2.35

Voices and Representation was the lowest-scoring pillar by a substantial margin**.** Nineteen of the 40 cases scored **1**, twelve scored **2**, and only nine scored **3**.

This finding distinguishes **visibility from agency**. People affected by SOGIESC-related issues may appear in headlines, images, crime reports, political controversies, or talk-show debates while having little or no authority over the narrative. Their experiences are instead interpreted through politicians, security institutions, religious figures, hosts, lawyers, psychologists, or other third parties.

Nine of the ten cases classified as problematic through the five-pillar total had a Voices score of 1.

The problem is therefore not simply whether LGBTQ+ people or individuals with diverse SOGIESC are visible. It is **whether they can participate safely and meaningfully as sources of knowledge about their own experiences**.

This pattern is best described in this assessment as **representation without voice**.

8.3 Editorial Environment Is Associated with Different Outcomes

The cases also show substantial differences across editorial environments.

For analytical purposes, the corpus grouped cases according to the type of editorial practice represented in the sample. **Independent rights-focused digital cases averaged 13.46/15, while civil-society and creator-led cases averaged 14.60/15. Legacy or affiliated cases averaged 8.86/15, and local or general-interest digital cases averaged 7.88/15.**

These groupings should not be interpreted as permanent ratings of individual outlets. A media organization can produce both strong and weak journalism, and the assessment examines selected products rather than every item published by an outlet.

Nevertheless, the case pattern suggests that **editorial mandate, source networks, specialist knowledge, workflow, space for contextual reporting, and willingness to question institutional claims are associated with better outcomes**. Rights-based cases occurred frequently among independent and specialist digital platforms, while weaker cases appeared more frequently in legacy, politically or religiously affiliated, local, and entertainment-oriented formats. Selected legacy products also demonstrated responsible practice, which is why a simple division between “good digital media” and “bad traditional

media" would be inaccurate.

The relevant finding is therefore about **editorial systems and practices**, not media format alone.

8.4 The Full SOGIESC Framework Is Not Equally Visible

Coverage was also uneven across the four dimensions of the SOGIESC framework.

Of the 40 cases:

1. **26** were cross-cutting;
2. **9** focused primarily on Sexual Orientation;
3. **2** on Gender Identity;
4. **2** on Gender Expression;
5. **1** combined Gender Identity and Gender Expression; and
6. **0** provided dedicated coverage of sex characteristics.

Sexual orientation was therefore the most visible specific dimension, while gender identity and gender expression received comparatively limited dedicated attention. Most importantly, **sex characteristics were absent as a dedicated subject from the corpus**.

This is significant because reducing SOGIESC-related journalism primarily to homosexuality or LGBTQ+ controversy leaves other issues outside the media agenda. Intersex-related questions of bodily integrity, medical intervention, consent, health, documentation, discrimination, and self-identification received no dedicated treatment in the assessed products.

The absence should not be interpreted as evidence that such issues do not exist in Lebanon. Rather, within this corpus, it points to a **knowledge and agenda-setting gap**.

8.5 Framing, Language, Visuals, and Accuracy: What Strong and Weak Coverage Look Like

The remaining four pillars performed better than Voice, but each revealed important differences in editorial practice.

Framing and Language both averaged 2.28/3. Strong cases approached people as rights-holders, citizens, workers, artists, displaced persons, victims of crime, advocates, or authoritative narrators of their own lives. Weaker cases organized stories around morality, criminality, abnormality, controversy, or social threat.

Language followed a similar pattern. Stronger cases used accurate and contextually appropriate terminology and respected self-identification. Weaker cases relied on derogatory, pathologizing, moralizing, or imprecise terms. Importantly, the assessment also found that **correct terminology does not by itself guarantee responsible journalism**. A report can use an acceptable identity label while still sensationalizing a person, excluding their voice, or exposing them unnecessarily.

Visuals and Headlines averaged 2.23/3. Twenty cases scored 3, nine scored 2, and eleven scored 1. Problematic practices included sensationalized thumbnails, unnecessarily ~~iden-~~

tifying imagery, scandal-oriented packaging, decontextualized symbols, and headlines that used sexual orientation or gender identity primarily as an attention device. Stronger products used portrait, documentary, archival, or anonymized imagery in ways that preserved dignity, context, and source control.

Accuracy and MDM received the highest mean score, at 2.35/3. Twenty-two cases scored 3, ten scored 2, and eight scored 1. Problems appeared not only through explicit factual errors but also through missing context: inaccurate or incomplete legal claims, pathologizing medical statements, conspiracy narratives, misleading connections between HIV and homosexuality, or the presentation of political or religious opinion as established fact.

These findings reinforce a central point of the assessment: **harm cannot be assessed through terminology alone**. Framing, sourcing, headlines, visuals, context, and verification work together to determine the meaning and possible consequences of a media product.

8.6 Similar Events, Different Editorial Choices

One of the clearest demonstrations of this principle comes from the coverage of crimes involving dating applications.

A rights-based feature by Sharika Wa Laken received **15/15**, centering affected people, explaining blackmail and legal vulnerability, and providing digital safety and structural context. By contrast, an MTV report addressing the same type of underlying crime received **7/15**; it relied heavily on an ISF communiqué, used a more sensational headline, and omitted affected voices and wider legal and social context.

The basic subject was similar. What changed was the journalism.

