Research Article

Analyzing the newspapers' coverage of sustainable development goals in UAE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how United Arab Emirates (UAE) national newspapers reported on sustainable development goals (SDGs) following the country's announcement that it would host COP28 climate change summit in 2023. We analyzed the content of a systematic random sample of news articles published in leading Arabic and English language newspapers over a one-year period. Results indicate that sustainable development issues, particularly related to the environment and economy, were covered widely and mostly positively, and were framed in the context of achievements rather than challenges. We also observed significant differences in SDG reporting between the two newspapers selected for our study. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: sustainable journalism, content analysis, UAE, global south, SDGs, news framing

INTRODUCTION

The media is as a pervasive force that shapes and reshapes various facets of society. Scholars such as Kumar (2015) have underscored the pivotal role of media in fostering societal awareness and consciousness. Digital and print media platforms have a significant role in disseminating information regarding sustainable development goals (SDGs) and in influencing public perceptions. 17 SDGs, introduced as a replacement for millennium development goals by the United Nations (UN) member countries on September 25, 2015, constitute a universal framework aimed at addressing pressing global challenges. The goals aim to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and foster prosperity in a comprehensive sustainable development agenda, and are a collective commitment towards achieving multilateral agreements by the year 2030.

SDGs are a novel framework for comprehensively approaching development. Departing from traditional metrics such as income and life expectancy, the emphasis now lies on the holistic experience of life. This

redefined approach underscores the importance of long-term sustainability, emphasizing that true development must cater to the economic, environmental, and social needs of present and future generations (United Arab Emirates National Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, 2017).

The establishment of United Arab Emirates National Committee on Sustainable Development Goals (2017) highlighted the central significance of SDGs to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) national and international endeavors. UAE's commitment to SDGs is evidenced by its concerted efforts to align the work of all ministries with these global objectives, integrating them into existing development frameworks, including vision 2021 and the centennial plan 2071. In 2016, UAE Cabinet expanded to include portfolios such as happiness, tolerance, the future, and youth, highlighting the country's evolving approach to sustainable development. The appointment of ministers for food security, advanced sciences, and artificial intelligence reflects a strategic focus on addressing contemporary challenges (United Arab Emirates National Committee on Sustainable Development Goals, 2017).

UAE places a high priority on achieving global SDGs and positions itself as a staunch advocate for environmental protection and human well-being. The national agenda emphasizes access to clean energy, affordable food, quality education, healthcare, sustainable economic growth, and healthy ecosystems. The concept of "leaving no-one behind" underscores UAE's commitment to inclusivity and resilience, aiming to steer the world towards a sustainable and equitable future (Ministry of Climate Change & Environment, 2023).

Several specialized councils and committees were instituted under the purview of the National Committee, including the National Operational Strategy for the Sustainable Development Goals, the Communication Strategy Committee aimed at disseminating awareness about SDGs, the Geospatial Data Portal for the Sustainable Development Goals, the Private Sector Advisory Council on Sustainable Development Goals, the Youth Advisory Council on Sustainable Development Goals, and the Global Councils on Sustainable Development Goals. These initiatives were designed to foster sustainable development within the framework of an efficient and effective government, thereby cultivating a prosperous and sustainable economy (Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Center Report, 2018). Assessments, such as Bertelsmann Stiftung Foundation's SDGs index 2018 (SDGs Index, 2018), have shown UAE's progress. The 2018 report indicated that UAE had achieved a performance rate of 69.0% in advancing towards optimal development and was 77th out of 156 countries evaluated. This was an improvement in ranking of 17 places compared to 2017 (SDGs Index, 2018).

Researching how leading UAE national newspapers have report on SDGs is important for a number of reasons. First, it sheds light on the media's role in shaping public discourse and awareness regarding global sustainability in UAE context. With a greater understanding of the contribution of newspaper coverage to public sentiment, we gain crucial insights for policymakers, media professionals, and civil society stakeholders. Understanding reporting patterns and narratives helps identify areas for improving media coverage and advocacy efforts related to sustainable development. It also informs strategic communication and interventions to enhance public engagement with SDGs. The significance of this research, therefore, lies in its potential to inform policy formulation, media practices, and public engagement strategies aimed at advancing SDGs both locally and globally.

United Arab Emirates Media & Sustainable Development

UAE government has recognized its role as a regional media hub and acknowledged that that the press and media industry has a part to play in communicating the developmental strides UAE has made over the past three decades across international sectors such as investment, economics, social welfare, technology, and innovation (Suwaid & Taya, 2016).

