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Capstone Research

Media Effect on Syrian Viewers

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Abstract:

The research study is about the effects of media on Syrian viewers living outside of Syria. Due to the bloody war that took place in Syria, many families or a member of the family fled for new life. The research's thesis is "in what ways did media effect on Syrian individuals living aboard". This study investigates the role of TV news coverage and programming about war on Syrians living abroad. This study uses the Cultivation Theory. Cultivation Theory was found by George Gerbner and defined as the theory that examines the effect of television on viewers (Shanahan and Morgan, 2001). 60 Syrians living aboard participated in this study and were sent an online questioner survey. The conclusion from the data analysis supports the argument that the media affected Syrians by viewing footages that made some feel safe to go back home and others feel insecure about the Syrian government. The study concluded that, media played big role on Syrian choices, whether to go back to Syria or stay where ever they are. It also changed their opinion whether they should support the Syrian government or be against them.

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Introduction:

After World War 2 broadcast television emerged as a new form of mediated communication. Broadcasting what's happening around the world played a big role in the viewer's mental health as many researchers proved so. Cultivation Theory will be the theory used throughout the research. Cultivation Theory was found by George Gerbner and defined as the theory that examines the effect of television on viewers (Shanahan and Morgan, 2001). After the start of the TV News Channels researchers completed projects about "how does the media effect on an individual's psychology". The researches made were influenced by how each media told the same story by different perspectives. Media affected the viewer's thinking way of a specific event taking place and change how the viewer thought about an issue in the society.

This Research was inspired in the researcher because he was a member of one of the many Syrians that fled war to seek for safety out of Syria. Many Syrian citizens left their beloved ones behind, but carry their thoughts of them and of the war with them. These people had to know what's happening in Syria, and follow the news on broadcast news channels and through social media platforms.

Background experience and observation narrative:

Going back to December 2010 when the Arab Spring started in Tunisia after the 27 years old Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in the streets of Sidi Bouzid "NPR STAFF, 2011" to over

throw the Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. This event led many Arabic speaking countries to start a revolution in their country, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen had turning points. News channels around the world broadcast the events taking place, and as 2 of the most viewed Arabic News channels had a big influence on the viewers by what they broadcasted.

Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabia are the most viewed channels in the Arab world (Snyder, 2016), and those channels were the ones boosting and helping the Arab Spring to gain more voice. It also broadcasted news about what is happening in different areas through their connections with the activists in a particular country. Al-Jazeera which is based in Qatar and Al-Arabia which is based in Saudi Arabia had the loudest voice in the Arab region (Snyder, 2016). Many people referred to those channels at the start, till other channels started to broadcast the opposite perspective.

As the Syrian Civil war broke out after a failed peaceful revolution news channels were split up to three sides, Anti-Al-Assad, Pro-Al-Assad, and neutral news. People had to listen to all three channels to get general information from. Anti-Al-Assad news channels talked more about why is the current Syrian government a dictator, showed images and videos of how the Syrian Army bombed civilian neighborhood, and broadcasted what the Free Syrian Army is doing and the battles against the Syrian Arab Army (France 24, 2012). The Pro-government news channels spread messages that it is safe to be back home, and how the Syrian army was defeating the Free Syrian army (the opposition), on the other hand pro-government news told its viewers how Al-Jazeera and several other opposition channels were broadcasting fake news taken from other civil wars. They tried to prove its viewers that some of the footages were fake footages that was done on purpose to help the rebels gain more supporters (Al Masdar News, 2017). The neutral

news channels gave all the information needed from both sides and how bloody the war was. The research will try to find out whether or not Syrians have passed through different psychological problems, or if they had any emotions while watching news about Syria.

The media war never stopped in Syria till ISIS came up. This was the turning point where all news channels broadcasted how the Syrian Government with the help of the Russian Air and Land forces and with the help of other militias was battling against ISIS. Till this day, Anti-Syrian Government channels exists, but looking back to 2011-2014 when ISIS “Islamic State of Iraq and Syria” was not active in Syria, those channels broadcasted more violent footages of the acts of the Syrian regime, but after 2014 those channels took a break and changed their broadcasting to less violent footages, and concentrated less about Syria and its government. Channels started to broadcast general news about what is happening around the world, and reducing the amount of news hours about Syria.

This study shows what the Syrian citizens lived from 2011 till present through media broadcasts. This mixed channels influenced on the viewer’s mentality, day by day people flee Syria as refugees mostly to start a new life, day by day people are going back to Syria because of what they see on the Syrian News Channels, last but not least day by day media is affecting the mental health of the Syrian viewers.

As it was mention Syrians had to flee, some went to Europe, some went to Africa, and some went to other Arab countries. Some had the money to start a new life and travel using safe transportation, but the other half risked their lives to travel by small boats to reach Europe as refugees. Many have died while fleeing for safety, but many more have found new life, and

started everything from scratch. Majority of the people, who fled, have someone back home. Families were broken up, friends were spread. Those people wanted to know what is really happening in Syria or in their city, but at a point of the Syrian Civil War, there was no internet connections and electricity, and some could barely make a phone call. People living outside had one way to find out what's happening in Syria, through television broadcast channels or through the internet. Different perspectives made Syrians lose their patience because each news channel appeared to be broadcasting what was beneficial for them. Al-Jazeera is an Anti-Al-Assad because it belongs to the Qatar government, due to this situation the Qatar government supports and believes that the Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad must leave after having a long term of presidency (France 24, 2012), and the Syrian news channel broadcasted what makes the viewer support the Syrian government, the Syrian news channel broadcasted how the Syrian army is winning the battles against the armed militias, and how the government is trying to find solutions to the citizens that are demanding equality, or changes in the Syrian constitutions. This made many Syrians confused. This research seeks to better understand how the media content of these broadcast channels affected the Syrian viewer's attitudes, beliefs and emotions.

The start of the Civil War broke down the Syrian Muslim population into 2 groups. This war was called by many, Sunni-Shia war that has been spread around the Arab world. According to World Population Review "87% of the country's population was Muslim. Broken down, around 74% are Sunni and around 13% are Shia." (Syria Population 2019, 2019). The other 13% are the Christians, the Kurds, and Assures of Syria. The Civil War broke out after the Sunni population

started the revolution against the Syrian Government, who leads it Bashar Hafez Al-Assad. Bashar Al-Assad is an Alawi Muslim who belongs to the Shia population. The Alawi populations of Syria are the minority in the Muslim society of Syria, but they still lead and occupy the high ranks in the government, and military positions. This made the Sunni population mad, and wanted to remove the Assad regime and have a Sunni leader (according to some citizens).

