

## Open Strike of Public-School Teachers during the 2022–23 Academic Year Coverage: An Analytical Study of Al-Akhbar Online Newspaper

ZEINA MOUSSA CHEET\*  
*Lebanese University, Lebanon*

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the journalistic framing of the open strike of public-school teachers in Lebanon, taking the online Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar and its coverage of the strike during the 2022–2023 academic year as a case study. Existing studies primarily focused on media coverage of crises, with most addressing political, economic, and social crises, while comparatively little attention is given to educational crises. Moreover, only a limited number of studies have explored the coverage of online platforms affiliated with national newspapers, particularly those that highlight dominant news frames. Addressing these gaps, this study contributes by shedding light on the media representation of an educational crisis in Lebanon. This study analyzes a sample of journalistic materials published on the Al-Akhbar's website during the period of the strike in the 2022–23 academic year, to identify the newspaper's discourse on the strike. By adopting a quantitative research strategy, the study employs content analysis as its methodological tool. The results show that Al-Akhbar's online coverage of the open strike of public-school teachers was extensive, aligned with teachers and their demands, and characterized by an escalatory and critical tone toward the authorities and donor institutions. Thus, its coverage illustrates the media's role as an active participant in shaping events, rather than merely reporting them.

**Keywords:** *Al-Akhbar newspaper, public schools teachers strike, framing, content analysis, media's role.*

### INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a cornerstone for both individual empowerment and collective progress. It constitutes the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that enable individuals to “develop critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, and communication skills, which are essential for personal and professional growth” (Verma et al., 2023). The impact of this process extends beyond the individual to shape family, community, and societal structures. Education is not only instrumental in shaping human capital but also in driving national development. The relationship between education and development is reciprocal: while education facilitates economic and social progress, development in turn improves education and its quality (Ashida, 2022).

In Lebanon, however, the education sector has long been marked by fragility. The roots of the current crisis can be traced back to the aftermath of the civil war, which left enduring structural weaknesses in the public system (Khalaf & Abdel Razek, 2020). Since 2019, successive crises have compounded these vulnerabilities: the financial collapse and widespread protests, the outbreak of COVID-19, the devastating Beirut Port explosion in 2020, and the fuel crisis in 2021 (Hammoud & Shuayb, 2021; Tabar, 2024). The 2022–2023 academic year represented a breaking point. Public schools remained closed for more than three months and were operational for fewer

\*Corresponding author: [zeinamoussasheet@gmail.com](mailto:zeinamoussasheet@gmail.com)

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than 50 instructional days in total (Abuelgasim & Chehayeb, 2023). Teachers launched an open-ended strike to protest the collapse of their wages under the rapid depreciation of the Lebanese pound (Abuelgasim & Chehayeb, 2023).

The gravity of the situation is reflected in alarming international indicators. The World Bank's concept of "learning poverty" describes the percentage of 10-year-olds unable to read and comprehend a simple text, even while enrolled in school. In Lebanon, the crisis extends further: not only are many children failing to acquire basic literacy, but a growing number are unable to attend school at all. According to a report published by UNICEF (2023), 15 percent of households discontinued their children's education, while 52 percent reduced their spending on schooling compared with the previous year. Entering its fourth consecutive year, the economic crisis has placed disproportionate pressure on public-school students (Future on hold, 2023). During 2022–23, striking teachers in Lebanon demanded salary adjustments and overdue payments, yet the system delivered fewer than 110 teaching days, with some schools recording fewer than 40 (Shaheen et al., 2024). This escalation ushered Lebanon into another year of educational collapse (Gebeily, 2022), with teachers immobilized by strikes, a government unable to secure funding (Abuelgasim & Chehayeb, 2023), and families constrained by soaring private tuition costs (Khurma, 2023). The ultimate victims of this crisis are children: nearly one million were forced out of school altogether (Khurma, 2023).

Despite extensive media coverage of crises in general, scholarly research examining the media representation of educational crises remains limited, especially in the Arab region. Thus, this study seeks to fill a gap by examining the journalistic frames employed in covering the open strike of public-school teachers in Lebanon during the 2022–23 academic year. The focus is on the online platform of Al-Akhbar newspaper, a major Lebanese daily, which provides a valuable case for understanding how a national newspaper portrays educational crises. According to Nassar (2019), Al-Akhbar newspaper, set apart from other Lebanese newspapers by its distinctive format, content, and editorial approaches, represents one of the newer publications that has managed to sustain itself while many long-standing newspapers have shut down or faced sharp declines in circulation. The study pursues several objectives:

- (1) To assess the degree of attention given by Al-Akhbar's website to the strike.
- (2) To identify the main frames employed in its coverage.
- (3) To analyze the overall orientation of the coverage and its underlying discourse.
- (4) To contribute to the broader literature on crisis reporting on national newspaper websites.
- (5) To propose an analytical model that may guide future evaluations of media performance in similar contexts.

Accordingly, the central question is, how did Al-Akhbar, through its online platform, cover the open strike of public-school teachers in Lebanon?