Emirati print media landscape reflects the profound developmental and transformative changes witnessed in the country, with editorial boards dedicating substantial coverage to local issues often referred to as "Nation." However, in shaping public opinion, print press outlets face challenges from the ascendancy of social media platforms (Mansoori, 2017).

Despite the burgeoning interest in SDGs globally, research on SDGs in the Middle East, including UAE, remains scarce within the domain of media studies (Golan, 2013). To date, media research in UAE has predominantly focused on topics such as the history of media and journalism, environmental journalism, professionalism in journalism, journalism management, and the impact of social media on institutional

communication and governmental communication (Darwish, 2017; Jenaibi, 2015; Jenaibi & Mansoori, 2022; Kirat, 2007, 2012; Mansoori, 2017; Nuaimi, 2010; Rashid, 1999; Wiest & Eltantawi, 2012).

Given the dearth of research on the role of journalism in fostering public awareness of critical issues such as sustainable development, coupled with UAE government's efforts to promote sustainable development through legislative and administrative measures, it has become imperative to explore the extent to which sustainable development topics feature in the daily news coverage of UAE newspapers. Our study aimed to bridge this research gap by investigating whether the national press aligned with government communication efforts and prioritized sustainable development issues in its daily reporting practices.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it addresses a gap in Arab literature regarding journalism practices and coverage of critical issues such as sustainable development. Second, it provides timely insights, post-COVID-19, by analyzing media content in a prosperous nation in a historically turbulent region. Third, the results can inform UAE government decision-makers about media responsiveness to national agenda items. Lastly, this study offers valuable feedback to editorial boards on aligning media coverage with state priorities and enhancing public awareness of global issues.

Political Economy of Media in United Arab Emirates

McChesney's (2000) scholarly viewpoint regarding the political economy in media studies is one of the interplay among economic frameworks, political authority, and media establishments. He explored the pervasive influence exerted by capitalist economic structures on the media landscape, often to the detriment of democratic ideals and the broader public interest. Through his seminal work "Rich media, poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times," McChesney (2000) delineated how the commercialization of media undermined democratic processes, principally by stifling diversity of voices, constricting political discourse, and perpetuating disparities in access to information.

McQuail and Deuze (2020) similarly focused on the economic dynamics that underpin media as a commodity. They highlighted the pivotal role of the "audience" as the primary commodity within this framework, emphasizing its commodification for advertising purposes. McChesney's (2008) theoretical framework elucidates the intricate regulatory and political pressures underpinning media ownership in UAE. Within this context, he contended that private ownership, exemplified by entities such as Gulf News, afforded a greater degree of responsiveness to market exigencies and audience preferences. Despite government oversight, private media entities can tailor content to optimize readership and advertising revenue, thereby facilitating a more diverse spectrum of coverage, within the confines of regulatory constraints and censorship directives. Expanding on the regional applicability of these concepts, Allam (2024) highlighted the broader political economy of media prevalent in Arab states, exemplified by the case of the Al-Ittihad Newspaper. Government-controlled media outlets, such as Al-Ittihad, are predominantly instruments for disseminating state-endorsed narratives, including those aligned with SDGs. Conversely, privately-owned media entities, like Gulf News, navigate a dual imperative of regulatory compliance and market dynamics, endeavoring to engage audiences while advancing SDGs.

In summary, McChesney's (2008) political economy framework sheds light on nuanced interplay between media ownership, regulatory environments, and public discourse in UAE and Arab region. Government influence pervades both government-owned and privately-owned media entities, albeit with varying degrees of editorial autonomy. Both sectors play integral roles in advancing national objectives, including sustainable development, through their dissemination of information and engagement with diverse audiences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental issues have garnered increased attention in the Arab world in recent years. Despite this, coverage by the Arabic media remains superficial, albeit with a predominantly positive tone. Key concepts such as environmental protection, climate change, and sustainable development feature prominently in Arabic media discourse. However, a clear strategic framework for environmental coverage is lacking, even as governmental entities establish ministries, agencies, and associations dedicated to environmental concerns and communication (Suwaid & Taya, 2016).

Oueiss and El-Khoury (2023) examined how the Global Compact Network Lebanon (GCNL) uses online communication to engage stakeholders around UN's SDGs. The researchers focused on the impact of GCNL's Instagram posts on stakeholders' company reputation, action emulation, trust in GCNL, and online cooperation. Using framing and social capital theories, the study assessed GCNL's campaigns and their influence on public discourse, trust, and reputation. Results revealed that stakeholders appreciated the comprehensive and inclusive nature of SDG communications, with a high level of trust (95.8%) in GCNL. Credibility was identified as crucial for establishing trust, with over half (54.2%) considering GCNL a reputable international network.