Literature Review

As the Arab Spring start-off in late 2010 in Tunisia, other Arab citizens started to join the movement and start a revolution in their own countries in hopes to overthrow a dictator or to have a democratic country. Syrians started their revolution, which, eventually turned to a bloody civil war in 2012, which lead to the collapse of the diverse culture home of 23 million Syrian citizens. Syria was diverse by its multi-religious groups of Christians (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant), Muslims (Shii'a, Sunni, Durzi, and Kurds). According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), 2011 was the turning point of nearly 11 million Syrians leaving the country seeking for safety and a new life in different parts of the world (World Vision, 2019). Many could not afford to move for safety far enough, so they moved to refugee camps around Syrian borders. Jordan has placed refugee camps near its border with Syria alongside Turkey and Lebanon. Many more could afford the "death ride" through the Mediterranean Sea for shelters in Europe, and Armenians had to go back to their motherland

Armenia. During this time of the crisis, the media came in to start its job in broadcasting what is happening on the Syrian ground from different perspectives. Did media have an impact on each Syrian individual's mental health, behavior, and choosing a side (pro or anti-Assad) by showing different perspectives shown on social media?

It is understood that news reports had a deep impact on Syrian society out of the region, pictures and videos posted online, or shown through breaking news made different parties think differently. Some pro-government reports viewed the victories and showed videos of people in the streets walking feeling safe. On the other hand, anti-government news shared bloody pictures and emotional videos, which talked about how the Assad regime is killing his people, and how insecure it is to be still ruled by the Assad regime. In the book "The Media at War" (Carruthers,2000) talked about how the production of the news and images of the war is analyzed, and how a specific piece effects psychologically on the viewer through many wars till 2000. Carruthers explains how the war media psychologically affected viewers. In the books first, chapter Carruthers tells the readers about how the media reacted and how media affected wars from the early ages until today. History is repeating itself, and the research will prove that what Carruthers said about the psychological effect through viewing images of war is still happening in our daily lives.

As the Syrian war broke out, different news channels decided to take a side pro or anti-Syrian government; each news channel chose what they wanted to view about the events happening in Syria to send a specific message to the viewers that will benefit their interest. Another book that has a similar connection to what's happening since 2011, is told in the book "Tell me lies:

Propaganda and media distortion in the attack on Iraq" (Miller, 2004) which talks about how the propaganda and media lied by spreading the wrong information about Iraq to support the US and UK attacks on Iraq. "This is not to say that TV news ignored the negative effects of war on the Iraqi people" (Miller, 2004, P.144). The book tells the readers about how different propagandas or news reports, "whether they get live footage or not, explained the invasion as fighting against terrorism and using power to cut off the Chemical and other dangerous labs that are used to make rockets. As the western news media decided the fate of Iraq by their own created scenarios" (Miller, 2004, P.144), some Arab news showed the viewer's scenarios about the Syrian Revolution. Al-Jazeera was one of the first Arab Media that showed how the Syrian government tortured its citizens. On the other hand, Al-Jazeera has its voice in this era, and many other news channels depend on what Al-Jazeera broadcasts. Throughout the Syrian revolution, Al-Jazeera has shown brutal 18+ footage of what is happening in Syria, which might have lead many viewers to be anti-Assad and think differently. In some cases, it created a scenario to show the world that the Syrian regime is using poisons gas weapons on citizens "Al Jazeera stages' fake news' clip alleging Syrian Army used 'new chemical weapons.'" (Al Masdar News, 2017). This types of news made the world mad and encouraged the US and Europe to interfere and start its threats against the Syrian government (Al Masdar News, 2017).

In the book "The Al Jazeera Effect: How the new global media are reshaping world politics" (Seib, 2008). The book talks about how Al-Jazeera took over the news world after the 9/11 tragedy. The author of the book asserts that Al-Jazeera has its unique ways, such as interviews, analysis, and debates that affect the world image about a specific topic. Since 2011 Al-Jazeera

had a debate program (The Opposite Direction) a couple of times per week, which is between Pro-Assad and Anti-Assad Syrian citizens in the Jazeera studio in Doha, Qatar. This program made the viewer confused about the events taking place because one side was saying something, and the other side was blaming the opponent of what is happening. "Reality was set on the table" (Seib, 2008) this was told when the author talked about the debates of different events till 2008. In a journal written by a professor at Uppsala University in Sweden, Greg Simons explains what one of the US goals of changing other countries regime is. In this specific journal, Simons tells readers about why is the US getting involved to remove the Al-Assad regime to favor US-friendly regimes. The journal explains how the US is trying its best to break down the Assad regime to help other US-friendly regimes in the area "Israel" in other ways. This makes the US national news media talk more about why is it better to remove Al-Assad and show aggressive footages of what is happening in Syria to make the viewer support any actions that will be considered to take towards Syria by the US government. According to the three books I mentioned, news played a significant role in particular events. It is still causing the same misunderstanding and the same violence between governments and people around the world by showing what they want to show and by telling a story from one side to make sure that the viewer receives the world media message of a particular party.

Messages may have had different impacts in the last seven years on Syria. It made other countries stand against the government, but it also affected the Syrian viewer's psychology and mental health. The research presented in the article "Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War" (Silver et

al., 2013); Measured media exposure and stress caused by the news and concluded that bloody and terrifying media cause stress about insecurity. This survey was done in the US, which later in the article proves that the media affect made the US citizens fight against terrorism and support the US troops in the Iraqi War. This may help the researcher to predict how the conclusion of the survey will be. Media Images about Syria may either make the viewer feel safe and want to go back home or feel insecure and start to donate money to the armed forces to fight against the Syrian Army to liberate the land from the Assad Regime. Another article that will support the conclusion of the research is, "The Psychological Effects of TV News" (Davey, 2012) which stated that TV news show bloody and scary news to attract viewers and send the media world message to them. Davey reached this conclusion after conducting a study of viewing negative news effect on psychological health. The study consisted of 3 news perspectives (negative, positive, and emotional). Throughout the article, Davey tells the reader that as long as a person is addicted to a media, they will eventually show aggression in their daily lifestyle and start thinking about security and life. Referring to the given articles and journals, it supports the idea of how media could cause the insecure feeling to the viewers, and how it approaches aggression to the viewers about a particular topic.