The significance of this study lies in its effort to reveal the performance of Al-Akhbar's online platform in covering one of Lebanon's most pressing educational crises. It highlights the importance of examining such coverage not only for its academic contribution to media studies but also for its practical implications. By unpacking the frames through which the crisis was presented, this study aims to inform strategies that can improve the responsiveness of Lebanese newspapers in their digital coverage of crises. In particular, the study underscores the need for a

more balanced, nuanced, and analytically grounded treatment of education-related crises, given their centrality to social stability and long-term national development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review examines existing scholarship on online journalism and its role in crisis coverage, with a particular focus on educational crises in the Arab world. It highlights the ethical and professional responsibilities of journalists, the phases of crisis reporting, and the use of framing to shape public perception. Additionally, the review explores previous studies on media coverage of teacher strikes and educational challenges, identifying gaps in the Lebanese context that this study aims to address.

### *a. Online Journalism and Its Role in Crisis Coverage*

In a world characterized by the increasing frequency and diversity of crises, responding effectively requires both genuine political will and organized efforts. A crisis may be defined as “an unexpected and uncertain situation characterized by tension and insecurity, which may affect individuals, families, businesses, organizations, communities, institutions, or even the international environment” (Nteka, 2021, p. 64). “Moments of crisis” are thus moments in which individuals strategically and purposefully confront the unexpected and the uncontrollable, often in an intercultural online context (Peng & Dervin, 2022, p. 2).

Media coverage has a profound impact on how the public perceives and responds to crises (Spinde et al., 2021). According to a report published by UNESCO (2022), journalism represents a moral public service: it provides citizens with trustworthy, fact-based information, while also functioning as an independent watchdog and agenda setter (Journalism as a Public Good, 2022). When crises or disasters occur, media outlets aim to lift audiences from a state of ignorance and fear by providing timely information. In such cases, journalists provide the public with accurate information (Mellado & Hallin, 2014). This places an ethical responsibility on journalists to uphold the highest professional standards as they provide citizens with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions about their lives and communities.

Ghoneim (2023) outlines three phases through which media coverage of crises typically unfolds, each of which involves a distinct role for online journalism:

- (1) Information Dissemination Phase: The press presents a comprehensive overview of the crisis (its causes, actors, and dynamics) while implicitly shaping perspectives through the selection, organization, and framing of information.
- (2) Interpretation and Analysis Phase: At this stage, coverage emphasizes analytical depth, investigating the roots of the crisis, comparing it to similar events, and showcasing the positions of stakeholders and policymakers, with a strong focus on interpretation, critique, and contextualization.
- (3) Preventive Phase: Beyond description and analysis, online journalism is expected to highlight preventive strategies and offer guidance on how societies might handle similar crises in the future (p.359).

*b. Al-Akhbar Newspaper*

In practice, discourse analysis of Al-Akhbar highlights journalistic practices that typically reflect its editorial agenda as a leftist newspaper (El Zein, 2020). Al-Akhbar is a Lebanese daily that publishes its content on its online platform <https://www.al-akhbar.com/>. According to the newspaper's official website (Al-Akhbar, n.d.), the first issue was published on August 14, 2006, thirty-three days after the Israeli war on Lebanon. Politically, the newspaper leans to the left and "belongs to a camp that rejects hegemony". Professionally, "the newspaper relies on young journalists who contribute to producing a modern daily paper that breaks away from the traditional approach to journalism". It gives high priority to in-depth investigative reports related to issues of daily life and society, without limiting these investigations to the political sphere.

*c. Previous Studies*

A review of academic literature reveals a limited number of studies specifically addressing media coverage of educational crises. Luo and Ling (2023) analyzed college-crisis coverage through the lens of framing theory in the information age, emphasizing the disruptive role of social media platforms in dismantling traditional media frames. Their study demonstrated that information sources and topic selection are critical variables exacerbating the impact of crises. Similarly, Darwish and Hasheesh (2022) examined how Egyptian news websites addressed pre-university education during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the role of these outlets in shaping student awareness of educational issues. Using content and qualitative analysis, they found significant coverage of education-related topics, particularly statements from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. They noted that news stories dominated the journalistic genres employed, followed by investigative reports and feature articles. Selini (2020) investigated the coverage of teacher strikes by the Algerian newspaper El Chourouk during the 2019–20 academic year. Through content analysis, she categorized articles by source, orientation, journalistic genre, language, technical treatment, topic, key actors, objectives, and target audience. Findings showed that El Chourouk sought to fulfill its informative and educative roles with accuracy and fairness, citing credible sources and often sympathizing with teachers despite occasional contradictory reporting. Another important contribution comes from Mahmoud (2015), who analyzed Egyptian online newspapers' prioritization of social and economic issues during the Presidency of Mohamed Morsi. The study revealed that education emerged as a top social issue but was often under-analyzed due to limited reliance on experts, which prevented newspapers from offering viable solutions or alternatives to pressing problems.