Pindiga and Sa'ad Abdullahi (2021) examined how Nigerian Press covered SDGs and the obstacles journalists faced in effectively reporting on them. They analyzed the content in SDG coverage in two national newspapers, and identified four predominant news frames: problem frame, solution frame, action frame, and responsibility frame. Through semi-structured interviews, the authors also discovered that journalists often lacked a comprehensive understanding of SDGs and faced challenging working conditions, which limited the depth of SDG reporting. The study concluded that the Nigerian press played a vital role in the country's efforts to achieve SDGs, emphasizing the need for improved journalistic engagement and understanding of SDGs.

Talabi et al. (2020) used content analysis to investigate the prominence and perspective of reporting on SDGs in four Nigerian national newspapers. The study surveyed a population of 2,188 editions published from January 2016 to June 2017, with a sample size of 1,152 selected through simple random sampling. They discovered a tendency among Nigerian newspapers to depict SDG campaigns positively, with a consistent bias towards favorable angles in the coverage across the four newspapers. They observed that coverage of SDGs was predominantly in news stories, often relegated to inside sections of the newspapers.

Dauada and Hasan (2018) explored how Malaysian online news media depicted SDGs. Through thematic analysis, they examined 16 English language articles on SDGs from six major Malaysian news sites. Their analysis identified five main themes: economy, education, environment, infrastructure, and poverty. Interestingly, while most outlets served as societal watchdogs, only alternative platforms like Free Malaysia Today and Malaysiakini offered a balanced perspective by addressing both positive and negative development aspects. These diverse editorial viewpoints contributed to a more nuanced discussion on sustainable development efforts.

Studies assessing environmental coverage in Emirati and other Arabian Gulf countries have revealed notable gaps and shortcomings. For instance, Mahmoud (2008) conducted an analysis across 15 Arab countries, revealing that less than 10.0% of Arabic media outlets assigned dedicated editors for environmental affairs and sustainable development. Similarly, studies examining Bahraini newspapers found that coverage often diverged from the country's environmental realities, with a significant portion of content failing to reflect pertinent issues (Abdul Aziz, 2003; Ajwa, 2004).

In UAE, Yassin (2014) found that local environmental issues received greater attention in newspapers compared to international and regional concerns. However, the representation of SDGs and broader sustainability concepts in Emirati newspapers appears insufficient, failing to align adequately with the government's international commitments and interests (Mahmoud, 2008). Existing literature highlights a predominance of news-based reporting on environmental issues in the national UAE press, with limited interpretative analysis (Yassin, 2014). This media approach overlooks the potential for the deeper insights and contextual understanding offered by interpretative reporting methods (Nilsson et al., 2016; Palen, 1999). It is evident that research pertaining to sustainability journalism within the Arab region is comparatively scarce and outdated in comparison to studies conducted elsewhere.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We based our research on media framing theory, an approach extensively used by editors, gatekeepers, and journalists to shape readers' perceptions and interpretations of specific issues (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 2000). Framing involves the deliberate selection of certain attributes or aspects of an issue for inclusion in media coverage, while ignoring or downplaying others, thereby directing the reader's attention to particular facets of published events (McCombs et al., 1997). This process, as defined by Scheufele (2000), revolves

around conveying the salience of attributes of issues, while Entman (2004) characterizes framing as selection and highlighting of facets of events or issues to promote specific interpretations, evaluations, and solutions.

Framing theory underscores the importance of recognizing how messages are created, designed, and presented by journalists to construct a coherent understanding of the world, using the verbal and visual resources available to them (Tankard, 2001). Scholars have posited that the presentation of information significantly influences comprehension and interpretation of messages (Baran & Davis, 2010). Newspapers strategically prioritize certain aspects of messages over others through framing, either by accentuating inclusion of specific parts of the message or by neglecting or downplaying (exclusion) other aspects of events. Frames serve to assist individuals in prioritizing, simplifying, categorizing, evaluating, and interpreting events (Norris et al., 2003).

In the context of this study, media framing theory sheds light on the predominant frames used in reporting on SDGs in UAE national newspapers, as well as the tone or inclination around SDG coverage that may influence public perceptions and understanding of SDGs. This study undertook an examination of the agenda-setting function of national Emirati newspapers by scrutinizing the content of published news stories pertaining to SDGs. Content analysis, as defined by Berelson (1952), is a research technique characterized by an objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.