As of the Cultivation theory process gets in this topic, it supports the research's outcome and will help the final analysis of the research about, how does the Media effect on the Syrians out of the region. The Article "Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research" (Shanahan and Morgan, 2001) talks about the history of Cultivation. In the article, the authors investigate the relationship between world view and exposure to TV. The Syrian TV wants its

viewers to believe that Syria is stable, and it is safer than any time from 2011-2016 and wants its citizens that migrated to come back home and rebuild the country together with faith. According to "Cultivation Theory and Research: Methodological Critique" (Potter, 1996), there is something that the television world wants you to know, or to hear in order to change your life and thinking towards a way of a particular event. As of for the researches done in this article, two researchers were influenced to do a study about the effects of viewing practices of individuals over the age of 60 on their social reality perceptions in Eskisehir. The Turkish students from Anadolu University used Cultivation Theory in their research to reach the conclusion which supported that TV makes the heavy viewers more aggressive and feel insecure. The student reached this conclusion by one of the Cultivation Theory research methods of asking questions to the volunteers after screening the same video to them. Cultivation Theory will be the leading theory throughout the process, and the research will be questioner research and surveys according to other research methods done by other researchers, or students by using cultivation theory. In general, the research outcomes will tell either support the thesis which says "the media does effect on the viewer," or proves the other way around — referring to all the articles and previous researches done that used Cultivation Theory. It is expected that the results will show that the Syrian populations in foreign countries are affected by what they see on news channels. The research will start from scratch and will rise to its conclusion, step following the other.

Methodology:

The research was done as a Quantitative research. Because the research required collecting data by giving out an online survey to 60 individuals, and after they completed the survey the researcher analyzed the individual's answers. The research will be using this type of research to be able to write a conclusion and answer the research question which is "Did media have an impact on each Syrian individual's mental health, behavior, and choosing a side (pro or anti-Assad) that live out of Syria by seeing different perspectives shown on social media?". As Şahin and Ünalın research was mentioned in the literature review section, the research used cultivation theory as its theory. It referred to cultivation theory standards throughout the research stages, as they did during their research.

The first step was gathering 60 volunteers to answer the survey. Why 60? Well they were divided to three groups, 20 people in each group 10 female and 10 male from different ages. First group was consisted of Syrian citizens that are voluntarily answering the survey, who live in Europe. Second group were Syrian citizens living in the Arab world. Third group were Syrians living in Armenia.

After forming the groups the researcher sent a request message online with full details of the research to the participants around the world. With the help of friends and family members around the world, the researcher was able to get connections with the Syrian Society in a specific country need. On the other hand the survey was spread in Syrian refugee camps with the help of a Syrian girl (Vaneni Bilemdjian) helping refugees in the camps. The participants who accepted

to participate in the survey were notified by the researcher that their answers were fully anonymous and this research is for educational purpose. The final step for agreement was sending them a paper signed by the researcher telling them that this is for American University of Armenia capstone research use only. This ensured them that they are free to mention their names or not, because many might disagree to volunteer because of having the fear of spreading their information and having a problem with the Syrian government. They might even refuse to accept the survey because they are not open to talk. The last stage of the agreement was, that the participant should sign the consent form (initials, or full name).

The survey that will be sent to the volunteers will be done by Survey Monkey program. It will have list of questions made of short answer and multiple choice questions. The survey is divided to three parts.

The survey was in both English and Arabic Languages. The questions was first written in English, and then translated to Arabic, after the translation was done several Arab speaking individuals that have a degree in translation were asked to review the Arabic questioner to check for any mistakes, or any miss used words that could change the definition of the question. This was done because some Syrians that live in the Arab world have low English educational statuses because of the Syrian curriculum which doesn't focus much on English language.

First part is called "background and general information about the volunteer". In this part the questions that are listed are mainly multiple choice questions. The volunteer will have to answer all questions so we can have an overview on the background of the person, what is their religious belief, how old are they, where do they live, if they are pro or anti Syrian government, their

marital status, if they have family members in Syria, what do they own in Syria, what their employment was in Syria and current employment, and since when did they start watching news. In this section the researcher will have background information about the person, and this will help me know how they think after answering the questions in the other two sections.

The Second section of the survey is called “News channel picking”. This section is not a personal section as the first one. In this section they will be asked to answer on questions related to what news channels they stay tuned up on, and what channels they take their sources and news about Syria from. Questions asked in this section are about if the channels is anti, pro, or neutral channel, what kind of news do they broadcast whether the channel broadcasts good news about how safe it is, or view images and clips of war zone and how people are dying due to combats taking place in Syria. This part of the survey will let me have the first feeling of what the third section’s answers will be. Because by seeing deadly and anti-government videos the viewer will be disgusted of supporting the Syrian government due to its acts shown on TV. On the other hand this questions will give me a head start of whether the person is a target of what the media wants him to see or if he is willing to find out when is it safe to go back home.

In the last section of the survey, the volunteers might get emotional and might realize something’s that they haven’t thought of before. They might realize that they have been a target to what message the channel is sending to its viewers. In the third section which is called “outcome” there are questions about what feelings they while watching their channel. Answering this will help me achieve my conclusion about “Did media have an impact on each Syrian individual’s mental health, behavior, and choosing a side (pro or anti-Assad) by seeing different

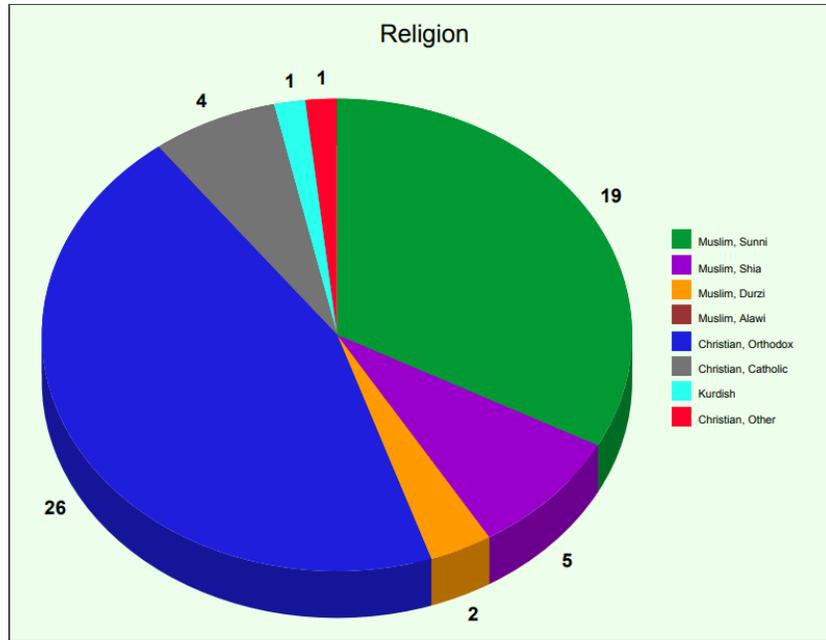
perspectives shown on social media”. This section contains question such as did the media you watch made you feel insecure, safe, or aggressive. In the other part of this section it asks questions about, if they thought of going back home or changing their mind about the side they support. The answers of these questions will prove my point, that media does have an impact on the viewer depending on where they live, what did they have in Syria and what news channels they watch.