Taken together, both Arabic and English-language studies highlight clear gaps. Arab studies on educational crises remain limited in scope, often lacking theoretical grounding and focusing narrowly on descriptive content analysis. Lebanese media, in particular, have received almost no scholarly attention in this regard. By contrast, international scholarship has more consistently employed framing theory, producing analytical models that allow for comparative insights and a more nuanced understanding of the media's role in shaping public perceptions of educational crises.

d. *Theoretical Framework: Framing Theory*

This study adopts framing theory as its conceptual foundation. News framing in which the events are presented is central to understanding both how narratives are constructed and how audiences interpret them (Omran, 2024, p. 2). Erving Goffman, a pioneer of the theory, argued that frames function as cognitive structures through which people and organizations interpret reality. His conceptualization of frames as organizing principles of experience has been widely applied in media studies to analyze how news stories are constructed and how they shape perceptions of particular groups or issues (Goffman, cited in Lunt, 2024).

Robert M. Entman further operationalized the concept by identifying four key locations where frames manifest in communication: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the broader culture. Communicators are guided, consciously or not, by schemata that organize their beliefs and inform their decisions on what and how to report (Entman cited in Zhang, 2025). Vreese (2005) proposed a list of 11 mechanisms for measuring news frames, including:

- Headlines and subheadings
- Photographs and captions
- Leads and opening paragraphs
- Source selection
- Use of quotations and slogans
- Statistical data, charts, and closing statements

In addition to these mechanisms, other techniques shape audience perceptions. Omran (2024) highlights strategies such as emphasis and selection (focusing on specific aspects of a story), repetition (to direct attention), personal commentary, and the use of personal narratives. The analysis of news framing of a crisis allows examining the five main frames, which are conflict, attribution of responsibility, human interest, economics, and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg, cited in Almahallawi & Abdul Rahim, 2022, p. 244). Drawing on these insights, this study applies framing theory to examine how Al-Akhbar's online platform covered the open-ended strike of public-school teachers in Lebanon during the 2022–23 academic year. Media frames not only direct public attention toward specific events but also shape the interpretive context in which audiences process information (Vreese, 2005). By identifying and categorizing the frames employed in Al-Akhbar's coverage, this research seeks to reveal how media representations contribute to public understanding of one of Lebanon's most pressing educational crises.

## METHODOLOGY

This study falls within the field of descriptive research and employs the descriptive-analytical method, which involves describing and analyzing how a media outlet addresses a particular issue or event. Specifically, it examines how the online platform of the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar covered the open-ended strike of public-school teachers during the 2022–23 academic year. The online platform of the newspaper is the primary data source for this research paper because in Lebanon's rapidly evolving media landscape, many print outlets have shifted to digital or serial formats, making online platforms a primary site of journalistic production and circulation (El Takach et al., 2022).

This study aims to collect, organize, and analyze data to provide a precise and comprehensive understanding of the linguistic, structural, and journalistic features of this coverage. “Descriptive analytics is a crucial aspect of data analysis that involves examining historical data to gain insights and identify trends, patterns, and relationships” (Wolniak, 2023, p. 700).

The adopted research design is a case study, which allows for an in-depth investigation of a single case to understand its particularities and complexities (Clark et al., 2021). Case studies are suitable for diagnosing phenomena through a review of their background, development, and context, thus enabling a holistic account of the situation (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024).

This study adopts a quantitative strategy, which is aligned with a positivist epistemology and objectivist ontology, and hence it maintains a distance between the researcher and the topic, starting from an existing theory (Clark et al., 2021). Accordingly, the method employed is quantitative content analysis, which enables the systematic identification of explicit and implicit frames in news texts. The content analysis method is systematic, objective, and a quantitative technique for measuring communication variables. The study does not aim to generalize its findings, but rather to provide sufficient understanding of how Al-Akhbar’s website addressed this specific educational crisis through media framing (Riffe et al., 2023). In this context, this study applies framing theory in the analysis of a newspaper’s coverage, allowing identification of the editorial agenda set by the newspaper owner(s) (Setiawan et al., 2024). The merging between content analysis and framing theory, as this study combines, allows for analyzing the news coverage of an issue in online newspapers (Ahmad, Abd Mubin, & Arzeman, 2023).

#### *a. Timeframe and Sampling*

The strike unfolded against the backdrop of a nationwide suspension of public education beginning on December 20, 2022 (Pushparatnam et al., 2023). Teachers formally entered an open strike on January 9, 2023, in protest against collapsing salaries and the lack of transportation allowances, leading to a complete shutdown of public schools across the country. Schools reopened only after an agreement was reached with teachers’ unions on March 6, 2023 (Matar, 2023).

Based on this chronology, the sampling timeframe was defined from December 20, 2022, to mid-March 2023, capturing the peak and most impactful phase of the open-ended strike. Articles were purposively selected from Al-Akhbar’s website using keywords such as “public education,” “teachers’ strike,” “crisis of public schools,” and “Ministry of Education.” The analysis was conducted in Arabic-language news materials published during this period.

