



## **Youth Issues in Lebanese Media Coverage**

### **Print media and Television Model**

#### **Introduction**

The percentage of youth in the world has exceeded the regular rates; according to the United Nations Population Division, half the world's population is youth under the age of 25.

In other words, at the level of communication, half the recipients are youth, and the focus of all types of media should be on this age category in terms of their tendencies, trends, aspirations, and issues...

Youth media aims at fulfilling the needs of young people with high quality content that provide them with varied knowledge and expertise.

Thus the media messages addressed to youth should fulfill their needs through highlighting their issues and interests, and provide them with more time and space, and new interesting editorial styles that attracts and keeps them within the positive communication circle.

Media has been trying for a long time to find the suitable way to highlight youth issues and to find proper ways to guide them socially and morally, which reflects the interest of media in this social category; however there is a large number of youth that feel marginalized in media.

The fact that youth has been of big importance and vital role in society throughout ages has led to raising hypotheses and challenges that media should be aware of, and seek to articulate, explain, and follow them up in their present and future planning.

This study aims at investigating the interest of Lebanese media outlets (print media and television) in issues related to youth in all Lebanese regions through answering the following question:

To what extent the Lebanese media is contributing in expressing, promoting and containing the needs of youths?

The study aims at investigating the research question through analyzing the media messages addressed by the media to the youths.

### **Numbers and Indicators**

Lebanon is one of the countries that signed the international treaties and agreements related to human and youth's rights, including the civil, political, economical, social and cultural rights, and the rights against torture and discrimination...

Youths in Lebanon are the young people aging between 15 and 29 defined by the ministry of youths and sports, United Nations organizations and youth's organizations and experts based on social and economical criteria related to Lebanon.

Youths constitute 28% of total population in Lebanon.

It is to note some statistics related to this category to understand their needs:

- Average age of marriage for males is 32 and females 29 which is the highest in the world, in addition to doubling the divorce rates among married couples
- 35 thousand people emigrates yearly, 60% of them are blow the age of 40, 44% of whom are youths searching for employment and to improve their standards of living
- Unemployment rates in Lebanon varies between 22% (according to International Labor Organization), and 25% (Lebanese ministry of labor), youths consist of 30% of unemployed. They also consist of 41% of the workforce.

- As of the level of social participation, Lebanon is among the 12 countries and 228 districts that determine the age for parliamentary and municipal elections of 21 (center for development projects and studies).

### **A-The methodology**

The current study was based on monitoring and analysis of media coverage (reports, and interviews) of most printed media and news bulletins of Lebanese media outlets between 24/4/2015 and 7/5/2015.

The study used quantitative methods to show the size of coverage and allocation of themes according to the following categories:

- Initiatives and success stories
- Social issues
- Sports, civil and environmental activities
- School, educational, and cultural activities
- Political and partisan activities

These categories cover the following subjects:

Sports, entertainment, art, technology, labor, employment, emigration, accommodation, household, gender, unemployment, addiction and drugs, leadership, civil society, political parties, education, culture, Miscellaneous accidents.

This study will show the size the coverage of every subject and the importance given through their location (first page, inner pages in oriented media) and their geographical distribution on Lebanese regions based on gender.

Qualitative methods were used to explain the content and nature of media messages, and methods of presentation in Lebanese media, and to provide some comparisons and samples with clear connotations.

## B-Material used

The study includes varied media material like articles, news reports, and news coverage dealing with youths issues.

- Printed media outlets monitored: Annahar, Assafir, Almousaqbal, AlAkhbar, AlJoumhouriya, L'orient le Jour, and Daily Star.
- TV Stations monitored: LBCI, OTV, MTV, FUTURE, ALJADEED, ALMANAR, and TELE LIBAN

These outlets were selected as sample for monitoring because they are the most read and watched outlets by Lebanese audience.

The study took place throughout 14 days from 24/4/2015 until 7/5/2015 and included 147 monitored articles in printed media according to the below table:

Number of coverage/with photos/ number of published photos  
(Figure1)

total	Daily star	Lorient le jour	AlJoumhouriah	AlAkhbar	Futures	Annahar	Assafir	newspaper
147	7	19	4	8	38	26	45	Number of articles
96	7	17	4	5	22	15	28	With photos
124	7	19	4	14	28	15	37	Number of photos

The study also included 67 reports in news bulletins of monitored TV stations according to the following table (Figure 2):

المجموع	الجديد	المستقبل	المنار	OTV	MTV	LBCI	TELE LIBAN	station number
76	6	10	11	11	14	19	05	

### **C-Size and type of media coverage**

The study shows the size of media coverage in news reports and articles totaling 147 articles in 7 leading newspapers; average of 21 articles daily.

However, the majority of the coverage was in the Arabic printed media: Assafir (30%), Future (26%), and Annahar (17%), where Lorient le Jour has the highest percentage among non Arabic printed media (31%) (Figure 1).

These numbers do not reflect exclusivity in coverage, but rather the redundancy of subjects that is of 50% in the majority of Lebanese newspapers, except those included in Lorient le Jour that is characterized by offering a content a layout that has to do with youths issues. This idea will be further detailed during the analysis of the nature of monitored subjects.

On the other hand, Figure 2 shows that the number of coverage in evening news bulletins in the 7 monitored TV stations is half the number in relation to printed media, 76 reports which means an average of 11 reports daily of issues related to Lebanese youths.