After having all the answers from all 3 groups the researcher created a pie chart for each group with percentages. The researcher took this step to know how people in the same zone differ from each other, whether they view the same channel or get their sources from somewhere else. The research referred to Potter’s journal about cultivation theory, and how to analyze the answers that was provided in the survey. In this journal the author tells the reader about how diagrams are used to reach an answer by using analysis. Another research that is similar to mine and as the researcher previously mentioned before, is the research done by Şahin and Ünalın in Turkey. Those students used cultivation theory to finalize their answers by charts and forming their own equation according the chart. After the data was collected to support the thesis, and answer to the research question. The outcome was backed up by Davey’s blog about psychological effect of TV news, and “Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of the September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War. Psychological Science” (Silver et al., 2013). This two papers helped finalize the outcome.

Research Findings and Analysis:

From what the results show after asking 58 Syrian Citizens that live out of Syria, we see that the majority of the participants who fled Syria are the Christians and the Sunni, Muslims. According to the numbers given, the majority of the Sunni, Muslims are Anti-Al-Assad or Neutral. This data supports the fact that the Sunni population of Syria does not support the Syrian regime. On the other hand, we have the Christian population that mainly fled to Armenia, and Europe strongly supports the Syrian regime although they had to leave their homes, family members, and friends back in Syria.

Throughout the survey that was given out, the Armenian community mainly stated that they are supporting the Assad government, and cleared out that they own many things in Syria and are willing to go back to Syria one day. Why are the majority of the Syrian-Armenians supporting the Assad regime? Asking further in depth, the researcher asked the elderlies that live in Armenia about why are they supporting the Assad government and why haven't they changed their opinion about the government. They nearly stated the same statement which said, "The Syrian government have provided us Armenian churches, Armenian Schools, and gave us all the freedom to celebrate any Armenian holidays. This is not something any country would do, that's why we should not forget what the Syrian government has done to us, and we should always be thankful for what they have done.". Many disagreed and stated that they are Anti-Al-Assad because he is using power against his people, and the country is not democratic.



The diagram above clearly shows the minority of the Syrians outside, which are the Shia's, Durzi's, and Alawi's. Those three Islamic groups are supporting the Syrian regime. Throughout the survey, one participant who was from the Shia community disagreed with the rest of the Shia's and said he was Anti-Al-Assad. Before judging and having a final statement, he added that he is a Human Right activist and is seeing what is happening in Syria, which does not make him happy, and makes him upset and speak up for what he thinks is right.

Not finding many Shia or Alawi Syrians outside supports the fact that it is a Sunni-Alawi conflict and that the Alawi's are living safely and have better opportunities in Syria than the Sunni population, but of course, this does not involve 100% of the Shia and Alawi population.

channels, and why do they refer to them. Responses supported that the majority of the Anti-Assad society watch Al-Jazeera and the majority of the Pro-Assad society refer to Syrian news Channel. Taking in consideration that the Syrian News Channel strongly supports the government because it is the countries media, on the other hand, Al-Jazeera has been broadcasting more news that supports the opposition than news which supports the Syrian government. Some said they find Al-Jazeera neutral channel, because of the debated they show about the situation in Syria. Pro-Assad participants called the Syrian News media trustworthy and added that it is the only channel we can rely on. Not surprisingly, the opposition said the same thing about the channels that they think support the Syrian revolution.

Not many watch western media, but some of the volunteers said they did watch western media because they are neutral and want to find out what is happening in Syria. They add that "by just watching the Syrian News Channel you will never know what is happening in Syria because the Syrian News channel mainly broadcasts their glorious victories against armed militias and how Syria is getting better." In the meanwhile, they added watching the opposition news channel mainly tells the viewer about what the Assad army is doing against civilians.

Looking at the most watched news channel in the survey, we find the Syrian News Channel, as mentioned before the Syrian News Channel is under the Syrian Governments control. It is impossible for a government to not a single mistake during a war. By asking the participants to explain why they refer to this specific new channel, we can see that the Syrian government inspires the participants who chose this channel and support the Syrian government. The most common response regarding this question was "this is our countries channel, it is the only

channel we can rely on to get what want to hear (Syrian Army victories against the armed militias). Getting in depth the most common answer about the message this channel is trying to give out to the audience was that the Syrian news channel broadcasts the beautiful views and how the collapsed and ruined parts of a specific city is being rebuilt. Another message the participants commented about was that the Syrian News Channel inspires the viewers and makes them want to go back to Syria to continue the lifestyle they had before the war broke out.

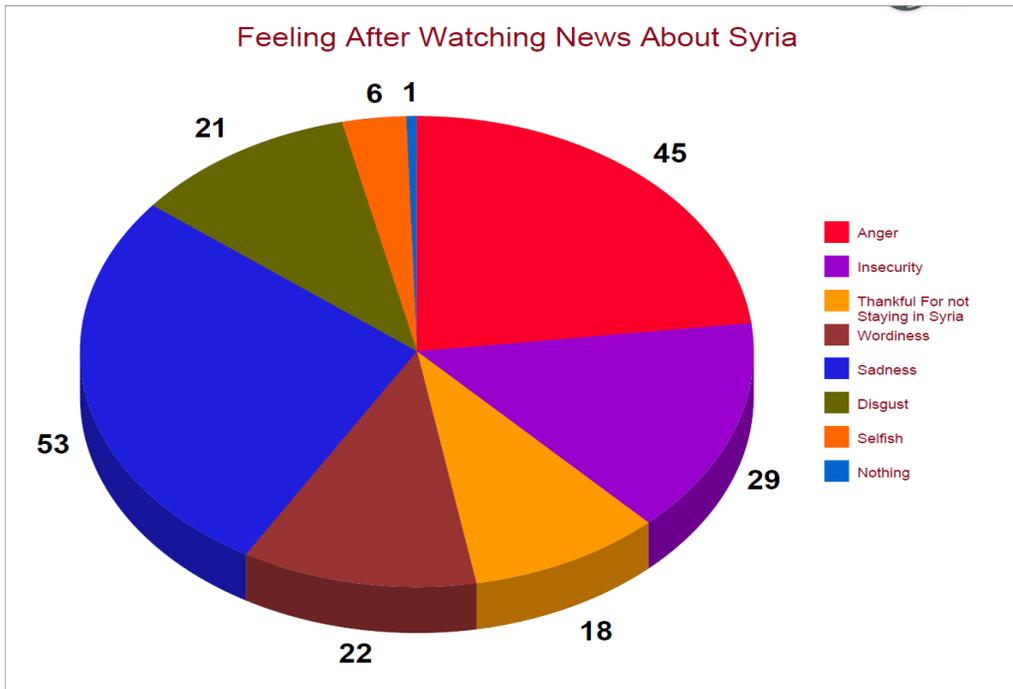
On the other hand, some of the participants commented, that by watching the Syrian News Channel they woke up and knew the reality behind the Syrian revolution through that they changed their minds from being Anti-Assad to Pro-Assad. Whoever stated this statement made sure to clear out what they meant by stating this. They said that the Syrian Media had programs that could prove what the opposition media did to gain more followers by faking news and staging an event that made the Syrian Army look like criminals.