#### *b. Data Collection and Coding Instrument*

Articles were collected directly from Al-Akhbar’s website and coded using a content analysis form designed in accordance with Entman (cited in Zhang, 2025) framework of framing, Vreese’s (2005) measurement tools, Tankard’s framing devices (Omran, 2024), and the five crisis frames identified by Semetko & Valkenburg (cited in Almahallawi & Abdul Rahim, 2022, p. 244). The coding instrument consisted of three main sections, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Coding instrument for news article analysis

Category	Element	Type / Coding Instructions
<b>SECTION ONE: General Information</b>	Article Title	Text
	URL	Text
	Author's Name	Text
	Subheadings	List all subheadings
	Word Count	Number
	Publication Date	Date
	Genre	News, Report, Investigative Report, Article, etc.
	Classification	Society, Politics, No clear classification
	Accompanying Visuals	Photos, Charts, Infographics, etc.
<b>SECTION TWO: Central Analytical Units</b>	Frames Employed	Present / Absent
	└─Human Interest Frame	
	└─Conflict Frame	
	└─Morality Frame	
	└─Economic Frame	
	└─Responsibility Attribution Frame	
	Sources Cited	Official, Union, Public, Expert, None
<b>SECTION THREE: Framing Mechanisms &amp; Devices</b>	Presence of an introductory lead	Present / Absent
	Quotations from sources	Present / Absent
	Inclusion of personal or human-interest stories	Present / Absent
	Use of slogans or striking expressions	Present / Absent
	Journalists' personal commentary	Present / Absent
	Repetition and emphasis techniques	Present / Absent
<b>Supplementary Elements</b>	Overall tone of the coverage	Sympathetic, Neutral, Critical
	Presentation of solutions	Proposed, Absent
	Language employed	Formal, Emotive, Technical

These variables were refined through a preliminary scan of the sample to ensure they captured the most frequent patterns. This allowed for systematic quantification across the dataset.

### c. Data Analysis

Articles were manually coded using the content analysis form, with WordCounter employed to determine article length. Data were entered into Google Sheets for calculation of frequencies and percentages, and to generate charts representing frame distribution and framing devices. This approach enabled the study to identify both explicit and implicit frames used by Al-Akhbar in covering the strike, measure the prevalence of specific devices and sources, and assess whether the coverage leaned toward bias, neutrality, or balance. In doing so, the methodology provides a structured foundation for examining how Al-Akhbar's framing shaped representations of the teachers' strike within Lebanon's broader educational crisis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the quantitative content analysis of the journalistic coverage of the open-ended strike of public-school teachers in Lebanon, specifically during the strike period in the 2022–23 academic year, published on the website of Al-Akhbar newspaper, show a set of indicators that reflect a noticeable diversity in the editorial structure and rhetorical style used in covering the crisis. This allows for the identification of recurring patterns at the levels of both form and content.

### *a. Formal Characteristics*

First, during the study period, which extended from December 20, 2022, until March 15, 2023 (a total of 85 days), 55 journalistic materials were published on the website of Al-Akhbar. This reflects a tangible and focused interest on the part of the newspaper in the issue of the open-ended strike and its commitment to closely following developments almost daily throughout the strike.

In terms of authorship, the majority of the material was written by journalist Fouad Bazzi (22 out of 55 articles). Bazzi's writings were characterized by a critical analytical style with a repeated emphasis on teachers' demands and the positions of educational unions. A significant portion of the coverage (13 out of 55 articles) was published under the byline "Al-Akhbar," which indicates a centrally directed editorial angle that naturally influenced both source selection and the rhetorical style used to frame the crisis.

The frequent use of subheadings was a clear indicator of the newspaper's effort to present material to the reader in an organized manner, dividing texts into conceptual units that highlight the main issues the writer sought to emphasize. 63.6 percent of the journalistic articles (i.e., 35 out of 55 journalistic materials) contained subheadings within the body, unlike the remaining articles, 36.4 percent (i.e., 20 out of 55 journalistic materials), which lacked this editorial structure. The newspaper also showed a preference for brevity and journalistic conciseness in addressing the issue. This was confirmed by the analysis of the sample, which revealed that most articles contained fewer than 500 words (29 out of 55 journalistic materials). Such reliance on short and intensive coverage reflected a style focused on quick updates rather than long and in-depth explorations, with limited background analysis. This was further reinforced by the predominance of news reports and short features over investigative reports and opinion articles. While Al-Akhbar did not restrict itself to simple news reporting, but also provided explanatory coverage with multiple viewpoints, reflecting a socially responsible journalism that interprets, pressures, and holds accountable rather than merely transmits events, the coverage still lacked sufficient depth and investigative rigor (as shown in Figure 1).