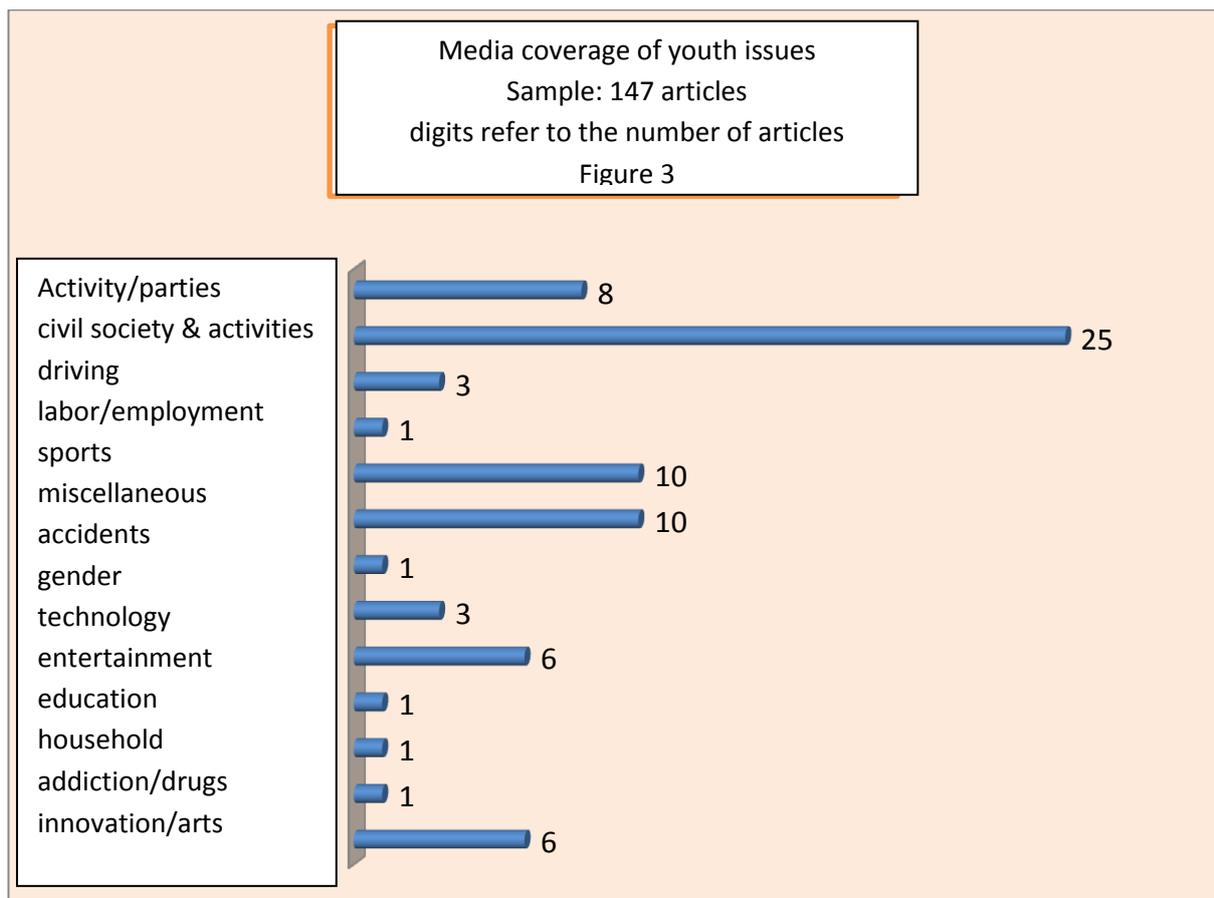
The figure also shows a difference between LBC and MTV, and equivalence between OTV, Future, and Manar, where Tele Liban made the least coverage of youth issues.

As it is the case for Lebanese newspapers, the TV stations also have up to 40% similarity in coverage with differentiation for MTV that

select specific subjects to show at the beginning of the bulletin entitled “despite everything”.

Figure 3 shows that sports consists of around half the coverage, then comes innovation, arts, civil society and youth activities before entertainment and education...

On the other hand, figure 4 about evening news bulletins shows that the news about youth activities and civil society has 30% of the coverage space before the sports, miscellaneous, political activities, and entertainment.



## **Part one: Analysis of coverage**

### **First: Media Approach of Youths issues**

The analysis of media coverage of youth's issues shows three main conclusions:

#### 1- Absence of television coverage

The difference between the tables showing the size of coverage shows unbalance between the percentage of newspapers readers and TV audience.

According to the Mediterranean Youth Networks project funded by the European Union about the youth and media (the statistic included 1200 Lebanese youth between 24 and 29 years old divided 50% females and 50% males), the percentage of youth reading newspapers is 13% however 98% watch TV.

This indicates that the main news bulletins of Lebanese TV stations do not give enough attention to contain the youths' issues their problems and aspirations by allocating a specialized youth bulletin for example.

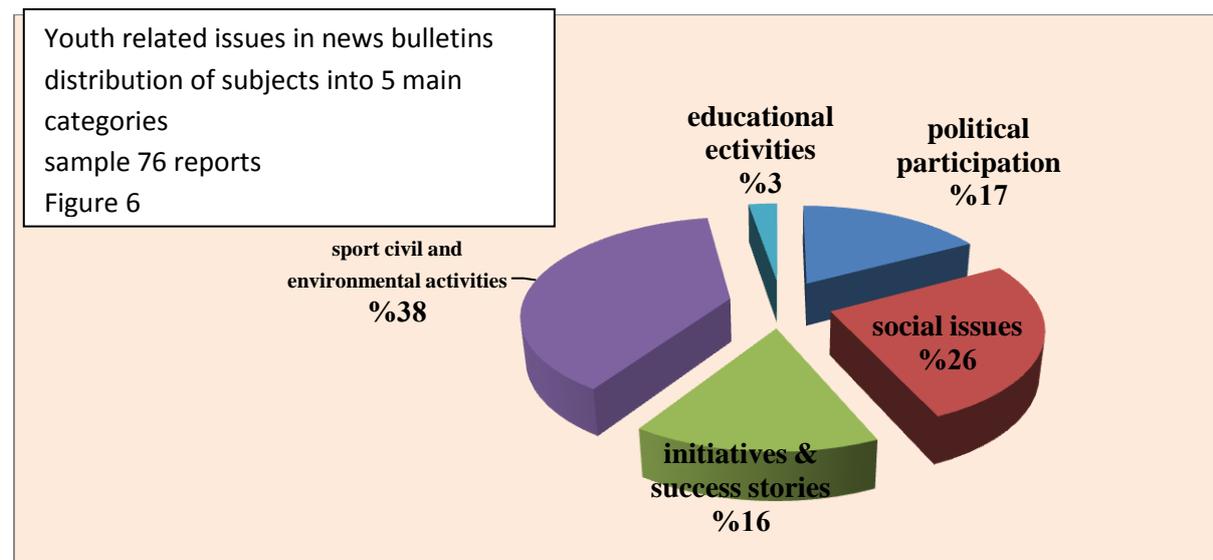
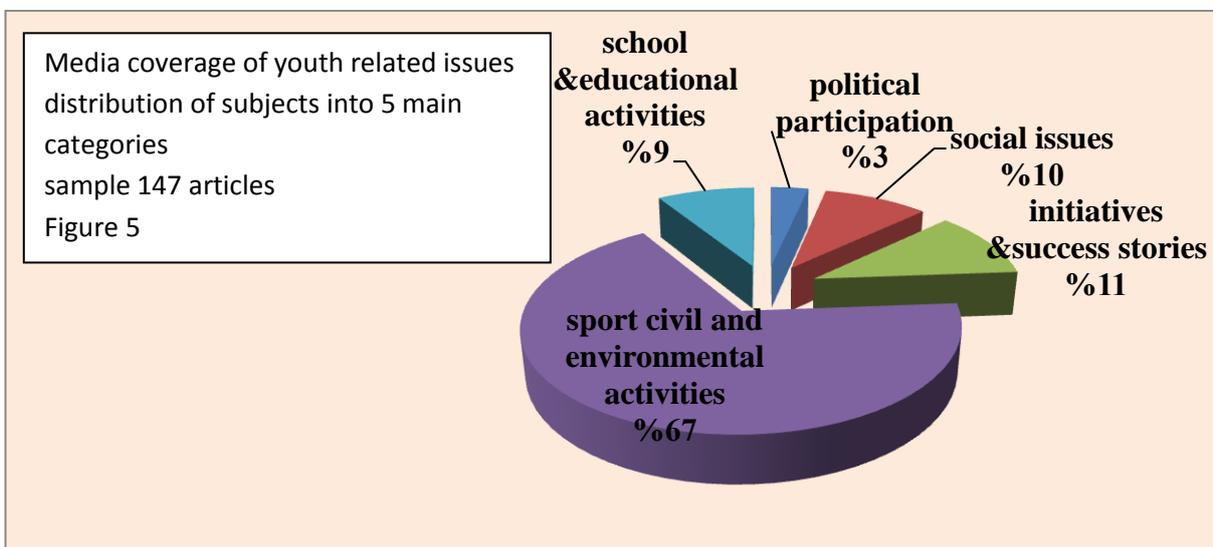
On the other hand, printed media keeps their interest in covering youth related issues despite the small number of youth readers.