It was not a single story; the research had another side of the same story. Participants who stated that they are against the Syrian government told the other side of the story. This group of people had a similar answer about the same question which said why they refer to the channel they watch, and what message is that channel trying to give out. The people who supported the opposition stated that they watch Al-Jazeera because it is reliable according to them. Why reliable? Before answering this, the research had a question that said, does your channel view more of violence or peace? People who said they refer to Syrian News Channel answered that the channel views more of peace.

On the other hand, people who watch Al-Jazeera mostly stated that that specific channel views more violence. Referring to the article "Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War" (Silver et al., 2013) which says that the Images of mass destruction and death images affects the mental health of the viewer, and makes the viewer more aggressive. In that article, the authors comment on how the USA published what the previous president of Iraq Saddam Al-Husain was doing to his people. This made the viewer's mad, and it changed the way they thought about Saddam and started to support the war against Saddam. Referring to "Mental- and Physical-Health Effects of Acute Exposure to Media Images of September 11, 2001, Attacks and the Iraq War" (Silver et al., 2013), both news channels broadcasted footages that made the viewer's mad against the other side. The Syrian Media viewed how beautiful Syria was before the opposition came up, which made viewers mad at the opposition, and the opposition media viewed what the Assad army is doing to his people which made the viewer's mad on the Assad government. Participants who supported the opposition referred to Al-Jazeera and stated that the following channel is viewing the reality of what the Syrian Army is doing to the Syrian people, which made them support the opposition. For those who changed their mind about the Syrian government stated that, after seeing the massacres done by the Syrian Army, they thank god they left Syria and felt with anger against the Syrian government, which made them support the opposition side. There were a couple of participants who said they want to go back to Syria and fight for a specific side due to the anger they got from watching the news.

The third party of the neutral participants watched everything. They didn't have one specific news channel to get their news from. Some even said that they prefer to call their family members in Syria to get the news because they are lost and don't know which news channel to trust anymore. This point is backed up by referring to the Cultivation Theory, "Cultivation Theory and Research: Methodological Critique" (Potter, 1996), states that there are something's that the television world wants you to know, or to hear in order to change your life and thinking towards the way of a specific event. The neutral group commented on both Syrian News and the opposition news by saying: watching Syrian news lets you pack your bags and go back to Syria because of what they are broadcasting, but the opposition news makes you feel thankful you're not there anymore. This leads to one statement; each news channel broadcasts what is beneficial for them. On the other hand, one participant mentioned that watching one channel is wrong because being neutral is hearing from both sides and coming up with a conclusion you think is right, not a conclusion that a channel wants you to have.

People who watched discussions about what's happening in Syria gathered information from both sides. Syrian citizens watching discussions were affected. Discussions made it easier for them to choose which side they support, or have whether to feel safe to be out of Syria or whether it's better to go back to Syria.



Looking at the diagram above, participants shared what they felt after watching News about Syria. As it is shown people felt anger and sadness the most and it is a common feeling between the participants. As it was mentioned before, news channels did affect and cause feelings to the Syrian viewers. Those feelings were combined and were given by both Pro and Anti Syrian regime because, at the end, both sides try to spread hate against the other side to gain more viewers and followers to their side. The last question of the survey helped the research reached the conclusion. The question was, "In 2 or 3 Sentences, please describe: After watching all this news about Syria, what is your worldview?" Majority of the participants answered the question by "We are living in a world of shame." Furthermore, into details, participants said that they blame other countries and foreign Media by boosting the revolution and broadcasting News that makes the non-Syrians upset. By this, they meant Islamists around the world came to Syria to fight against the Syrian government to spread Sunni power in Syria over the Alawi power that is

currently ruling Syria. The majority agreed that Syria wouldn't have been like this today if outsiders didn't interfere. Another group of participants agreed that the world is all about natural resources. They mentioned that Syria has natural resources and oil; this makes the big powers come in Syria and support a specific side to benefit from that resources. The United States of America was Anti-Al-Assad strictly because of its relations with Israel.

On the other hand, Syria has excellent relations with Russia, who is the USA's first enemy. Getting too deep into this is complicated. Not getting far from our topic, different news channels did send messages to the Syrian viewers.

In general what is observed by the findings of the research is that people who watch Syrian News Channel are getting the message that “Syria is getting better, and it is getting safer to return back home day by day”. On the other side, people who are anti-Syrian government commented that they received the message that says “Bashar Al-Assad is a dictator killing his own people, and the president must resign”. The third party who watched both anti and pro Al-Assad Channels has their own perspective. Their perspective is neutral and refers to both sides to really know what’s happening. The message they received from watching both sides was “the world has become a disgusting place; leaders of strong countries are leading wars indirectly to benefit from the war”. Participants who commented this mainly believe that other countries whether they are against or with the Syrian government are acting up because they have benefits (selling weapons, or getting access to the Syrian natural resources.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion referring to what the survey has conducted, News channels played a huge role in the Syrian revolution. By that, it played a more significant role in the Syrian mentalities. On one side it spread hatred against the other side, and on the other side, the Syrian News channel tried to wake up its viewers to support the government by their stories about what's happening. In a way or another, both sides had followers, and both sides were influenced by what a specific news channel told them about what's happening in Syria. Many want to go back to Syria after seeing what the Syrian news is broadcasting. Many changed their sides after seeing specific footage, whether it's pro or anti. Some played it smart and decided not to choose a side because of the difference from both sides, and wanted to start a new life in a new country. At the end of this research and as the article "Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research" (Shanahan and Morgan, 2001) talks about the relations between the exposure to TV and world view, the research has reached to a conclusion of; Media channels played a significant role in the Syrian mentalities and is still playing a significant role.