This comparison demonstrates why the assessment focuses on **editorial choices rather than topic alone**. Sourcing, framing, context, language, safety information, and headline design can transform the public meaning of substantially similar events.

8.7 Five Recurring Narrative Patterns

Across the qualitative case analysis, five broader narrative patterns recurred.

Institutional voice. Politicians, police, religious authorities, hosts, and professionals frequently supplied both the facts and the interpretation of an issue. The problem was not the presence of institutional sources themselves, but cases in which institutional authority became the only meaningful source of knowledge.

Crime and exposure. Crime was a recurrent entry point into coverage. Strong reporting treated gay and bisexual men or other affected individuals as targets of exploitation and explained the structural conditions that made them vulnerable. Weaker reporting foregrounded identity, dating applications, arrests, or scandal while leaving the experience and safety of the victim peripheral.

Moral and religious debate. Some coverage framed SOGIESC-related questions primarily through morality, religion, family, or national values. Religious perspectives are legiti-

mate parts of public debate; the professional concern arises when such claims are treated as established facts, left unverified, or allowed to define the entire premise of a story.

Human rights and lived experience. Stronger cases shifted authority toward affected people, community organizations, lawyers, researchers, historians, health specialists, and other relevant sources. These products were more likely to connect individual experience to wider legal, political, social, or institutional conditions.

Absence. The fifth pattern is what does not appear. Sex characteristics received no dedicated coverage, and affected voices remained weak across the corpus. Absence is therefore analytically relevant alongside what is explicitly published.

8.8 What the Case Assessment Shows

Taken together, the 40 cases show that **Lebanese media do not construct one uniform understanding of SOGIESC-related issues**. Different editorial environments produce markedly different forms of representation.

The clearest weakness is **voice**. The corpus performs better on factual accuracy, language, framing, and visual treatment than it does on giving affected people meaningful narrative authority. At the same time, the complete absence of dedicated Sex Characteristics coverage shows that the problem concerns not only *how* people are represented, but also *which dimensions of human diversity become visible enough to be treated as news*.

The findings therefore point toward an institutional and professional question rather than a simple division between journalists who are personally supportive or hostile toward LGBTQ+ people. Some newsrooms appear better equipped than others to combine accurate terminology, contextual reporting, safe sourcing, visual responsibility, and critical treatment of institutional claims.

The next stages of the assessment, the stakeholder survey and key informant interviews, examine whether practitioners recognize these gaps and help explain the professional, structural, legal, and ethical conditions behind them.

9. Findings II: Stakeholder Survey

The stakeholder survey adds a supplementary professional-perception layer to the media assessment. It helps identify whether issues observed in the 40 media cases are also recognized by people working in journalism, civil society, communications, and related fields, and provides additional evidence on professional knowledge, newsroom practices, source safety, terminology, and training needs.

9.1 Respondent Profile

The respondent group was professionally diverse. It included nine civil-society or NGO professionals, seven journalists or reporters, three editors or news directors, three digital or social-media content creators, and eight participants working across legal, academic, religious, artistic, UN, facilitation, and management roles. The sample was also relatively experienced: 21 of the 30 respondents (70%) had six or more years of professional experience, including 14 with more than ten years. This gives the survey value as a source of informed professional perception, while not making it representative of the wider Lebanese media workforce.

Respondents worked across Arabic, English, and French. Arabic was selected by 73%, English by 67%, and French by 27%; multiple language selections were allowed.

9.2 Newsroom Practice and Institutional Conditions

The responses point to an uneven level of institutionalization.

Ten respondents reported that their organizations had formal written guidelines relevant to SOGIESC-related coverage, while six described informal or unwritten norms. Three reported having no guidelines and three did not know whether such guidance existed; eight considered the question not applicable.

Among the 22 respondents for whom the question was applicable, only 10 (46%) reported formal written guidance. This suggests that professional practice often continues to depend on informal norms, individual judgment, or institutional culture rather than written newsroom policy.

SOGIESC-related coverage was also not routine for many respondents. Thirteen said their organization had produced no such content during the previous twelve months, while seven reported regular production of more than five items and four reported occasional production. The survey also provides useful evidence about who is typically heard. Civil-society organizations were the most frequently selected sources (18/30), followed by religious or spiritual authorities (12/30) and individuals with diverse SOGIESC speaking in their own words (11/30). Lawyers and legal experts and politicians or state officials were each selected by ten respondents; medical or health professionals by eight; displaced or war-affected individuals with diverse SOGIESC by seven; and academic researchers by six.

Four respondents said coverage may rely primarily on news-agency or ISF material without specific voices, while another four indicated that such topics may be avoided alto-

gether. The pattern therefore does not indicate a complete absence of affected voices. Rather, it suggests that they appear within a dense field of civil-society, political, religious, legal, medical, and institutional voices, raising questions about who ultimately receives narrative authority.

9.3 What Drives Coverage, and What Restrains It

When asked about the main driver of coverage, the most frequently selected standard response was controversy, sensationalism, or conflict (12/30; 40%). Seven selected human rights and dignity, four official state, judicial, or security follow-ups, and four audience or digital engagements.