#### 2- Absence of general strategy

It seems normal for sports activities to take the majority of coverage space since it is considered one of the major interests for youths, then the coverage of issues related to civil society the percentage of youths members of civil society organizations is 38.7%.

However, important issues like emigration, accommodation, late marriages, unemployment, and technology were absent or had slight coverage which shows a lack of strategic orientation for Lebanese media in approaching youth related issues and their aspiration.

As an overview of the monitored issues within the 5 categories that were defined earlier shown in figures 5 and 6, it is shown that the first category that includes sport, civil and environmental activities are of highest coverage in printed media and Television, whereas, television tend to cover more issues related to society, success stories and political activities than does printed media.

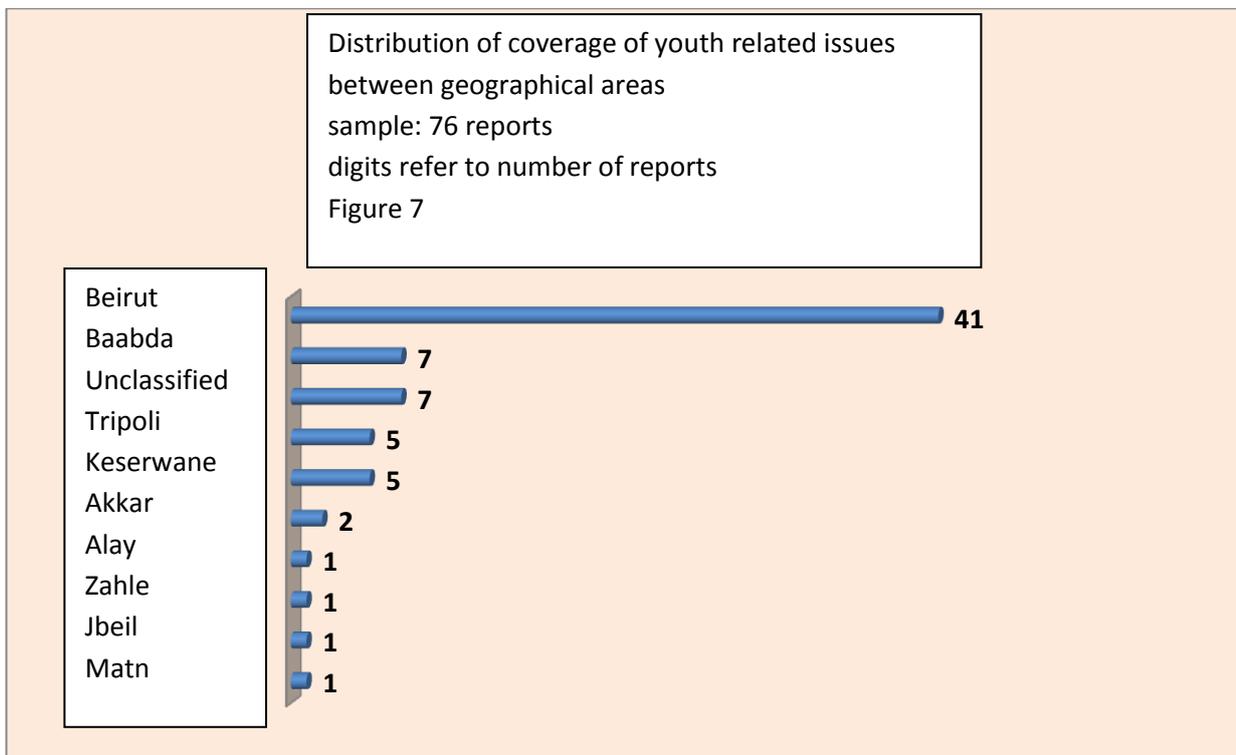


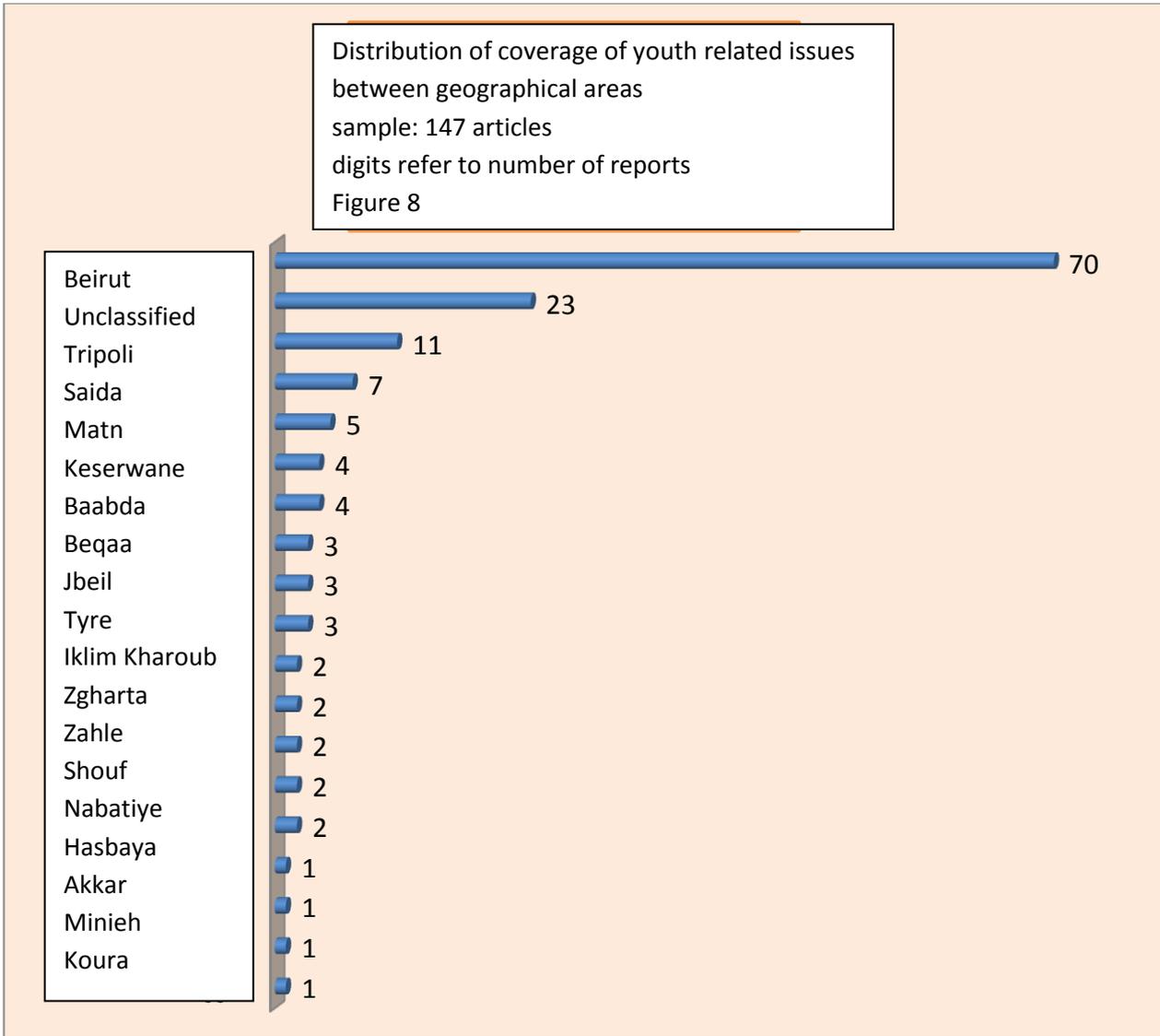
Despite neglecting the main topics that were mentioned earlier, it is important to note that highlighting the youth initiatives and success stories is considered as moral support for Lebanese youths to bear the social and political circumstances for a better future.