Research Question

Which frames are most frequently used by the national UAE press when reporting on SDGs?

MATERIALS & METHODS

Over two-thirds (69.0%) of UAE populace is made up of expatriates of more than 200 non-Arab nationalities working in various professional, educational, and investment occupations, so UAE has a broad media landscape with media outlets catering for speakers of diverse languages. Our study encompassed all daily printed newspapers available in both Arabic and English languages within UAE. At the time of the study, UAE had 13 daily newspapers, with eight issued in Arabic and five in English. From these, we selected two newspapers to with extensive readership and: Al-Ittihad in Arabic and Gulf News in English. Al-Ittihad was established in 1969 and is headquartered in Abu Dhabi. It has symbolic significance in that it was founded concurrently with the announcement of UAE's unification into a federal state. It is positioned as the newspaper closest to decision-making echelons of the Emirates. Al-Ittihad reflects state policies and exerts considerable influence on public discourse. Al-Ittihad has 48 pages, predominantly focusing on national news. There are sections for cultural, business, and sports-related content, alongside perspectives on various global issues.

Gulf News was founded in 1978 and is based in Dubai. It was UAE's first English language newspaper and has a widespread readership across the region. This publication comprises a diverse array of content with 16 colored pages in addition to the front page. The newspaper allocates two pages for editorial opinion, alongside dedicated sections for Pakistani and Indian affairs. Four pages are dedicated to covering local topics in UAE, and there are also sections covering business and sports. The remaining pages feature world news updates, entertainment, celebrity news, and crossword puzzles.

The selection of these two newspapers aimed to ensure comprehensive coverage of both Arabic and English language readerships, thereby facilitating a nuanced analysis of the agenda-setting function across linguistic demographics within UAE. We excluded news websites without physical print editions, such as Emirates News Agency and Al Ain News, as well as magazines like Majed and Zahrat Al Khaleej. This decision aimed to maintain consistency in the scope and methodology of the study while ensuring a focused examination of print media content within UAE.

Both newspapers use their news portals and social media platforms to publish identical news content. Gulf News has a substantial online presence, with 1.5 million followers on X, 3.3 million on Facebook, 453,000 on YouTube, and 866,000 on Instagram. Al-Ittihad has 1.2 million followers on X, 580,000 on Instagram, and 409,000 on Facebook.

The analysis period for this study encompassed all written articles published in Al-Ittihad and Gulf News from November 7, 2021, to November 3, 2022. January 2022 was the month with the highest frequency of

articles on sustainable development issues, comprising 36 articles (13.0% of all articles). This was followed by June 2022 (35 articles, 12.4%), and November 2021 (32 articles, 11.3%). In contrast, April 2022 recorded the lowest number of published news articles on sustainable development issues with 12 articles (4.2%), followed by October 2022 (13 articles, 4.6%. This timeframe aligned with the announcement made by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, President of UAE, regarding the country's hosting of COP 28 in Dubai in 2023.

We used systematic random sampling to select articles from both newspapers, ensuring equitable representation across all days of the week and months throughout the sampling period. The study commenced its sampling from the first Sunday of November 2021 and continued by evenly distributing selections across the subsequent weeks. Consequently, the sample encompassed a total of 46 days, constituting approximately 13.0% of the study's overall duration. However, one issue from Al-Ittihad and 13 issues from Gulf News did not contain any news related to SDGs and climate change.

The research team used a variety of keywords to gather samples from the respective websites of each newspaper, focusing on terms such as climate change, environment, and sustainable development. During the study period, 283 pieces related to SDGs and climate change were identified across various sections of the newspapers: 204 (72.0%) were sourced from Al-Ittihad, while 79 (28.0%) were sourced from Gulf News. All articles published during the specified timeframe were incorporated into the sample for analysis, encompassing a range of formats including editorials, opinion pieces, features, reports, and standard news stories. The news story served as the primary unit of analysis, with letters addressed to the editor excluded from consideration.

This study analyzed the following: SDG themes, SDG framing, and main tone.

SDG themes refer to the primary subject matter in each narrative, covering discussions on achievements or challenges related exclusively to the 17 SDGs, as well as local and international efforts partially or wholly related to projects, initiatives, conferences, plans, strategies, meetings, and indicators of sustainable development. To facilitate this analysis, we adopted the measurement framework proposed by Bilal (2017), which categorized 17 SDGs into five overarching themes: economic goals, health, education, environmental concerns, and social issues.