"Cultivation Theory and Research: Methodological Critique" (Potter, 1996)

"There is something that the television world wants you to know, or to hear in order to change your life and thinking towards the way of a certain event." (Potter, 1996)

This Research is as important as it was scary to the participants. Syria was known for its strict government when it comes to papers about Syria. One of the harshest problems faced while

collecting the surveys was the refusal of the participants to continue after seeing the questions.

No one can blame them because there is no trust towards this kind of projects.

A person from Sweden helped the research collect data from the refugees in Europe. She commented: “When the participants were told about the survey some of the reactions were fear, being worried and unsure about the purpose of the survey. After reading the researchers written statement about the Survey and the reason he is doing this research in details they agreed to participate. They had one term, and said “I’m not signing due to mistrust of the anonymity of the survey and they didn’t see it necessary to sign. The Arabic survey scared participants while trying to complete the survey because the words used were heard too much on the news, which were affecting the participants brain, and automatically making them think that the survey is being held for bad/evil or personal reasons.” (Bilemdgian, 2019). This was the only problem the researched faced with participants from Europe. Same problem happened with the researcher which made him leave to Saudi Arabia for a week; to make sure it is all going good and help the participants gain trust. At the start Arab country participants specially from Saudi Arabia had the fear that I would be working with the Syrian government. When I met them in person, I realized why, because some supported the armed militias or have a family member in them. This problem was solved when the researcher provided an academic ID and showed them the purpose of the research by showing them the Universities obligation. 10 out of 58 participants refused to sign the written forms of agreement, and many signed a fake signature hiding their identity.

A future research Advice on a similar sensitive topic, the researcher is recommended to meet in person with the participants, and provide full written explanation to the participants.

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Appendices

Multiple Choice Survey.

I: Background and early stage of watching news.

- What is your religious belief? If other please mention.

A: Muslim, Sunni B: Muslim, Shia'a C: Muslim, Alawi D:
Muslim, Durzi E: Christian, Orthodox F: Christian, Catholic G: Christian,
Other H: Other

- Are you pro or anti Assad?

A: Pro B: Anti C:Neutral

- Where do you live?

Please Mention: _____

- How old are you?

Please Mention: _____

- Marital Status:

A: Single B: Married C: Divorced D: Engaged

E: In a Relationship

- Do you have any family members living in Syria? If Yes, Please be specific:

A: Yes

B: No

- What do you own in Syria? Can be more than one answer.

A: Car

B: Apartment

C: Bank Account

D: House

E:

Business

F: Other _____

- What was your employment in Syria?

Please Mention: _____

- What is your current Employment?

Please Mention: _____

- Do you watch news about Syria?

A: Yes

B: No

- When did you first start watching news?

Please Mention: _____

- Which news channel do you get your information about what's happening in Syria?

Please Mention: _____

- Other than news, do you watch debates/discussions about the crisis in Syria?

A: Yes

B: No

2: News channel picking.

- Why do you refer to this specific channel?

- Is your channel supporting anti or pro Assad government?

A: Anti-Assad

B: Pro-Assad

C: Neutral

- Rate 1-10, what is the rating of that channel viewing 16+ footage? (dead bodies, dead kids, combats between FSA and SA, and aftermath of any mass destruction)

- Does that channel show more of:

A: Violence

B: Peace

- Do you refer to any other channel to know if the news is real? If yes which channel?

Is that channel anti-or pro?

3: Feeling

- Have you ever reconsidered the side your with due to something you've seen on the news?

A: Yes B: No

- What's the first thing that comes to your mind when you see footage of mass destruction in a neighborhood that took lives of many civilians? Can be answered by more than one choice.

A: Anger B: Insecurity C: Being thankful that you are not there anymore D:

Worriedness

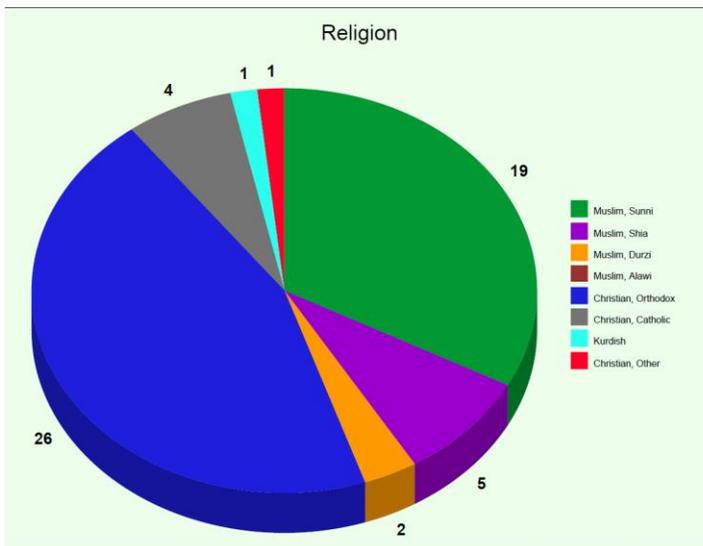
E: Disgust F: Sadness G: Selfish H: Other, Mention Please. _____

- Did any specific footage you've seen from the channel you watch make you want to go back to Syria? If Yes. Why did that feeling of going back to Syria appear in you? If No. why not?

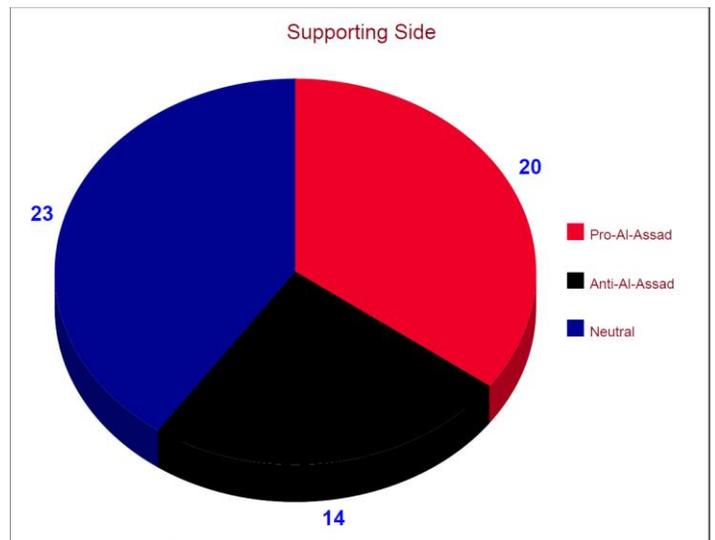
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- In general what's the message you've received from watching a specific channel?