### 3- Geographical Centralization of coverage

The united nations- department of social and economical affairs has expected an increase in urban population in Lebanon to 87.8% in 2015, and according to Byblos Bank Report, the population of the city of Beirut will reach 2.2 million in 2015 (Annahar 25/5/2015) which is around half the population of Lebanon.

These indicators was totally reflected in the distribution of news coverage in oriented media and television





According to figures 7 and 8, almost 50% of subjects related to youth issues are within the city of Beirut, where the remaining coverage was distributed among the big population groups like in Tripoli, Baabda and Keserwan...

The high coverage in the city of Beirut shows that youth in rural areas is not having a chance of media appearance to express their aspirations, problems and issues, which is not necessarily the same as youth living in big cities.

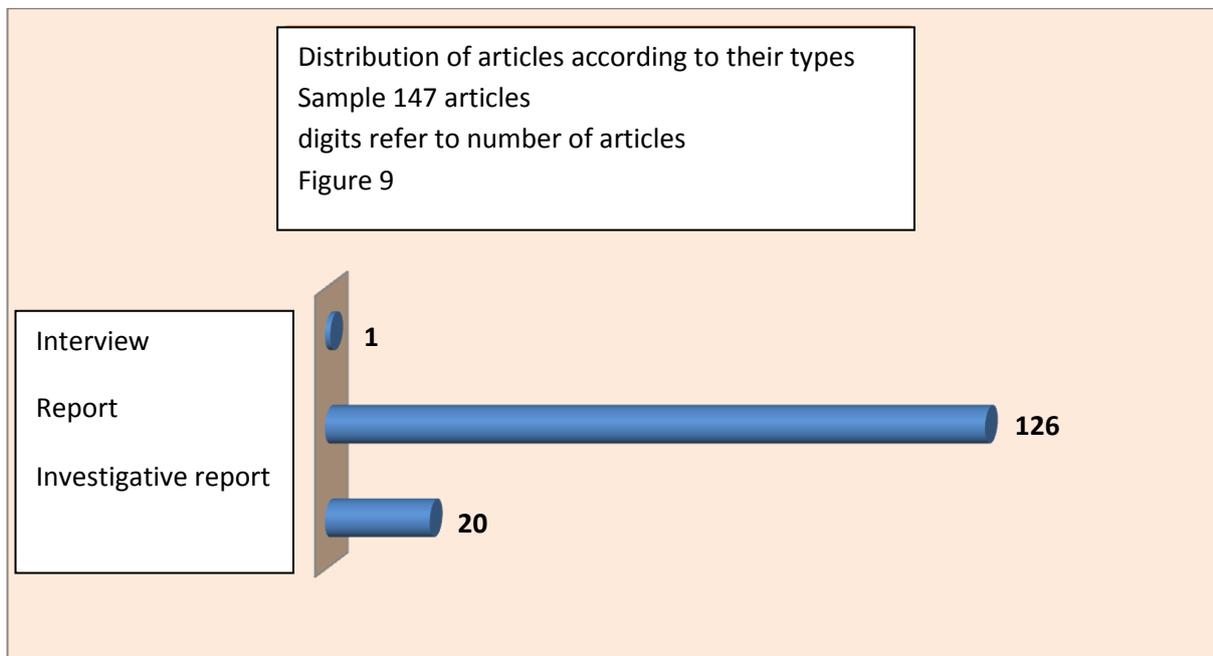
These indicators show the centralization of interest of media outlets which necessitates the review of media policies of these outlets to make them fairer and more inclusive.

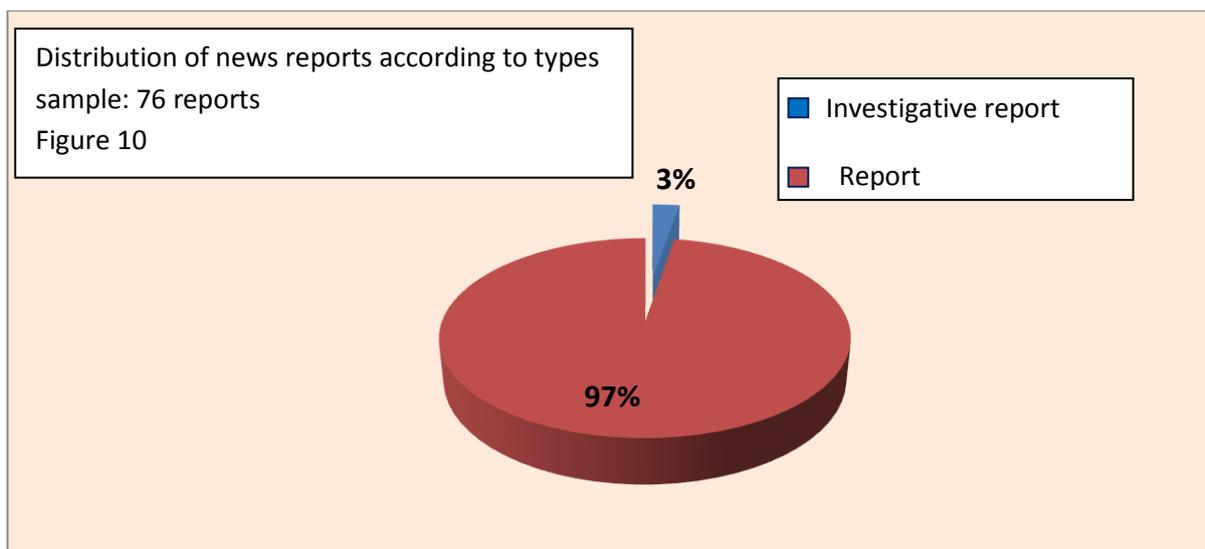
## Second: The Type and Position of Media Coverage

The study focused on 3 types of coverage news reports, investigative reports, and interviews

News reports requires the least efforts to gather and publish information, which is taken usually from varied sources that are sent to the media outlet.