The most frequently identified barrier to more inclusive coverage was pressure from political, institutional, or religious authorities (12/30; 40%). Public backlash and lack of journalist knowledge, vocabulary, or training were each selected by four respondents. Others identified legal risk, fear of being associated with a "foreign agenda," financial pressure, and owner or advertiser concerns. These are single-choice responses and should therefore be read as the most frequently selected explanations within this respondent group, rather than as measures of the prevalence of each factor across Lebanese media.

9.4 Knowledge and Terminology

Professional familiarity with the SOGIESC framework was uneven.

Twelve respondents (40%) said they regularly use or encounter SOGIESC in their work. Eight were aware of the framework but did not use it regularly, five had heard of it without fully understanding it, and four were encountering the term for the first time.

Knowledge was stronger in relation to some medical issues. Twenty-three respondents (77%) knew of the Lebanese Psychiatric Society's position that homosexuality is not a mental disorder. Legal knowledge was less consistent: 18 respondents (60%) said they were aware of the judicial precedents referenced in the questionnaire concerning Article 534, while 12 were either unaware or unsure.

The open-ended terminology responses showed broad agreement that journalism should avoid derogatory, stigmatizing, pathologizing, or moralizing Arabic language. Frequently rejected terms included:

شاذ / شواذ / شذوذ، لوطي / لواط، منحرف

Respondents repeatedly preferred terminology such as:

مثلي / مثلية، عابر / عابرة جندرياً، شخص ترانس، مجتمع الميم-عين

There was, however, not complete consensus on every Arabic term, particularly terminology relating to trans identities. This inconsistency is itself important: it demonstrates the need for contextualized Arabic guidance rather than assuming that professional terminology is already standardized.

The strongest cross-cutting principle was therefore not simply a fixed vocabulary list but accuracy, self-identification, relevance, and context.

> *"The proper terms used give dignity to the trans image; using slurs disrespects an already stigmatized community*.**"- Stakeholder survey response**

9.5 Perceptions of Lebanese Media Coverage

- The perception results show substantial concern about current professional practice.
- 25/30 (83%) disagreed that mainstream Lebanese media generally cover SOGIESC-related issues fairly, accurately, and in a balanced manner.
- 26/30 (87%) disagreed that Lebanese journalists and media professionals receive sufficient training.
- 27/30 (90%) agreed that derogatory terminology can contribute to stigma, harm, or violence.
- 23/30 (77%) agreed that fear of legal or social consequences helps explain why affected people rarely appear as named sources.
- 28/30 (93%) agreed that a practical, contextualized training manual would benefit Lebanese newsrooms.
- 20/30 (67%) considered independent digital outlets more responsible in their SOGIESC-related coverage than legacy television, print, and state-aligned media.
- These findings should be understood as respondent perceptions, not as an independent ranking of Lebanese outlets. Their importance lies in the extent to which they echo several concerns identified in the case-based media assessment.

9.6 Harmful Coverage Encountered

Twenty-two respondents (73%) said they had encountered harmful, inaccurate, or biased Lebanese coverage of SOGIESC-related issues frequently or occasionally. The most frequently selected form of problematic coverage was the uncritical amplification of political or religious statements without an adequate rights-based or factual counter-perspective, selected 22 times. Sensationalist crime reporting that exposes or identifies people by sexual orientation or gender identity was selected 16 times, as was comedy or entertainment content that mocks or caricatures gender-nonconforming people. Psychological or medical pathologization was selected 14 times, "Western agenda" conspiracy framing 11 times, and exclusive association between homosexuality and HIV or sexually transmitted infections ten times. These figures should be interpreted with caution. The questionnaire instructed respondents to select a maximum number of options, but the online form did not consistently enforce that limit. The figures therefore represent frequencies of selection rather than a strict ranking of respondents' top choices.

9.7 What Respondents Want to Change

- The survey indicates strong demand for practical intervention.
- The most frequently selected proposed improvement was hands-on workshops for journalists, editors, and digital creators (19 selections). This was followed by:
- formal adoption of rights-based newsroom guidelines by leadership - 16;

- specific editorial standards for stories originating in political or religious controversy -14;
- a localized bilingual Arabic-English terminology and ethics guide - 13; and
- legal reform, including reform related to Article 534 - 12.
- As with the previous multiple-response question, these figures are reported as selection frequencies, not as a strict ranked order, because the stated response limit was not consistently enforced by the form.
- The pattern is nevertheless informative. Four of the five most frequently selected interventions concern professional practice and newsroom systems, rather than terminology alone.

9.8 Open-Text Themes

Written policy, not individual discretion	Respondents repeatedly called for clear newsroom-wide standards supported by leadership rather than leaving sensitive decisions entirely to individual journalists.
Human-centered reporting	Participants urged journalists to treat people as whole social actors and avoid making sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression itself the spectacle.
Editorial independence	Several respondents located problems upstream of the individual reporter, including ownership, political alignment, religious pressure, funding, and editorial gatekeeping.
Source safety and newsroom inclusion	Respondents called for greater attention to privacy, informed consent, self-censorship, conflict and displacement, and the position of LGBTQ+ people working inside media organizations.

Table 9.1. Recurring themes in the survey's open-text responses.

> *"Moving from identity-focused reporting to human-centered reporting reduces harm, builds trust, and produces more ethical journalism across all sensitive reporting."* - **Stakeholder survey response**
>
> *"There is a dehumanization in how SOGIESC topics are covered; these issues must be seen as part of this society, not as intrusive to it."*- **Stakeholder survey response**

9.9 What the Survey Adds

The survey does not establish that Lebanese media professionals as a whole think or work in one particular way. Its value is more specific.