In 2 or 3 Sentences please describe: After watching all this news about Syria, what is your world view?

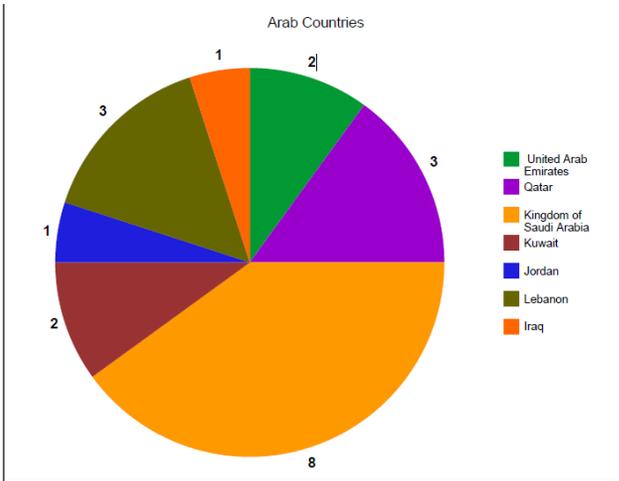
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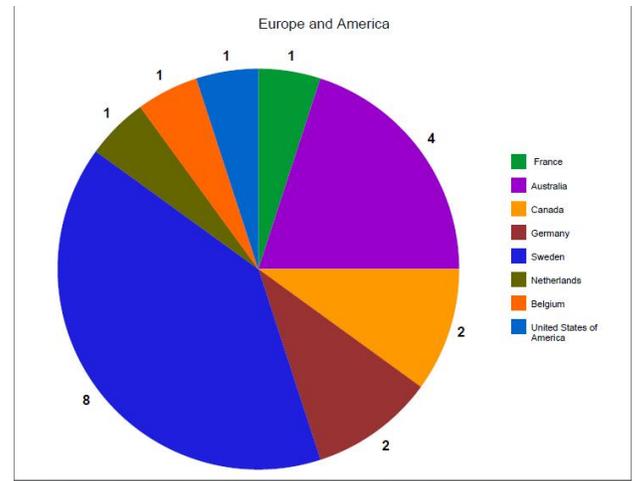
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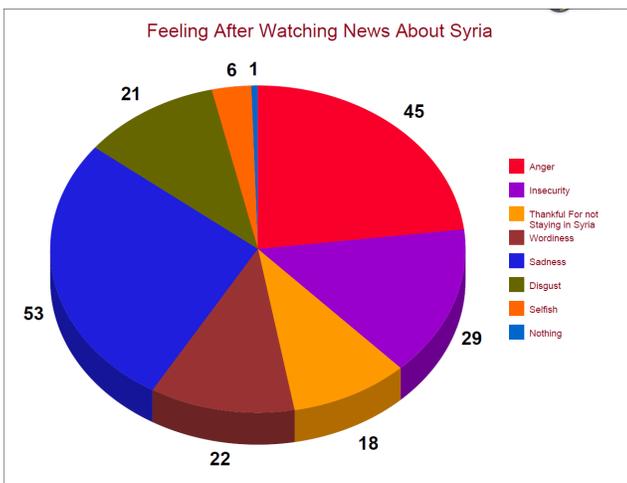
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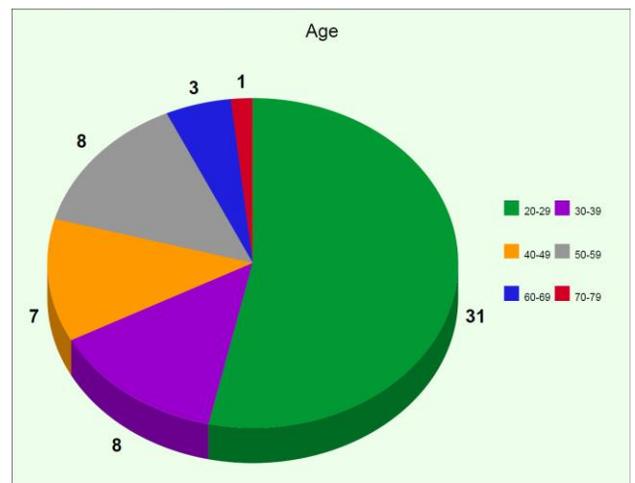
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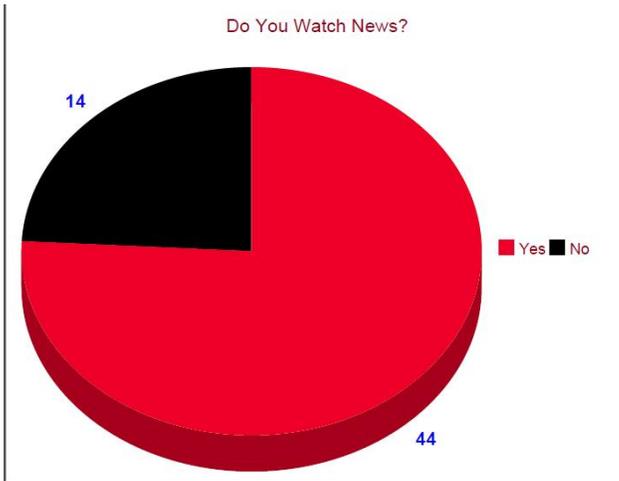
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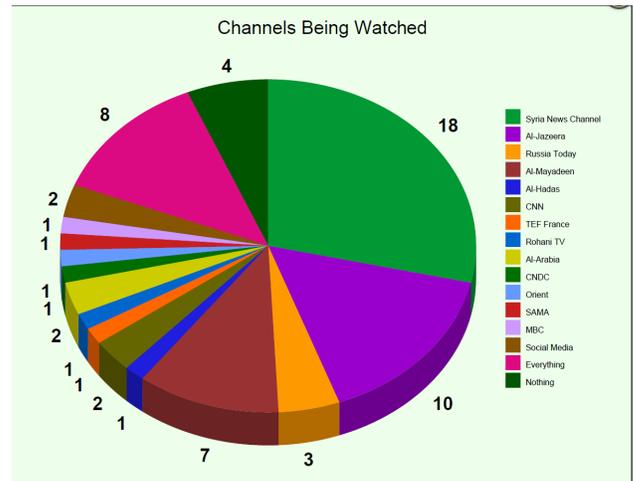