As for the investigative reports, they show the interest of the media outlet in a given subject that wants to elaborate and allocate more coverage space and engage youth groups in these investigations. This is similar with interviews that present youth and realistic witnesses.



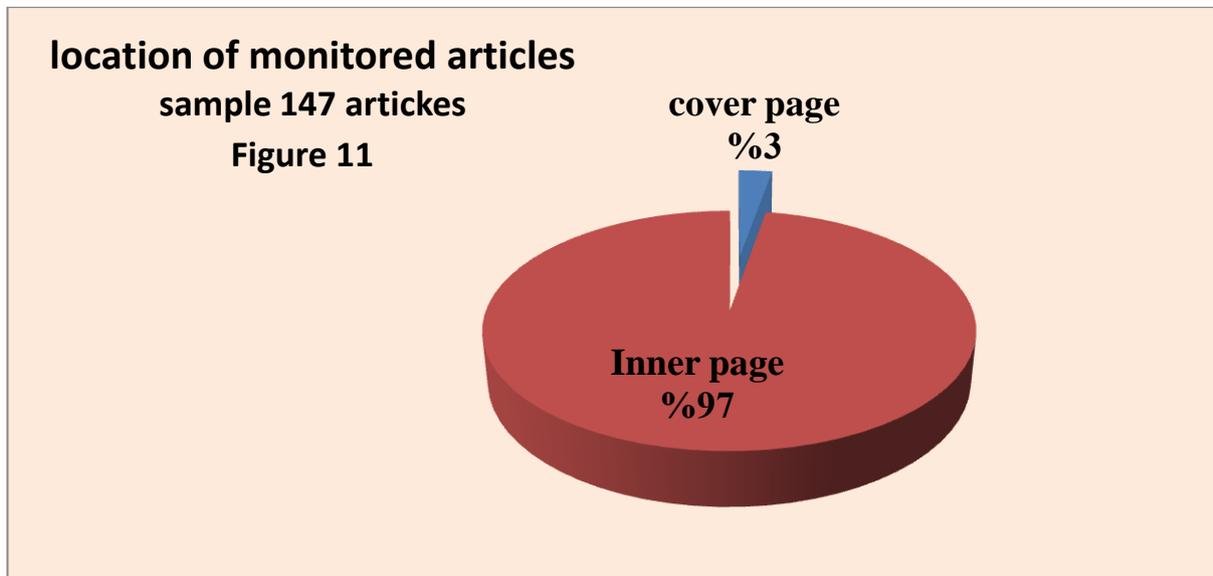


Figures 9 and 10 show that reports had 58.7% of coverage in written media and 97% in TV news bulletins.

90% of these reports are pure news coverage, as for investigative reports, they had 13.6% which is acceptable in relevance to the number of youth readers of printed media in Lebanon (13%). But this percentage is very low in television (3%) in regards of high youth audience (98%).

The absence of interviews is remarkable in these indicators. This element is very important in highlighting the participatory and interactive processes between media and youth, especially that the most efficient media messages are developed in coordination with youths (youth addressing youth), which means “the youth approach” and the concept of “self approach” in youth and realistic languages shows things without filter and approach the media content from the reality of things.

Figure 11 shows that 3% of youth related issues are published on cover page and the others in the inner pages, and this is related to the dominance of conflict, crises and political issues in printed media.

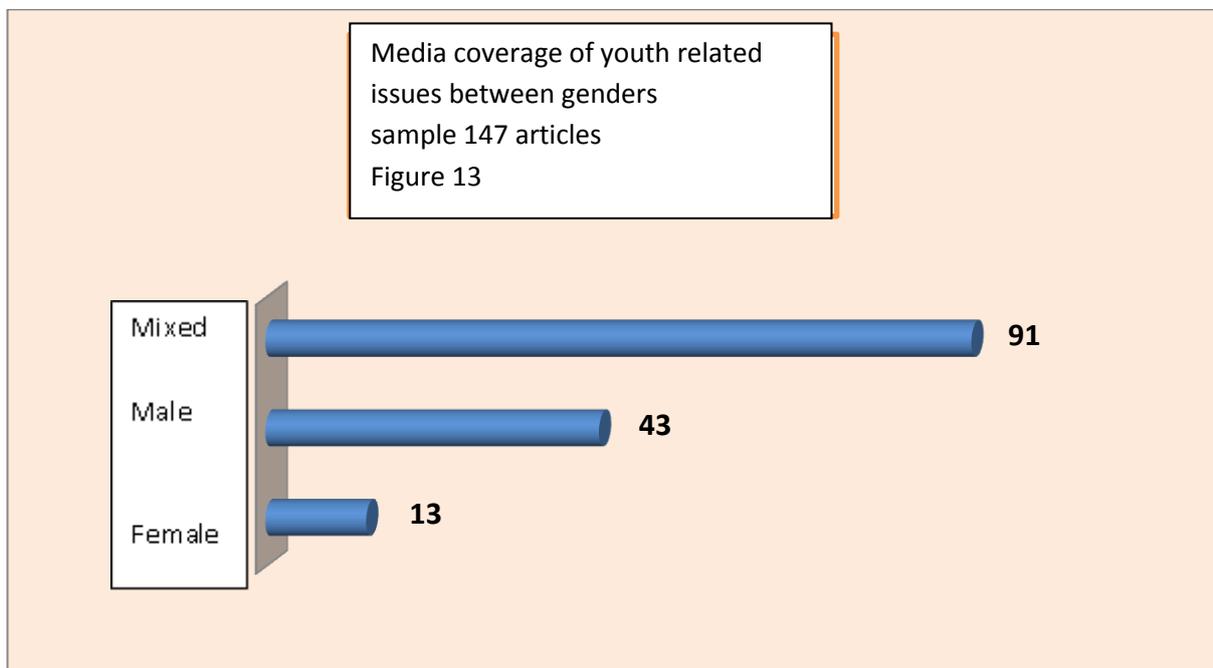
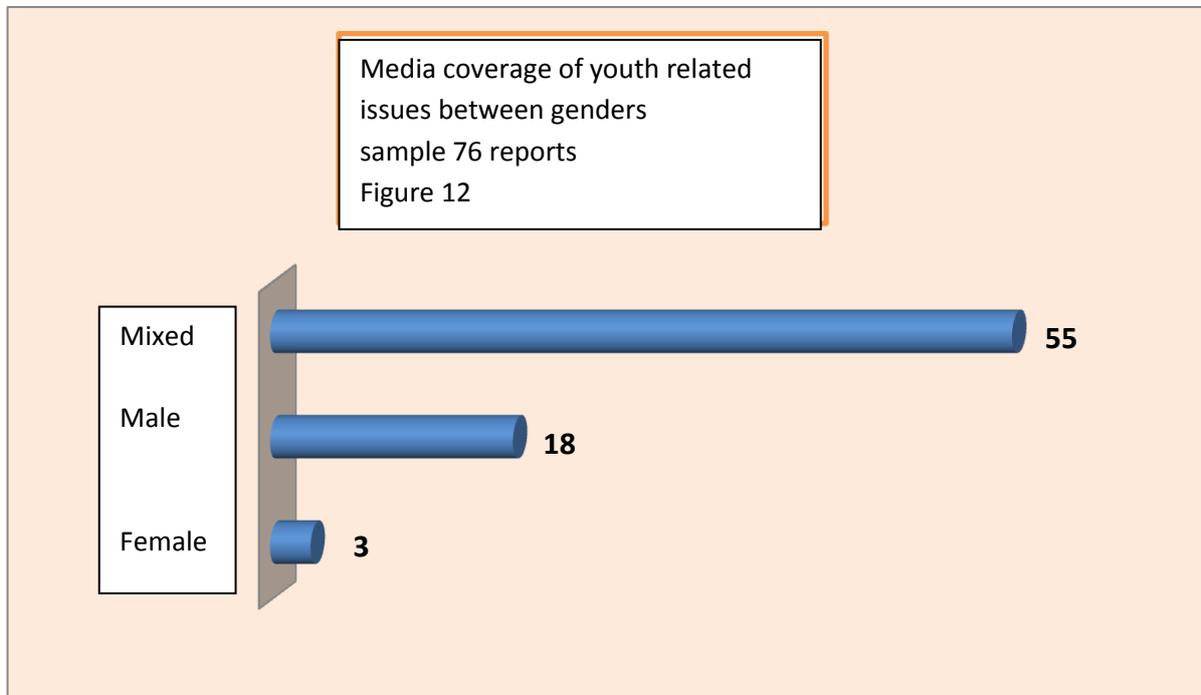