It shows that many participants in this purposively selected group recognize the same professional issues that emerged from the media corpus: weak institutional guidance,

uneven terminology and legal knowledge, source-safety concerns, controversy-driven news value, political and religious pressure, and a strong demand for practical training and newsroom standards. At the same time, the findings do not support a simple claim that individual practitioners already possess all the knowledge required for responsible coverage. Only 40% reported regular familiarity with the SOGIESC framework, 40% were unaware of or unsure about the judicial precedents referenced in the survey, and 87% considered existing professional training insufficient. The more precise conclusion is therefore that the survey identifies both individual knowledge gaps and institutional gaps. Respondents want better terminology, legal literacy, practical training, written policy, source-protection procedures, and stronger editorial leadership.

10. Findings III: Key Informant Interviews

The third stage of the assessment consisted of six semi-structured key informant interviews conducted between 23 and 28 July 2026. Participants brought expertise in law and human rights, journalism and media research, newsroom practice, communications and digital media, religious leadership, and psychology and trauma-informed care.

The interviews were used mainly to explain the patterns identified in the media cases and stakeholder survey. They add context on newsroom decision-making, legal uncertainty, political and religious pressure, source safety, digital circulation, and the practical conditions under which journalists work. Because this is a media assessment, journalism was approached from two complementary perspectives: media research and monitoring, represented by Karim Safieddine, and day-to-day newsroom practice, represented by Nazeer Rida. This allowed the study to consider both how media performance is examined and how editorial choices are made in practice.

10.1 The Panel of Experts

Expert	Domain	Position
Me Hasna Abdul Reda	Legal & human rights	Head of Legal Department, Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH).
Karim Safieddine	Journalism: research	Researcher, Samir Kassir Foundation / SKeyes; media monitoring.
Nazeer Rida	Journalism: newsroom	Senior journalist and managing editor.
Myra Abdallah	Communications	Media strategist; gender and digital-rights expert.
Pastor Nabil Habibi	Religious	Pastor and youth minister; digital advocate (Shibifeed).
Aya Mhanna	Psychosocial	Clinical psychologist; trauma-informed care specialist (Sens Consulting).

Table 10.1. Key informant panel: six experts across five domains, with journalism represented through both research and newsroom perspectives.

10.2 Structural Pressures Shape Editorial Decisions

A recurring finding across the interviews was that problematic coverage cannot be explained by individual journalist attitudes alone. Interviewees repeatedly pointed to ownership, political and religious influence, newsroom hierarchy, commercial pressure, audience metrics, legal uncertainty, and weak institutional standards as factors that affect what eventually reaches the public.

Hasna Abdul Reda described moral-panic framing as the product of overlapping political, religious, commercial, and knowledge-related pressures. In her account, SOGIESC-related

issues can become useful sites of political and sectarian mobilization during periods of wider social insecurity. She also warned that vague state regulation of hate speech could be used to restrict rights-based expression, and favored clearer internal standards, independent oversight, rights of reply, correction mechanisms, and proportionate remedies.

Myra Abdallah focused on the editorial chain. She described situations in which a reporter may prepare a more rights-conscious story only for the headline, framing, or contextual material to be altered further up the hierarchy in response to ownership interests, political priorities, or audience metrics. Her phrase "gatekeeper massacre" captures the distance that can emerge between a reporter's original work and the version that is finally published. Karim Safieddine identified sensationalism and weak institutional guidance as recurring problems, while Nazeer Rida emphasized risk avoidance within legacy newsrooms, including decisions to limit visibility or withdraw content after controversy. Pastor Nabil Habibi likewise described moments when sexual and gender diversity becomes a convenient focus for public anxiety during wider political or social crises. Aya Mhanna added a psychosocial perspective, emphasizing the importance of institutional commitment to training, safety, and professional care.

> *"You might have a well-intentioned field reporter, but once the story reaches the senior editor, it undergoes a complete editorial massacre, rewritten into clickbait or stripped of its human-rights context to serve commercial or political interests."*
>
> **— Myra Abdallah**, *Media Strategist, Gender and Digital-Rights Expert*

Taken together, these accounts shift attention from the journalist alone to the editorial system through which journalism is produced.

RQ LENS

The interviews suggest that ownership, gatekeeping, political and religious pressure, commercial incentives, legal uncertainty, and weak institutional standards can shape SOGIESC-related representation before an individual report reaches publication.

10.3 Training Is Necessary, but the Newsroom Also Matters

The interviews also reveal an important difference of emphasis over where reform should begin.

Safieddine placed considerable weight on journalist-led practice, voluntary professional standards, and the use of historical press archives to show that sexual and gender diversity is not simply a foreign or newly imported subject. Rida similarly questioned the effectiveness of guidance that remains at senior-management level and emphasized practical support for younger reporters and content producers.

> *"During the war, coverage of displacement focused on privileged groups, completely ignoring lower-class trans individuals and grassroots queer shelters. Lebanese journalism suffers from a massive socio-economic class blind spot."*
>
> **— Karim Safieddine**, *Researcher, Samir Kassir Foundation / SKeyes*

Abdallah placed greater weight on newsroom leadership. In her account, reporters can receive training and still see their work substantially changed by editors and other decision-makers. She therefore argued that editors-in-chief, news directors, and other gatekeepers must also be engaged.