Sustainable Development Goal Frames

Three main frames were developed for this study. The achievements frame emphasized the efforts made by UAE to achieve SDGs across various sectors and levels. The challenge frame focused on obstacles and issues encountered in achieving these goals across sectors and levels. The awareness frame highlighted media initiatives by UAE authorities aimed at enhancing reader awareness of sustainable development issues and emphasizing the societal importance of sustainable development concepts, without explicitly addressing achievements or challenges.

The tone refers to the prevailing inclination of the author, ranging from positive or supportive stances to negative or neutral positions.

Validity, Reliability, & Statistical Measures

To measure the validity of the study tool, it was assessed by faculty members in media, sociology, and education programs, and corrections were made based on their feedback. Intercoder reliability was tested by using the Holsti index. Agreements between coders was high for SDG and frames (1.00), and also for tone (.88). We used the statistical package for the social and human sciences software, and percentages and frequencies were calculated after collecting and reviewing the data. A Chi-square test was used to test the hypotheses and determine significant differences between the tested variables.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The findings of our study revealed that newspapers in UAE predominantly portrayed news stories about sustainable development issues in a positive light. Positive articles accounted for the majority (248 articles, 88.0%) of analyzed content. Approximately one-fifth (32 articles, 11.0%) depicted sustainability issues in a negative light, and three articles (1.0%) adopted a neutral stance. Data suggests Gulf News exhibited a higher propensity for negative portrayal of SDG topics (19 articles, 24.0%) compared to Al-Ittihad (13 articles, 6.0%).

Table 1. Main frames in reporting on SDGs in UAE newspapers

Frame	Al-Ittihad	Gulf News	Total
Achievements frame	176 (86.0%)	41 (52.0%)	217 (77.0%)
Challenges frame	16 (8.0%)	20 (25.0%)	36 (13.0%)
Awareness frame	12 (6.0%)	18 (23.0%)	30 (11.0%)
Total	204	79	283 (100%)

Note. $**\chi^2(2)=37.792$ & $p<0.001$

In terms of SDG themes, environmental issues emerged as the most frequently addressed topic, with half of the total articles (142 articles, 50.0%) focusing on this area. Business-related subjects were the second most prevalent theme (76 articles, 27.0%), followed by social issues (17 articles, 6.0%). Education-related issues garnered the least attention in reporting (11 articles, 4.0%), with social issues trailing slightly behind (19 articles, 7.0%). This contradicted previous findings by Abdul Aziz (2003) and Mahmoud (2008), which suggested that Arabic newspapers had limited coverage of environmental issues.

Sustainable Development Goal Frames

Our study found that the selected newspapers presented sustainable development issues largely within the achievements frame (217, 77.0%), followed by the challenges frame (36, 13.0%), and finally the awareness frame (30, 11.0%). At individual level, Chi-square tests indicated that there were significant differences between the two newspapers and frames they used to present SDG topics ($\chi^2[2]=37.792$, $p<0.001$) (**Table 1**).

The analysis reveals a notable discrepancy in the framing of SDGs between Al-Ittihad and Gulf News. Al-Ittihad predominantly used the achievements frame in presenting SDGs (176, 86.0%), whereas Gulf News exhibited a greater propensity for the challenges frame (20, 25.0%). Gulf News displayed a higher inclination towards the awareness frame compared to Al-Ittihad in its coverage of SDGs.

Our qualitative content analysis indicated that the achievements frame emerged as the dominant framing approach in UAE national newspapers, while the challenges frame was less frequently used. This finding diverges from Mahmoud's (2008) study, which suggested a lack of priority for environmental affairs and sustainable development in Arabic media coverage, with a dearth of focus on achievements.

The prevalence of achievements frames in news reporting can be attributed to UAE's demonstrable success in implementing robust plans, initiatives, and strategies aimed at achieving sustainable development indicators. This is underscored by UAE's prominent position in international reports assessing sustainable development indicators, reflecting its proactive stance in addressing global sustainability challenges.

Throughout the study period, UAE announced a series of projects, initiatives, and events aligned with its commitment to sustainable development objectives, thereby reinforcing the prominence of the achievements frame in media coverage. Examples of these achievements include the launch of a guide for developing sustainable communities, the modernization of 40 buildings, collaborative efforts by entities such as Mubadala Investment Company and utilities company Engie to develop solutions for sustainable mobility, the introduction of the Road to COP28 program by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, the establishment of Sustainable Projects Laboratory at Abu Dhabi University, the initiation of four national initiatives aimed at ensuring water resource sustainability, substantial investments totaling $40 billion in clean energy ventures in Abu Dhabi, a significant increase in investments in climate-smart agriculture to $1 billion, the launch of the gender balance strategy, and an annual conference hosted by Emirates Green Buildings Council.