This is similar in news bulletins of monitored televisions, where most of the time the report highlighting youth related issues is allocated during the second half of the news bulletin.

### **Third: Gender Approach of Media Covering Youth Related Issues**

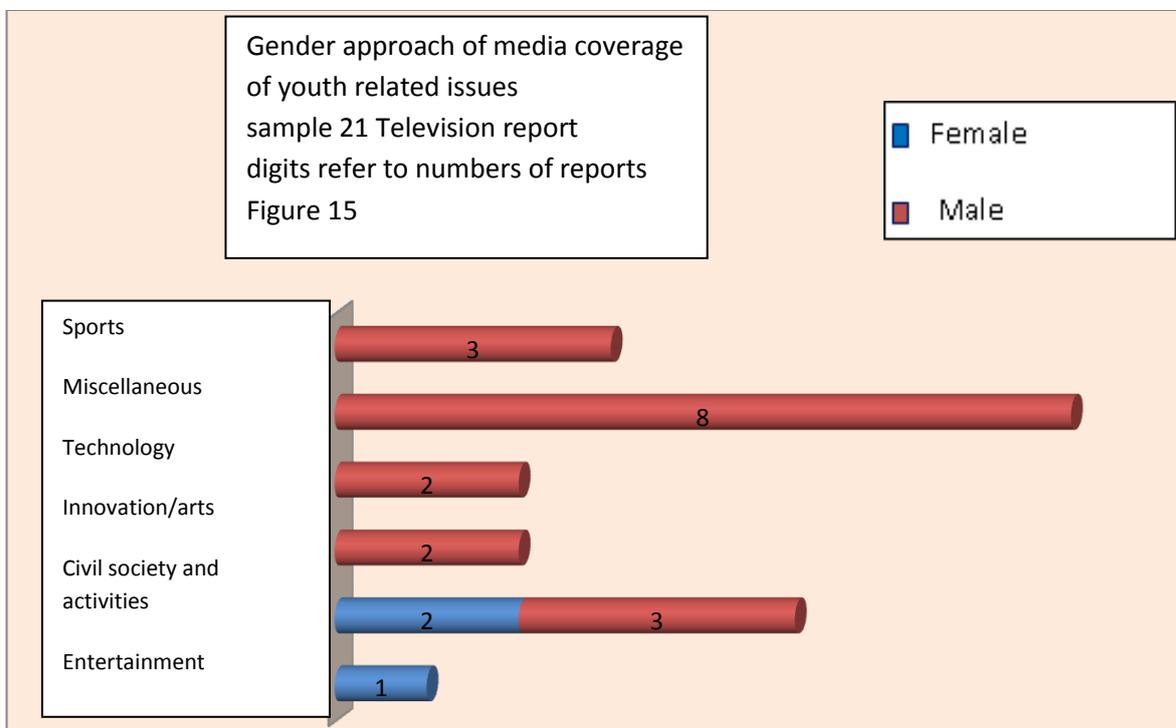
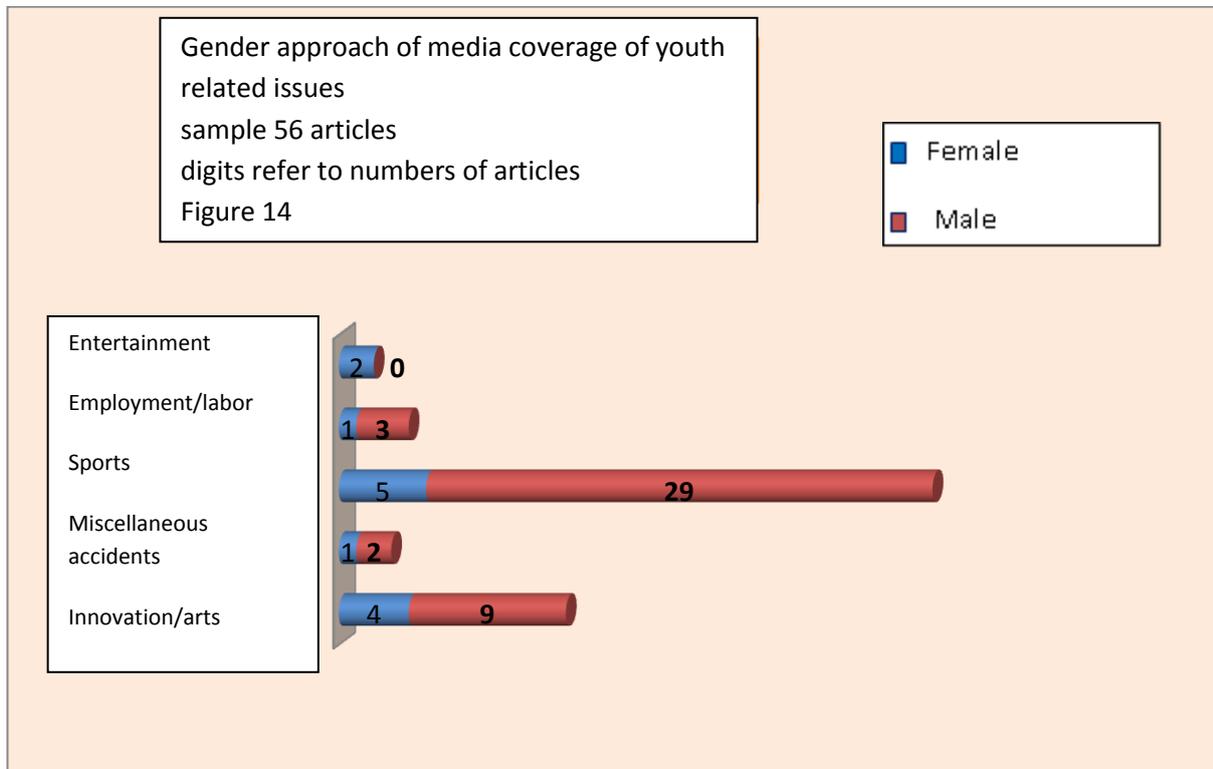
The National Bank statistics for the year 2011 show that the percentage of females is 49.2% of the population, and the statistic conducted by the ministry of social affairs shows that females are 48% and males are 52% of the population.