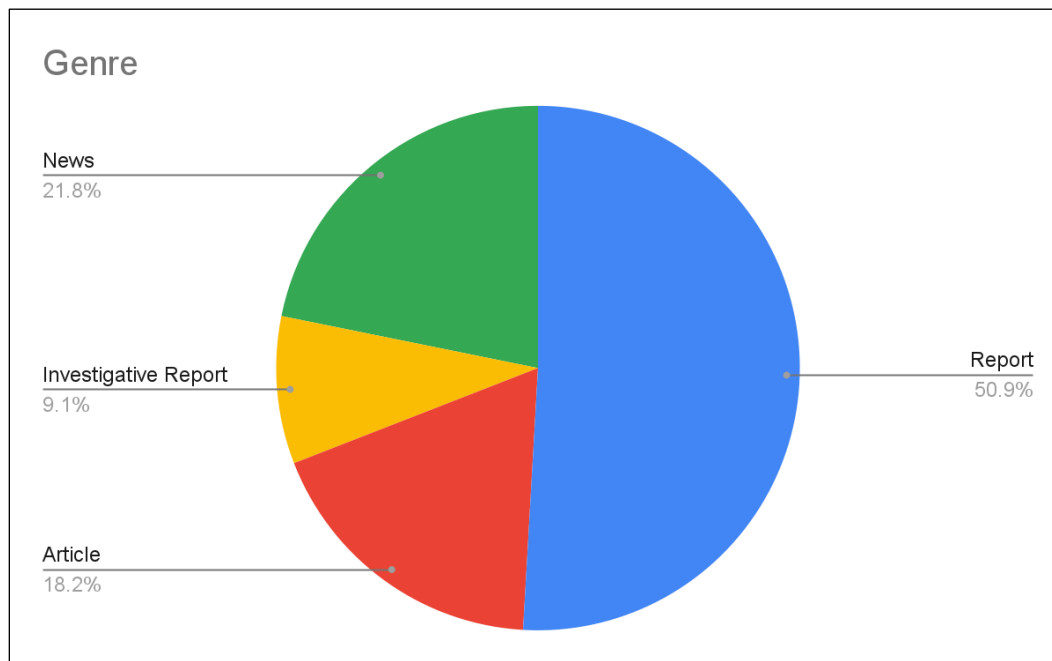


Figure 1: Types of materials on *Al-Akhbar* during the open strike of public-school teachers in the 2022–23 academic year

The coverage of the crisis was concentrated in January and February 2023, coinciding with the escalation of the teachers' strike during that period. The classification of the coverage on the website shows that *Al-Akhbar* treated the open-ended strike primarily as a social issue, framing it in terms of its humanitarian and social consequences for affected groups such as teachers, students, and families, rather than focusing on the political dimension. 69.1 percent of the journalistic articles under study fall under the "Society" category on the *Al-Akhbar* website (38 articles), while 27.3 percent of these articles had no clear editorial classification (15 articles), which reflects either a reliance on a general categorization or a lack of editorial organization on the newspaper's website. Meanwhile, only two articles (3.6 percent) appeared under the "Politics" section, and this limited presence suggests a lack of emphasis on the political aspects of the education crisis during the study period.

As for accompanying visuals, the analysis indicated a lack of visual elements that could have added a stronger human or documentary dimension to the crisis (i.e., 7 out of 55 journalistic materials contained visuals). This reliance on textual narration may have limited the impact of the articles on readers and reduced their ability to capture attention or convey messages in a direct visual way.

#### *b. The Media Frame Used and the Sources*

The coverage on *Al-Akhbar*'s website showed a clear bias in favor of the affected groups, particularly teachers, and relied on mobilizing and provocative framing to activate public opinion and create alignment with one side. The coverage heavily employed the responsibility attribution frame (in 50 out of 55 journalistic materials), the use of the human-interest frame (in 47 journalistic materials), the social and humanitarian suffering of teachers and students, as well as

the conflict frame (in 41 journalistic materials) (as shown in Figure 2). This suggests that the newspaper built a clear narrative that placed the state, the Ministry of Education, and donors in a position of blame, while granting the affected groups moral and social legitimacy by foregrounding their suffering. In contrast, the economic frame was relatively underused (in 32 out of 55 journalistic materials), and the morality frame was even weaker (in 14 out of 55 journalistic materials), which indicates that the newspaper favored political and social discourse over ethical or legal framing.