These positions are not mutually exclusive. Read together, they point to a two-level capacity gap: journalists need practical skills and usable guidance, while editorial leadership needs standards and accountability mechanisms that allow those skills to survive the production process.

Terminology provides a clear example. Interviewees supported accurate and non-stigmatizing language, but several stressed that correct vocabulary alone does not produce ethical journalism. A report can use an appropriate identity term while retaining sensational framing, unsafe sourcing, or stigmatizing imagery. The implication for training is straightforward: terminology needs to be taught alongside framing, sourcing, verification, visual treatment, consent, and editorial decision-making.

> *"Mainstream media behaves just like the Lebanese state. We cannot eradicate queer people, but we will keep them in the shadows, so we don't trigger a societal confrontation. Coexistence, in the end, becomes coexistence through erasure."*
>
> **— Nazeer Rida**, *Senior Journalist and Managing Editor*

10.4 Law, Safety, and Self-Censorship

The legal and psychosocial interviews help explain one of the strongest findings from the media corpus: the weakness of affected voices.

Abdul Reda emphasized the chilling effect created by legal uncertainty. Lebanese judicial decisions, including Batroun in 2009, Jdeideh el-Metn in 2014, and the Mount Lebanon appellate ruling in 2018, challenged the application of Article 534 to consensual same-sex relations. Article 534 nevertheless remains in force.

> *"In Lebanon's current climate, sensationalist coverage isn't just unethical, it is life-threatening. When outlets treat queer and gender-diverse individuals as 'scoops' for ratings, they don't just trigger stigma; they expose people to physical violence, blackmail, and state persecution."*
>
> **— Hasna Abdul Reda**, *Head of Legal Department, Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)*

She further argued that legal risk cannot be understood through Article 534 alone. In her professional assessment, other provisions or allegations relating to public morality, indecency, drugs, sex work, or digital evidence may also affect how LGBTQ+ people and journalists assess risk. These observations are treated here as attributed expert evidence, not as a quantified assessment of prosecutorial practice. The result is an environment in which both sources and journalists may choose caution, anonymity, or silence. Aya Mhanna approached the same issue from a psychosocial perspective. She emphasized that exposure, hostile framing, online harassment, and toxic comment environments can create psychological harm for sources and can also affect journalists working repeatedly with traumatic material. She was particularly critical of forms of "balance" that place a vulnerable person opposite a speaker whose contribution is primarily dehumanizing or demonstrably inaccurate. Her recommendations can be summarized as a continuum of duty of care: assess risk before publication, preserve agency and informed consent during reporting, moderate foreseeable harm after publication, and ensure that both sources and journalists know where additional support can be accessed when necessary. The recommendation is not that affected people should always be named. Meaningful representation has to be balanced against safety. Anonymity, pseudonyms, altered voices, or indirect testimony may sometimes be the more ethical form of participation.

> *"Why do we give hateful figures equal airtime under the excuse of 'hearing all sides'? Giving a platform to violent, ignorant speech is not balance. It validates hate speech and sets people up against each other."*
>
> **— Aya Mhanna**, *Clinical Psychologist, Trauma-Informed Care Specialist*

WHAT THIS EXPLAINS

The voice deficit cannot be read simply as journalistic indifference. Legal uncertainty, exposure risk, family and employment consequences, digital permanence, and weak safety protocols can all affect whether people are able or willing to speak.

10.5 Religion, Moral Framing, and Public Debate

Pastor Nabil Habibi challenged the tendency to treat religion as a single, uniformly hostile position. He argued that Lebanese media frequently privilege conflict-oriented religious

voices while overlooking the diversity of pastoral, theological, and community responses that also exist.

> *"Media always brings on a priest and a sheikh to debate whether it is allowed or forbidden. But true faith isn't about moralizing rules; it's about grace, dignity, and unconditional acceptance."*
>
> **— Pastor Nabil Habibi**, *Pastor and Youth Minister, Shibifeed*

Religion is a legitimate part of Lebanese public debate. The professional problem arises when religious opinion is presented as factual authority over another person's identity, health, legality, or dignity, or when one position is made to represent the entirety of religious thought.

Habibi also identified the recurring idea that sexual and gender diversity constitutes a "Western import." This frame turns questions of rights and lived experience into a cultural confrontation between an imagined "West" and "local values." Abdallah extended this discussion to digital platforms, arguing that platform incentives and weaknesses in Arabic-language moderation can amplify polarizing and hateful material beyond the original newsroom. The interviews therefore suggest that moral panic is not produced through one actor alone. It can emerge through interactions among political discourse, religious framing, newsroom incentives, and digital circulation.

10.6 Insights from the Key Informant Interviews

The interviews do more than repeat the media and survey findings. Their main contribution is to explain how and why some of those patterns may be produced.

Episodic visibility. SOGIESC-related issues often become news when connected to crime, political controversy, religious statements, public events, viral content, violence, or legal disputes. This helps explain why everyday lives and less controversial subjects remain less visible.

Gatekeeping shapes both frame and voice. Stories pass through reporters, editors, owners, producers, legal concerns, platform requirements, and audience expectations. What reaches publication may therefore differ substantially from the journalist's initial reporting.