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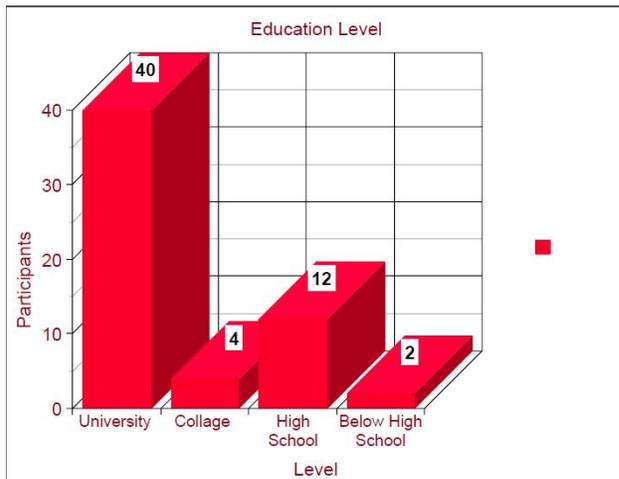
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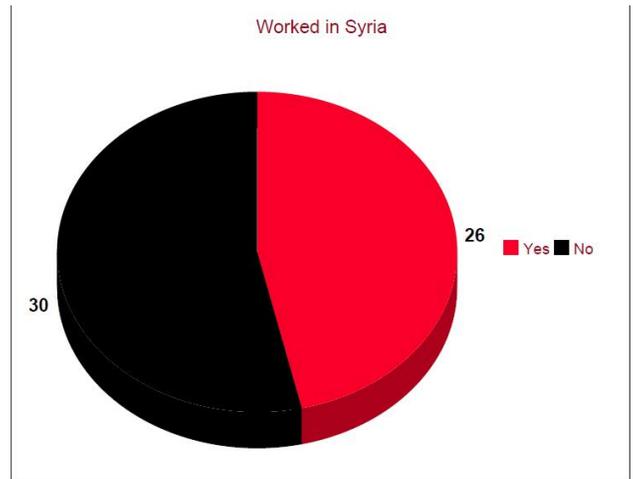
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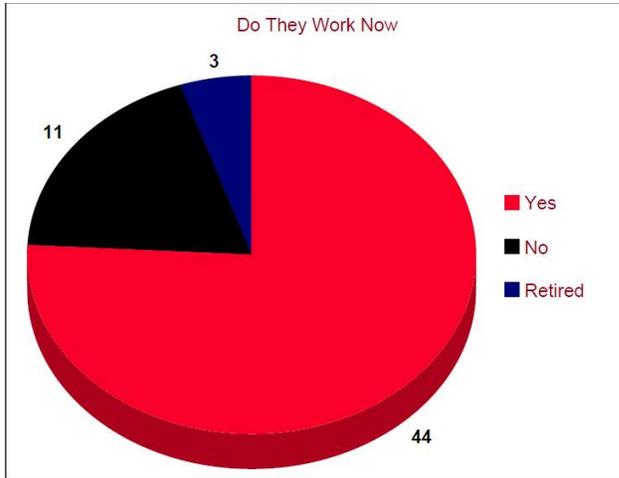
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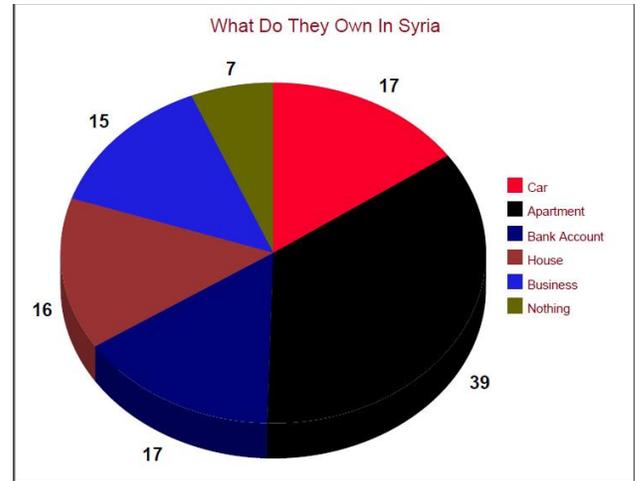
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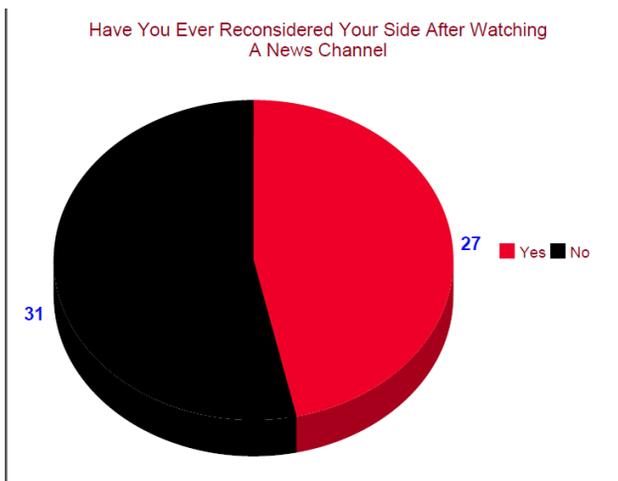
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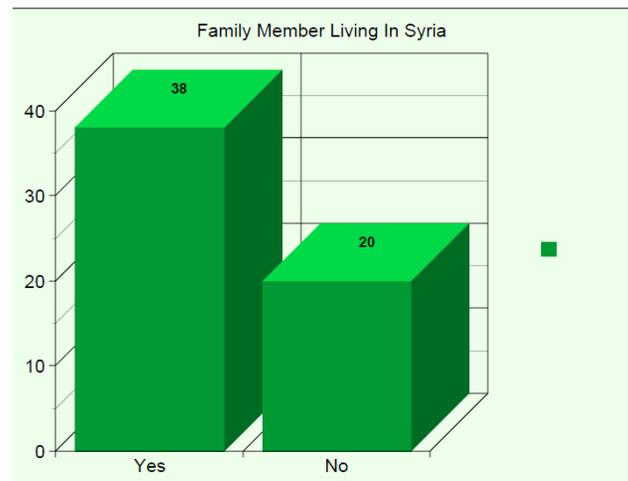
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