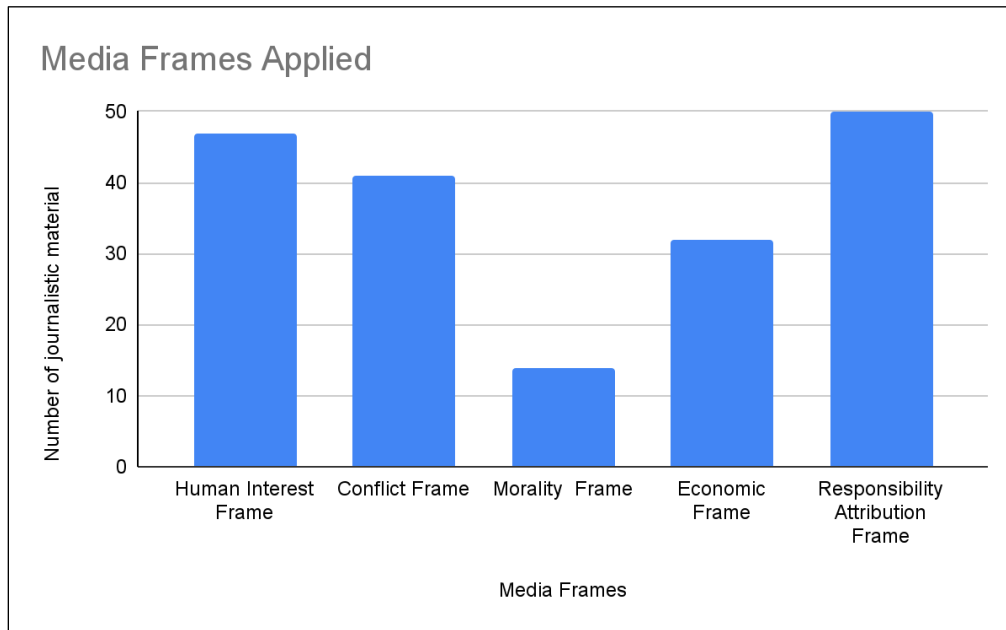


Figure 2: The media frames used within the materials published on Al-Akhbar during the open strike of public-school teachers in the 2022–23 academic year

This focus on responsibility attribution was reinforced by the analysis of sources. Official (49 times) and union (42 times) sources dominated the coverage on Al-Akhbar’s website. The reporting concentrated on the statements of authorities (the Ministry of Education and the government) and representatives of teachers (unions and syndicates), highlighting their responsibilities while criticizing their decisions, policies, and failures.

### *c. The Rhetorical and Narrative Style*

The analysis revealed a clear tendency not to use introductory leads, which suggests that the writing style in this coverage tended to go straight to the core of the issue without introductory framing (in 44 out of 55 journalistic materials). This could also indicate that the newspaper assumed prior knowledge on the part of readers, or that it intentionally adopted a fast-paced, direct news style focused on reporting developments without narrative preludes.

Regarding quotations, the results indicate a near balance between articles that used quotations (in 28 out of 55 journalistic materials) and those that did not (in 27 out of 55 journalistic materials). This suggests that quoting was not part of a systematic editorial policy in covering the strike. However, the absence of quotations in almost half of the articles is a sign of

weak professional balance. In the context of a sensitive crisis, such as a strike, particularly given the multiplicity of actors and conflicting interests, quoting a range of sources is an essential element of comprehensive and transparent coverage. In more than half of the articles, personal or human-interest stories were absent (in 33 out of 55 journalistic materials), pointing to a partial lack of the human dimension in the coverage. This limited the potential emotional impact and audience engagement with the issue.

Personal commentary by journalists or writers was, however, present in many of the articles (in 35 out of 55 journalistic materials), indicating that Al-Akhbar's coverage was not limited to objective reporting but engaged actively in the event through commentary, analysis, and critique. This reflects an editorial orientation toward mobilizing framing, aiming to guide readers toward specific positions on the crisis or the actors involved. In the same vein, extensive reliance on repetition and emphasis was used to reinforce key ideas, such as holding the state accountable or emphasizing the legitimacy of teachers' demands (in 40 out of 55 journalistic materials). The analysis of the tone of coverage also confirmed that the reporting was predominantly sympathetic to teachers (in 45 out of 55 journalistic materials) and critical of the state (in 44 out of 55 journalistic materials), thus framing the crisis in a narrative that assigned blame to authorities while legitimizing teachers' positions.

The repeated use of formal, direct language and crisis-related terms such as "collapse" conveyed both an attempt at objectivity and an effort to portray the crisis as an urgent, exceptional situation. In this way, the newspaper adopted a "tragic-dramatic" frame in its coverage (as shown in Figure 3).

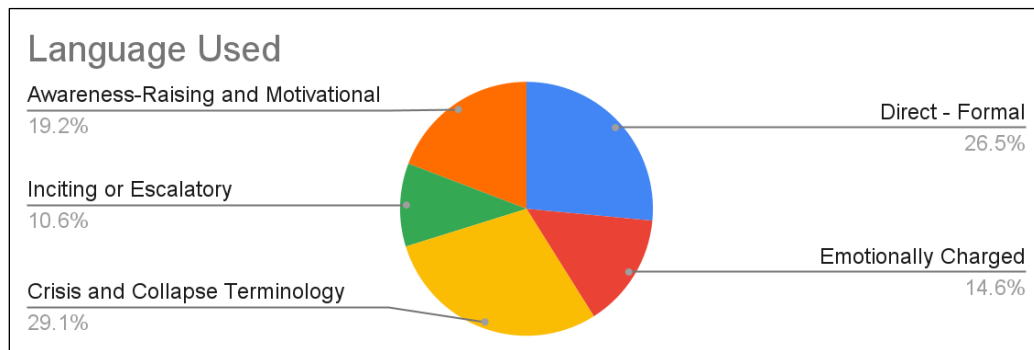


Figure 3: The language used in the materials published on Al-Akhbar during the open strike of public-school teachers in the 2022–23 academic year

The use of slogans and striking expressions was distributed almost evenly across the sample (in 29 out of 55 journalistic materials), suggesting that such rhetorical devices were not a constant strategy but rather selectively employed, typically in contexts of mobilization and provocation.