Safety affects who can speak. Legal uncertainty, family and employment risk, public exposure, harassment, and digital permanence make first-person sourcing more complicated than a simple instruction to "include community voices."

Digital media create openings, but not automatic safety. Independent digital formats can provide more space for first-person storytelling and contextual reporting, but they remain subject to funding pressures, algorithms, comment cultures, and weak institutional safety procedures.

Reform has to operate at more than one level. The interviews differ over whether change should begin with senior editors, younger reporters, independent professional standards, or newsroom policy. Together, they suggest that sustainable reform requires both institu-

tional authority and field-level practice.

The interviews also add an intersectional dimension. Several participants drew attention to class, geography, language, displacement, and employment insecurity as factors that shape who can safely become visible. Affluent, urban, multilingual, and financially secure people may be easier to interview and safer to identify, while people living in peripheral areas, conservative households, refugee settings, insecure employment, or crisis shelters may face much greater exposure. The central implication is that the quality of SOGIESC-related journalism is shaped not only by what an individual journalist knows, but by whether the surrounding newsroom allows that knowledge to be translated into practice. These explanations complete the study's sequence from media content, to professional perceptions, to specialist interpretation. The Discussion brings the three evidence components together and considers what they mean for Lebanese journalism.

11. Discussion

With all three evidence components complete, the assessment can now answer the central RQ more directly. The 40 media cases show how representation appears in published content; the stakeholder survey identifies how a purposively selected group of practitioners and specialists perceive the professional environment; and the interviews help explain the mechanisms behind those patterns.

11.1 How the Assessed Media Construct Understanding of SOGIESC

Across the assessed corpus, public understanding is shaped not only through explicit derogatory language or hate speech, but more consistently through three quieter mechanisms: framing, sourcing, and omission. Framing determines whether a story is organized around dignity, rights, public interest, and lived experience, or around crime, scandal, morality, abnormality, and threat. Sourcing determines whose knowledge counts: affected people, civil-society actors, experts, politicians, police, clergy, television hosts, or other institutional voices. Omission determines which experiences never become visible enough to be treated as news. These mechanisms matter because a story can appear technically neutral while still producing a narrow or distorted picture. It may accurately report an arrest, quote an official statement, and avoid explicit slurs, yet still leave the affected person absent, omit the legal or social context that explains vulnerability, or use identity mainly as a headline hook.

The complete absence of dedicated Sex Characteristics coverage and the comparatively weak representation of affected voices are therefore not side findings. They show that media power also operates through what is missing.

ANSWER TO THE DESCRIPTIVE PART OF THE RQ

In the selected corpus, public understanding of SOGIESC-related issues is shaped through the combined effects of framing, selective sourcing, visual and headline choices, factual context, and omission. Harm is therefore not limited to explicit hostility.

11.2 Structural, Professional, and Ethical Factors

The three evidence components also point toward the conditions under which different forms of coverage are produced. The most consistent structural association in the case assessment concerns the editorial environment. Ownership and affiliation, editorial independence, newsroom standards, source networks, workflow, and institutional priorities repeatedly emerged as relevant factors. This does not mean that every product from one outlet type is strong or weak, nor does the study establish a statistical predictor of coverage quality. It does show that sustained rights mandates, specialist knowledge, editorial

space, and stronger sourcing practices are associated with better case outcomes in the sample. Professional factors sit within that structure. The survey identified uneven familiarity with SOGIESC terminology and legal developments, while the interviews described how deadlines, source access, senior rewriting, risk avoidance, and controversy-driven formats can shape the published story. The ethical dimension concerns how journalists and newsrooms manage dignity, consent, privacy, exposure, balance, and foreseeable harm. The voice deficit is especially revealing because it sits at the intersection of all three levels: sources may be difficult to reach, editors may prefer institutional voices, legal and social risk may discourage identification, and newsrooms may lack practical safety protocols.

Many survey respondents demonstrated awareness of responsible reporting principles while simultaneously identifying substantial gaps in training, policy, legal knowledge, and newsroom practice. The interviews help explain why individual awareness may not automatically translate into consistent output.

The resulting picture is not one of individual ignorance on one side and institutional failure on the other. Both levels matter. Knowledge is uneven, and the institutional conditions needed to apply that knowledge are also uneven.

11.3 From Explicit Hostility to Structural Harm

One of the most important implications of the assessment is that harmful reporting cannot be reduced to slurs. Some of the clearest weaknesses appear in stories that look neutral on the surface. A report may copy an official statement, use technically acceptable language, and accurately describe an incident, yet still erase the affected person, omit essential legal or medical context, present one institutional source as self-validating, or package identity as spectacle. In these cases, harm is produced through source hierarchy, incomplete context, visual treatment, and omission rather than through openly abusive language. This also helps explain the hierarchy of credibility visible across the study. Politicians, clerics, police, lawyers, psychologists, and television hosts enter stories with institutional authority. Affected people often enter with exposure risk. News routines reward sources who are available, quotable, official, and legally defensible, which can make institutional voices appear more authoritative simply because they are repeatedly heard.