Regarding the challenges frame, predominantly employed by Gulf News, a substantial portion of news stories within this frame centered on events beyond the borders of UAE, accounting for 37.0% of the total. Coverage often highlighted events such as the heatwaves affecting Europe and the floods that ravaged regions of India and Pakistan during the analysis period within the context of climate change-induced alterations in water balance and river flow within Europe. Coverage also encapsulated climate activists' calls for a realignment of blame concerning global warming,

Framing Strategy & Political Economy

From a political economy perspective, the differences between the two newspapers may be explained by various factors. First, the ownership structure and editorial priorities of each newspaper may influence their

framing choices. Al-Ittihad, a government-owned publication, may align its framing with official narratives and policy objectives, thus emphasizing achievements to promote UAE's image as a leader in sustainable development. Gulf News, a privately owned newspaper, may adopt a more critical stance, highlighting challenges to fulfill its journalistic responsibility of providing diverse perspectives and holding power to account. The commercial interests and target audience of each newspaper may also shape their framing strategies. Gulf News, catering to a broader readership base, may prioritize highlighting challenges to engage a more diverse audience and stimulate public discourse on sustainability issues. In contrast, Al-Ittihad, with its government affiliation, may prioritize projecting a positive image of UAE's sustainability efforts to bolster national pride and international reputation.

Key points emerge around newspaper coverage of SDGs in motivating contributions from UAE's expatriate population, The universal relevance of SDGs fosters expatriates' communal responsibility, with tailored coverage potentially increasing engagement. However, expatriate interest may vary based on awareness, culture, and socio-economic status. Innovative storytelling and community engagement can deepen expatriates' involvement in UAE's sustainable development agenda.

CONCLUSIONS

The national Arabic and English-language press in UAE have demonstrated a commitment to integrating sustainable development issues into their journalistic practices, establishing these as prominent topics of interest in their news reporting. During the study period, local and international events may well have competed for attention in newspaper coverage. These included major events such as the one-year anniversary of the Russian war on Ukraine, the death of the UK's Queen Elizabeth II, the continuing fall-out of the coronavirus pandemic, the demise of UAE President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed, and the election of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed to UAE presidency, alongside Houthi terrorist attacks on civilian infrastructure in Abu Dhabi. Despite this, sustainable development issues were consistently covered in UAE newspapers. This may suggest that the newspapers are committed to highlighting sustainable development concerns, even amidst challenging circumstances and tumultuous times.

A substantial portion of the events and initiatives highlighted by the press regarding sustainable development matters were organized, facilitated, and supported by Ministry of Climate Change and Environment (2023). The Ministry's remit is to strengthen national endeavors in addressing climate change concerns, safeguarding the nation's interests internationally, and mitigating the adverse impacts on environmental and economic systems domestically. This is achieved through preventive measures, protocols, and policies aimed at mitigating climate-related risks and fostering resilience to its effects at the local level. Given the official sponsorship of sustainable development initiatives by the Ministry, it was not uncommon for the voices cited in press coverage to be those of government officials, policymakers, and authoritative figures within the government. Consequently, the emphasis on achievement and success frames in the narratives attributed to these official sources is understandable, reflecting the government's efforts to promote its accomplishments in sustainable development. We acknowledge that this study has several limitations. First, findings cannot be generalized to other time periods beyond our study parameters, as outcomes are contingent on prevailing events. The focus on two national newspapers, Al-Ittihad and Gulf News, may not fully capture the diversity of media representation and framing strategies across the broader landscape of UAE newspapers. Exploring a more diverse array of newspapers could offer a more comprehensive understanding of media framing dynamics regarding SDGs.

In light of these limitations, future research could adopt longitudinal designs to capture trends in media framing and explore diverse newspapers representing a spectrum of ownership models and editorial perspectives. Using mixed-method approaches that integrate qualitative and quantitative analyses could offer richer insights into complexities of media framing processes and their implications for public discourse and policy formulation. Future research could explore how media worldwide use the COP28 hashtag, comparing regional and international newspaper coverage of sustainable development issues in COP27 and COP28 host countries, and delving into the profiles and capabilities of journalists reporting on environmental topics. Addressing these limitations would enhance the robustness and generalizability of findings, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of media representations of SDGs and their socio-political ramifications.

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