Both figures 12 and 13 show that the majority of coverage (72%) in printed media and (62%) in television include varied youth related activities.



It is obvious that male youths have higher presences in coverage of printed media (23.6%) and television (29.3%) which contradicts the gender indicators mentioned earlier. The reason behind these numbers is the reluctance of females to engage in lobby and in debating issues

that are considered as taboo in the Lebanese society like sex, cohabitation and drugs...



As for the figures 14 and 15 related to unmixed coverage between genders that consisted of 38% of monitored sample in printed media and 27.6% in television news bulletins, they showed that male youths have higher percentage in sport, innovation, artistic activities, technology, and miscellaneous accidents. There was a significant absence of females in television news bulletins, and the coverage was limited to few civil society activities and entertainment.

The reason behind the males' dominance on sports activities is the growth of males' sports clubs, but the absence of females in the coverage of topics like innovation and arts and technology is not realistic, because reality shows the opposite of what media is covering especially that 64% of students in Lebanese universities are females.

All these information indicate the lack of clear strategies to attract this social category and contain their issues in Lebanese media.

## **Second Part: Youth Message in Coverage**

This part of the study highlights the nature of media message (news, participatory, interactive...). In addition to analyzing the content of the media coverage of monitored outlets according to the 5 main categories:

- Sports, civil and environmental activities
- Social issues
- Initiatives and success stories
- Political and partisan activities
- School, educational, and cultural activities

The study also analyses the editorial styles and focuses on some samples that attracts youth to the media outlet. The study focuses on the general context and content of printed media and news bulletins especially when there are differences and contradictions.

To reach reliable results, the researcher opted reading and watching all coverage according to classifications highlighted earlier, where the orientation and concepts were analyzed to investigate whether they are shown in their professional context.

### **First: The Nature of Message in Printed Media**

The study showed that 70% of media coverage (reports, articles, investigative reports) were published in a negative way which means without any comment, explanation or participation of youths.

Which means the coverage was pure narrative according to professional standards (who, what, where, when, how). This may be because the majority if coverage so about sports activities where the outlet sets the facts and results of the games. But this is not only in

sports activity coverage but also in social and artistic activities coverage. On the other hand, 30% of printed coverage included opinion and political and social feedback.

This overview is not applicable on all monitored media.

Assafir approached the issues of youths among Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Lebanon as elements of the Lebanese society who “work under the minimum wage” and suffer “from bad accommodation” and don’t have “clothes to avoid the cold weather” without presenting any samples from the Lebanese youths who suffer from unemployment and live below poverty line.

Despite the fact that 75% of coverage in Assafir was news reports, the remaining 25% included social messages. They considered that Tripoli film festival 2015 organized by “Tebaneh Youth Council” is an indicator of a restored life that was stolen by extremists, the same message was included when covering the bike race in the city assuring that it reflects the true image of Tripoli.

The youths’ strikes on Labor Day and their demands were highlighted such as unemployment, housing plans and reviewing the Lebanese political structure.

These demands meet the demands of seculars about citizenship, civil marriage, and proper political representation.

Disabled people are also covered demanding integration and refusing discrimination.

Despite the importance of these demands, however, their coverage ends by the end of the event day.

Assafir also highlights in its coverage the challenges that will be faced by Masters Graduates of the sciences department at the Lebanese university and promotes debate and diversity.

As for Annahar that publishes 77% of the youth activities in news reports, however it includes in the remaining 23% some messages especially for the Christian youths.

In its coverage of the activities of Labora organization, the newspaper focuses on encouraging the Christian youths to be employed in the Lebanese states institutions. Similarly in covering the event of Christian youth organization where they highlighted that the youth is the victim of moody leaders and misguided beliefs, and the role of educated youths in promoting educational productions, this was during covering the kamal Haj award at Notre Dame University.

On the contrary of Assafir, Annahar highlighted “support of editorial bloc” while covering the master graduation ceremony in the science faculty at the Lebanese University.

AlMoustaqbal published 80% of its coverage of youth related issues as news reports, and 20% was characterized by focusing on the importance of Almustaqbal party and the late prime minister Rafic Hariri. A series of statements that support the project of the late minister Rafic Hariri was highlighted, like the importance of working towards unity and peace and communication among youths. These statements were given by politicians from the Moustaqbal party who are sponsors of youths’ activities.

On the contrary of what Assafir published, they considered that the bike race in Tripoli is an expression of joy and encouraging the clean transportation, and demanding secure paths for bicycles in Lebanese regions.

AlAkhbar that publish 50% of its coverage as news reports, tends to criticize its political opponents and hold them accountable of the failures.

While covering the incident of the death of a lady at a club in Tripoli, they held the authorities in Tripoli responsible of the incident because of their negligence, and their report also referred to the blue buildings in connotation of AlMoustaqbal party noting that this region includes 3000 wanted people. On the other hand, they called in their article about the man in high heels to refuse the violence against women and warn from the dangers of family violence demanding some solutions.

AlJoumhouria did not allocate many articles to cover youth related issues, however they covered the issues of young ladies and sexual harassments especially by their parents and called for protecting the victims and to apply the law, and criticized the judiciary leniency of such issues

As for Lorient le Jour, it so contrary to the Arabic newspaper, it cannot publish any article without raising through it a social or human cause, its slogan is “searching for youth news every Monday”, thus more than 70% of its coverage included social, cultural, legal and philosophical approaches.

Concerning the emigrants, the newspaper calls them to return to Lebanon and find out about their roots and to be introduced to the Middle East culture.

As for the food of the Lebanese students, the newspaper describes it as “unbalanced” and calls for improving the quality of food, and relates this fact to love experiences, fitness, obesity, and highlights the

relation between stress and the quality of food, and address the parents with guidance on how to behave in this matter.

This media approach is considered as totally in relation to youth related issues and concerns, and can attract them to read the newspaper and to raise their issue through its platform.