11.4 What This Means for Lebanese Journalism

The assessment identifies substantial gaps in the selected corpus, particularly around voice, Sex Characteristics, source safety, contextual reporting, and consistency across editorial environments. At the same time, it documents strong rights-based practice within the Lebanese media landscape. That matters because the findings do not suggest that responsible SOGIESC-related journalism requires importing an unfamiliar model. Lebanese journalists and outlets in the sample already demonstrate that accurate, critical, contextual, and dignity-centered reporting is possible.

The practical challenge is consistency. Written editorial standards, clearer Arabic terminology, legal literacy, source-protection and trauma-informed protocols, stronger verification, and engagement with both newsroom leadership and field reporters are all

realistic interventions.

11.5 Limits of the Interpretation

The findings should be interpreted within the design of the study. The 40 media products were purposely selected and do not provide a prevalence estimate for Lebanese media as a whole. The survey includes 30 purposively recruited respondents and describes their perceptions rather than the profession nationally. The six expert interviews provide depth and explanation but are not representative of expert opinion. Qualitative coding also involves interpretation. The standardized case tool and two-stage review process made those judgments more systematic, but they do not remove interpretation. These limitations do not make triangulation irrelevant; they define what triangulation can reasonably do. Convergence across the three evidence components strengthens an interpretation, while disagreement or difference helps identify where published practice, professional perception, and expert explanation do not fully align.

11.6 Conclusion

This assessment began with one central research question:

Key RQ: How do Lebanese media construct public understanding of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics, and which structural, professional, and ethical factors can influence this representation?

Taken together, the findings provide an answer to both parts of this question.

First, the assessed media construct public understanding of SOGIESC through more than openly hostile language or explicit hate speech. Meaning is also produced through everyday editorial decisions about framing, sourcing, visibility, context, headlines, visuals, and omission. These decisions affect who is allowed to speak, whose expertise is treated as credible, which experiences become visible, and which remain largely absent from public discussion.

One of the clearest findings is the difference between visibility and voice. LGBTQ+ people and individuals with diverse SOGIESC may appear in media coverage as subjects of crime, political controversy, religious debate, or social discussion without necessarily being able to speak for themselves. Representation is therefore not only a question of whether people appear in the news. It is also a question of whether they can participate safely and meaningfully as sources of knowledge and experience.

Second, the assessment identifies several structural, professional, and ethical factors that can influence how this representation is produced. These include ownership and political alignment, newsroom routines and editorial gatekeeping, the presence or absence of written editorial standards, gaps in legal and terminological knowledge, legal uncertainty, source-safety concerns, and a news culture that can reward controversy and attention.

These findings show why the quality of SOGIESC-related journalism cannot be understood only through the attitudes or knowledge of individual journalists. Reporters work within editorial systems. Editors influence framing, headlines, sourcing, and presentation. Newsrooms determine which sources are considered authoritative, how much context is

included, and how risks to sources are managed. Individual professional knowledge matters, but so do the institutional conditions that allow that knowledge to become consistent editorial practice.

At the same time, the assessment identifies strong examples of accurate, contextualized, and rights-based journalism within the Lebanese media environment. The stronger cases examined, particularly among some independent digital outlets, demonstrate that responsible SOGIESC-related journalism is already possible in Lebanon. The challenge is, therefore, not to introduce an entirely unfamiliar model of journalism, but to make good practice more consistent across a wider range of editorial settings.

Six main conclusions emerge from the assessment.

1. Coverage is uneven rather than uniformly poor. Strong rights-based journalism coexists with mixed and problematic practices. The assessed cases show substantial differences in framing, sourcing, context, and professional safeguards across different editorial environments.

2. Voice is the clearest weakness. The most consistent gap is not simply whether affected people are visible, but whether they are able to participate safely and meaningfully as sources of knowledge and experience.

3. Harm can result from routine editorial practice. Problematic representation does not always depend on openly hostile language. Reliance on official sources, sensational presentation, incomplete context, unsafe visuals, and uncritical amplification can also produce harm.

4. Terminology matters, but terminology alone is not enough. Accurate and respectful vocabulary is essential, but it cannot compensate for sensational framing, weak verification, exclusionary sourcing, unnecessary exposure, or missing context.

5. The full SOGIESC framework is not equally visible in coverage. Sex Characteristics received no dedicated coverage in the assessed corpus, while Gender Identity and Gender Expression appeared less frequently. The gap therefore concerns not only terminology, but also which subjects enter the media agenda.

6. Lasting improvement requires institutional support. Training individual journalists is important, but its effect is more likely to last when it is supported by written editorial standards, newsroom leadership, source-safety procedures, correction mechanisms, legal and professional guidance, and accountability.

These conclusions move the assessment from diagnosis to action. If framing, sourcing, terminology, legal knowledge, source safety, and newsroom structures influence the quality of coverage, then these are also areas where professional intervention is possible. These findings also give the next phase of work a place to start. They can serve as an evidence base for journalist training, engagement with editors and newsrooms, a practical code of conduct, and continued monitoring of how Lebanese media represent SOGIESC.

The recommendations that follow therefore translate the findings into practical steps. They address not only journalists, but also the editors and institutions that shape their work, the civil-society and professional organizations that provide information and expertise, the bodies that influence the legal and accountability environment, and researchers ~~who c~~an continue to assess change over time.

12. Recommendations

The recommendations follow directly from the findings and are organized around the areas where the assessment identified opportunities for improvement. Their purpose is to strengthen daily journalistic practice while recognizing the legal, political, economic, institutional, and safety constraints within which Lebanese journalists and newsrooms operate.