The frequent use of statistics and numerical data (in 33 out of 55 journalistic materials) reflected the newspaper's effort to substantiate its coverage with quantitative evidence. This approach enhanced the credibility of the content and enabled readers to form a clearer understanding of the scale and implications of the crisis.

*d. Presentation of Solutions*

The coverage focused largely on criticizing official proposals and highlighting government shortcomings, while rarely offering alternative solutions of its own. This indicates that Al-Akhbar's discourse was primarily framing-oriented rather than solution-oriented (as shown in Figure 4).

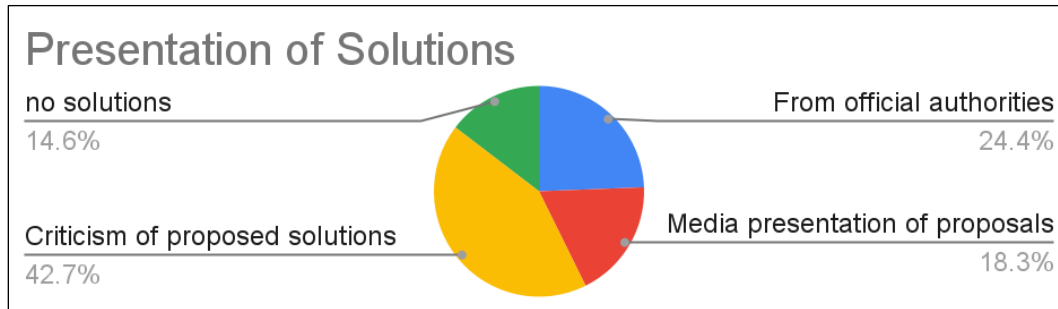


Figure 4: The presentation of solutions in the journalistic materials published on the Al-Akhbar website during the open strike of public-school teachers in the 2022–23 academic year

*e. Final Remarks*

These findings show that the discourse of Al-Akhbar's website regarding the open-ended teachers' strike in public education during the 2022–23 academic year went beyond transmitting information. Rather, it actively reshaped reality through various rhetorical and framing devices. This supports the argument that the media does not act as a neutral intermediary during crises but instead contributes to constructing the crisis narrative and shaping public opinion in alignment with its editorial line.

## CONCLUSION

This study shed light on the journalistic coverage of the open-ended strike of teachers in public education in Lebanon during the 2022–23 academic year, taking the online platform of the Lebanese newspaper Al-Akhbar and its coverage of the strike period as a case study. The study was situated in its context by providing a comprehensive understanding of the issue and reviewing the relevant literature, thereby supporting an informed grasp of its subject. In this framework, the study answered the central research question, achieving its objective of identifying the frames employed in the journalistic treatment of the open-ended strike of teachers in public education in Lebanon on the website of Al-Akhbar.

Practically, the analysis of Al-Akhbar's media discourse helped identify the journalistic practices that usually reflect the editorial line adopted by the newspaper itself. Theoretically, the study selected journalistic articles dealing with the open-ended strike of teachers in public education in Lebanon, which were published on the newspaper's website between December 20, 2022, and March 15, 2023, the period that coincided with the open-ended strike of public education teachers during the 2022–23 academic year. The study aimed to analyze the content of this coverage using quantitative analytical tools to identify the most prominent characteristics of the coverage, the dominant framing mechanisms, and the choices related to formal features, sources, language, rhetorical and narrative style, and the manner of presenting solutions. This analytical path contributed to building an integrated picture of how Al-Akhbar, through its

website, addressed a highly sensitive social and educational issue. It is worth noting that this newspaper represents one of the most influential journalistic outlets in Lebanon.

The results of the quantitative content analysis of the journalistic materials published on Al-Akhbar's website during the period of the open-ended strike of public-school teachers in the 2022–23 academic year indicated that the newspaper provided intensive coverage in terms of volume and focus, closely tracking the escalation of the crisis in real time. This coverage expressed a dual orientation: on one hand, a political critique, strongly evident in the newspaper's sharp criticism of the political authorities, holding them responsible for the crisis, and exposing their failures either in finding solutions or in implementing proposed remedies; and on the other hand, a social commitment, manifest in the paper's strong sympathy and support for the affected groups, particularly teachers. The newspaper employed repetition and emphasis to reinforce these two orientations, focusing on the social and humanitarian consequences of the crisis on affected groups rather than emphasizing its political dimensions. This was reflected in the predominance of political and social discourse, where the frames of "attribution of responsibility," "conflict," and "human interest" overshadowed the moral and economic frames.