There is no article published in Lorient le Jour without a clear message for youths. The sports article about the event at Saint Joseph University highlights the importance of sports for young people, and the incident about the death of the two firemen raised the issue of safety of the buildings, and in other case they stressed the importance of protecting water resources in Lebanon.

As for the article about the victory of Lebanese youths in the “Robotics” competition, the newspaper stressed the efforts of the youths despite power outage and economical, social and religious crisis.

The daily star focused on the interest of the youths and on developing their skills. 28% of their coverage addressed youth education and environmental protection and on the necessity of developing better youth to suit the world, in addition to the issue of mental health and called the authorities to take care of this issue.

### **Photos in media coverage of printed media**

<b>Total</b>	<b>Daily star</b>	<b>Lorient le Jour</b>	<b>AlJoumhouriah</b>	<b>AlAkhbar</b>	<b>Moustaqbal</b>	<b>Annahar</b>	<b>Assafir</b>	<b>newspape</b>
147	7	19	4	8	38	26	45	Number of articles
96	7	17	4	5	22	15	28	With photos

**Figure 16**

Photos are considered major elements of attraction for youth readers, they enrich the content with testimonies and often leads to symmetry

while talking about innovation and successes and leads to creating a sense of empathy and increase the credibility of the content.

If the nature of television reporting requires visual reports, the printed media is obliged to increase the number of photos in their printings.

Figure 16 shows that 35% of the articles were published without photos which made them unattractive for youths, and this is an indicator of lack of professionalism in addressing the youths.

## **Second: The Nature of Messages in Television Reports**

The evening news bulletins are the focal points of media outlets.

Through these platforms the media outlets send their messages and raise the political, social, economical, educational and health issues in addition to weather reports.

The timing of the news bulletins considers the return of family members from their work. As previously mentioned, 98% of youths watch the TV stations, but there is no explanation about the relation between watching the local stations and watching the evening news bulletins.

As for the nature of media messages, the majority of the coverage content is narration of youth activities.

The absence of youth is significant in cases where they can be hosted to provide their feedback.

The common ground of the Lebanese media outlets is that they all provide at the end of the bulletin a report about sports activities; they all use the same style in covering these events and states the results of the games.

Like in printed media, there are many reports about youth activities that include political and social messages where they often mean to criticize the political opponent of the outlet.

MTV for example allocates every evening at the beginning of the bulletin a section entitled “Despite Everything” that highlights the importance of youth return to their land, the youth aspirations, and successful projects and innovations, all this to encourage youth to come back to their country and to stop emigration.

It is significant that 50% of the reports on youth include varied messages. The issue of firemen caused raising another issue about the safety of buildings.

It is similar with the issue of disabled people in Lebanon who have unfulfilled demands (live witnesses). The report also shows the unemployment rates of Lebanese youth that consist of 18% females and 15% males who all university degrees, and warns from the emigration of those experts.

This issue is raised again on the occasion of Labor Day when some youths participated in a strike, and the report calls to develop economical policies to solve the situation.

MTV doesn't miss the opportunity to show a young activist that has been attacked in Dahieh that is related to Hizballah and gives him a space to talk about the cruelty of the attackers.

Aljadeed calls in more than 60% of its reports on the rights of disabled women and women rights, blood donation, awareness against violence, disabled people and the traffic law, awareness against fraud, and the necessity and importance of unions, all these messages are included in a guiding and firm style.

OTV narrates 65% of its coverage about youth activities, and includes with the issue of power plants political messages. Similar things happen with the issue of strike on Labor Day for the bikers and disabled people organized by the communist party.

All the Lebanese media outlets repeats similar titles every evening in their news bulletins about youth concerns, but each includes different messages based on the political orientations of the outlet.

While some outlets disregard completely the Sumo wrestling competition that took place between schools in Dahieh, OTV highlighted the event and explained the importance of this game for youths.

Almanar meets OTV in highlighting this story, and similar cases about disabled people and teachers at the Lebanese university. But Almanar raise these issues with better argumentations and documentation. 70% of its reports include clear political messages that serve the ideological orientations of the media outlet owners.

Futures TV raise similar issues related to labors, disabled people, motorcycle race at Tripoli and the rights of bikers that should be protected by the authorities especially in the traffic law.

AlMoustaqbal gives tome to present the Christian leader Samir Geagea on the occasion if student day at the Lebanese forces office where he was showing political opinion that opposes that of Hizbullah highlighting statements like “remove your hand from Lebanon” and “the army is the one who protects us”....

At the environment day at Achrafieh where the highlight was for the statements of the politicians and the opinion if the youth was absent.

LBC shows its reports in a narrative way bit highlighted significantly the winner if the Said Akel prize and winners of Robotics competition. As it also referred to the topics mentioned earlier like disabled, Tripoli race, firemen, Tripoli film festival.... It presented a report on the importance of explaining the traffic law at all Lebanese

universities; the report also refers to the concerns related to victims of car accidents.

On the other hand, LBC presented a report on Miss Obese that encourages Lebanese girls to reconcile with their bodies.

As for Tele Liban, the national Lebanese TV station, it showed reportages on the same topics, and focused on Tripoli marathon and the statements of Geagea, Labor Day, and sports without any messages for youths.

In conclusions, the political events dominate the news bulletins in all TV stations that promote for the political affiliations of their political leaders.

It is significant that the majority of the topics defined by the study as youth related issues needs to be better tackled by media so it won't cause an aversion for the youths who are tired of being neglected by political, media, economic, and social decision makers.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the monitored data shows that Lebanese media outlets lack appropriate planning and visioning in addressing the youths in the Lebanese society. Lebanese media outlets do not address the aspirations and issues of youths.

The increase of young people in the media outlets doesn't mean an increase in the coverage of youth related issues, and also doesn't mean tackling these issues in a professional way.

Personal interests are still dominant in the Lebanese media outlets over the valuable media content which is restricting the development of these outlets.

- The first indicator that has been concluded is that Lebanese media outlets do not tackle seriously the youth related issues and do not reflect their aspirations and visions.
- The second indicator is that media outlets approach the youth in a traditional stereotypical manner; they only highlight the negative (disaster) and some rare positive cases (successes) without clarifying the case and its causes (constructive knowledge).
- The third conclusion indicates that media outlets are not capable of communicating with the youth audience, since personal interests of these outlets contradicts the youth goals.
- The fourth conclusion indicates the inability of media outlets of using interactive and participatory approaches while dealing with youth related issues.
- The fifth conclusion indicates the lack of sustainable media campaigns, and lack of follow up of youth related issues which doesn't lead to any solutions and the style used in coverage is only temporary and only aims at grasping the attention.

Thus it is necessary to have a media coverage that highlights more the youth issues especially the ones related to their everyday lives to reach what is called a youth media. Realistic approaches in tackling such issues are the most effective especially while highlighting youths' testimonies.

The media outlets and the civil society organizations have to contribute in building a public that supports the youth issues and aspirations, and that work towards supporting media programs and activities that are prepared, directed and presented by youths.

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