Responsibility should not fall on individual reporters alone. The recommendations therefore address five interconnected areas:

1. Training Manual and Masterclasses

2. Editors and Newsroom Leadership

3. Civil Society and Professional Organizations

4. Policymakers and Accountability Bodies

5. Future Research

Together, these recommendations translate the assessment's findings into practical measures that can strengthen accuracy, editorial consistency, source protection, professional knowledge, and responsible representation.

12.1 For the Training Manual and Masterclasses

Build a bilingual terminology and ethics guide. Provide accurate Arabic-English terminology, explain contested or outdated terms, and connect vocabulary to framing, self-identification, verification, dignity, and public interest.

Prioritize applied learning. Use real Lebanese cases, paired treatments of similar events, headline exercises, sourcing decisions, and newsroom simulations rather than relying mainly on lectures.

Include practical legal literacy. Explain Article 534, the distinction between statutory text and judicial interpretation, and the wider legal-risk environment. Legal claims should be updated before publication of the final manual.

Add a dedicated section on Sex Characteristics. Address the complete absence of dedicated coverage in the corpus with basic concepts, accurate Arabic terminology, story ideas, medical and rights context, and sourcing guidance.

Integrate trauma-informed and digital-safety practice. Include pre-publication risk mapping, meaningful consent, anonymity options, secure handling of identifying information, comment moderation, and post-publication response. A localized trauma-informed reporting guide already exists for the Arabic-language context and can anchor this part of the training (El Helou, 2026).

Ground the training in media and information literacy. Build the manual and masterclasses on UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy framework, so the habits journalists rely on to weigh any source, where a claim comes from, what backs it, and whether opinion is standing in for fact, carry over when they report on SOGIESC.

12.2 For Editors and Newsroom Leadership

Adopt a written editorial standard for SOGIESC-related coverage. The standard should cover terminology, sourcing, verification, privacy, visual treatment, headlines, corrections, and source safety. It should be usable under deadline, not stored as a symbolic policy document.

Train both gatekeepers and field reporters. Editors, producers, news directors, reporters, social-media teams, and content creators influence different stages of the same story. Training only one level leaves the editorial chain vulnerable to breakdown.

Create a source-protection protocol. Before publication, assess foreseeable risks related to naming, images, location, family, employment, legal exposure, metadata, and online harassment. Direct testimony should be encouraged when safe, but never treated as a diversity quota.

Strengthen verification of institutional claims. Police, political, religious, medical, and other authoritative sources should be subject to the same standards of verification and context as any other source.

Build correction and harm-response pathways. Newsrooms should have a clear process for correcting factual errors, changing unsafe headlines or images, responding to unintended identification, and considering removal when continued publication creates disproportionate harm.

A SHORT NEWSROOM CHECKLIST

Is identity relevant to the public-interest meaning of the story? Have legal, medical, and identity claims been checked? Who is speaking, and who is missing? Could the headline, image, caption, metadata, or comment environment expose someone unnecessarily? If an affected person is not quoted, is there a clear safety or access reason? Does the story provide enough context for audiences to understand the issue accurately?

12.3 For Civil Society and Professional Organizations

Make reliable expertise easier to access. Provide journalists with timely, verified legal, health, rights, and safety information, particularly during breaking news and controversy.

Develop source networks without pressuring vulnerable people to become public. Organizations can help journalists identify informed sources, including affected individuals who wish to speak, while protecting people for whom visibility creates unacceptable risk.

Support newsroom-wide policy adoption. Training is more likely to endure when civil-society engagement includes editorial leadership, producers, legal advisers, and digital teams rather than focusing only on individual reporters.

Preserve independence. Civil-society material should provide evidence and expertise without becoming a substitute for reporting or creating an expectation that journalists reproduce advocacy language uncritically.

12.4 For Policymakers and Accountability Bodies

Reduce legal ambiguity while protecting freedom of expression. Reform should improve legal clarity and rights protection without creating vague hate speech or morality powers that could be used to censor journalists, activists, or affected communities.

Support proportionate accountability mechanisms. Rights of reply, correction, independent complaints processes, transparent professional standards, and proportionate remedies are preferable to broad restrictions that can be politically captured.

Treat source privacy and digital safety as part of media freedom. Legal and institutional safeguards should recognize the risks created by outing, device searches, digital traces, and the permanent circulation of sensitive material.

12.5 For Future Research

Expand the media corpus and track change over time. A larger longitudinal sample could test whether the patterns observed here persist across election cycles, conflict periods, and changes in platform use.

Study Sex Characteristics directly. Future research should examine intersex-related knowledge, terminology, health reporting, bodily integrity, documentation, and source access in Lebanese media.

Add class, geography, displacement, and language to source analysis. The interviews suggest that visibility may be easier for urban, multilingual, and financially secure people than for those facing displacement, poverty, conservative family settings, or insecure employment.

Evaluate the effect of training. Future monitoring should assess whether newsroom policies and masterclasses produce measurable changes in sourcing, framing, terminology, safety, and correction practices.

HIGHEST-LEVERAGE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

A written newsroom standard is one of the most practical ways to connect individual knowledge with institutional practice. It should not be treated as a stand-alone solution: its value depends on leadership support, training, source-safety procedures, and consistent editorial use.

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