In its coverage, the newspaper framed the crisis primarily as a social issue. Moreover, Al-Akhbar's editorial style was marked by a focused and deliberate angle of treatment, evident in the organization of most articles through the use of subheadings and conceptual divisions of text, alongside a preference for concise, fast-paced coverage rather than long, in-depth analyses. The newspaper thus played the role of socially responsible journalism (reporting, interpreting, and exerting pressure) while giving limited attention to investigative reporting or deep probing of the background of the crisis.

Regarding professional practices, Al-Akhbar's coverage displayed weaknesses in professional balance, evident in the absence of quotations in half of the analyzed articles, the partial presence of the human dimension due to the limited use of personal stories and individual experiences, and the lack of visual elements, which reduced the emotional impact of the coverage. Furthermore, the objectivity of the coverage was weakened by the frequent presence of journalists' personal commentary and the selective use of sources, which focused largely on union actors, reflecting the newspaper's active involvement in the event. Despite this evident bias, the newspaper reported the crisis using formal language, portraying it as an emergency and a case of systemic collapse. It also adopted a mobilizing and provocative style selectively, suggesting a degree of professional awareness in calibrating the tone of discourse depending on context. To support its narrative and enhance credibility, the coverage relied heavily on the use of numbers and statistics.

The newspaper's coverage highlighted the failures of official authorities, offering strong critiques of the policies pursued and the proposed solutions, while rarely presenting alternative solutions of its own. This indicates reliance on a framing discourse that spotlighted the crisis, exerted pressure, and assigned responsibilities without engaging in constructive proposals to resolve or mitigate the crisis.

From this perspective, the results of the analysis demonstrate that the media does not merely transmit or describe a crisis as it is, but rather contributes to reshaping and reconstructing it, presenting it to the audience in a manner aligned with the editorial policy of the outlet. This is achieved through the use of specific news frames, formal devices, and rhetorical strategies that

emphasize particular aspects of the issue, employing carefully chosen language to influence audiences in ways intended by the media institution. The newspaper's editorial and professional orientation provide a meaningful context for understanding the framing strategies it employs. Given Al-Akhbar's left political stance and its commitment to challenging dominant power structures, as well as its focus on investigative journalism that prioritizes issues of daily life and society, the prevalence of the responsibility attribution frame in its coverage appears consistent with its broader editorial identity. By emphasizing the actions and accountability of both governmental and union actors, the newspaper reinforces its role as a critical voice that questions authority and exposes institutional shortcomings. This alignment between Al-Akhbar's political positioning and its framing practices reflects an intentional journalistic approach aimed at holding power accountable while maintaining its ideological and professional commitment to social critique.

#### FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The successive crises Lebanon has witnessed have impacted multiple sectors, most notably education, deepening the gap between the public and private sectors and rendering public education a highly sensitive issue requiring careful handling by all relevant actors, especially the media. Journalism, in particular, stands as a key partner in highlighting crises, managing them effectively, shaping public opinion, and exerting pressure to produce viable solutions. Education is a collective societal responsibility, and the media constitutes one of its essential components, contributing to the formation of awareness regarding education. Media engagement with crises should not be limited to the dissemination of information and event reporting. Instead, the media, particularly journalism, must approach crises with objectivity and professionalism through balanced and comprehensive coverage, avoiding sensationalism, exaggeration, and incitement in addressing such issues.

To improve the journalistic coverage of sensitive crises, particularly the open-ended strike of public-school teachers in Lebanon, this study offers the following recommendations:

- The enforcement of specific laws and regulations governing online publishing to ensure newspapers' adherence to journalistic values and standards that promote comprehensive and balanced coverage.
- Avoiding mere framing of crises and striving to provide in-depth treatments that investigate the background of the crisis and offer practical solutions to mitigate its effects.
- Expanding the base of media sources to ensure more inclusive coverage and enhancing the involvement of experts in media analysis to support debates with greater objectivity.
- Striving for balance in discourse between incitement and escalation on the one hand, and awareness and constructive engagement on the other.
- Using human-interest stories and quotations to reinforce the human dimension of coverage and ensure a positive emotional impact on audiences.
- Analyzing educational policies, investigating the roots of the crisis, and offering constructive suggestions and solutions.

- Enriching journalistic content with digital media such as images, videos, infographics, interactive maps, data visualizations, virtual reality (VR), audio reports, and other multimedia tools to make content more engaging, impactful, and interactive.
- Achieving balance in the use of news frames to broaden the perspective on the crisis.

#### BIODATA

*Zeina Moussa Cheet* is a digital creator with a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Digital Media from Al Maaref University and a Master's degree in Economic and Developmental Journalism from the Lebanese University. Her research interests include media framing, media representation, film analysis, and media semiotics. Email: [zeinamoussasheet@gmail.com](mailto:zeinamoussasheet@gmail.com)

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