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*Corresponding author:

**Asst. Prof. Ahmad
Abdulkareem Shaban**

Department of General
Education Cihan University -
Duhok, Kurdistan Region, Iraq
Email:

ahmad.shaban@duhokcihan.edu.krd

Obeida Nefzaoui

Television, and cinema
Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul,
Türkiye
Email:

obeida.nefzaoui@stu.ihu.edu.tr

Aeda Kamour

Facultad de Filosofia y Letras
University of Malaga, Spain
Email: aedakamour@yahoo.com

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Beyond the Airwaves: How Independent Podcasting Contributes to Peacebuilding in Society

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how independent podcasting functions as a transformative medium for peacebuilding in contemporary society. It explores how podcasting, distinct from traditional broadcasting, empowers individuals to share personal narratives, amplify marginalized voices, and cultivate inclusive dialogue on complex societal issues. Drawing upon participatory culture and peacebuilding frameworks, the research highlights podcasting's ability to foster empathy, challenge dominant media narratives, and promote collective memory through accessible digital storytelling. Unlike conventional media, which often operate under institutional constraints, podcasts are produced with minimal resources and offer creators flexibility, authenticity, and direct engagement with audiences. This decentralized model enables diverse perspectives to emerge and fosters community-driven discourse around human rights, freedom, social justice, and identity. Through qualitative content analysis of selected Arabic podcast episodes, the study identifies key themes such as the transformative power of voice, the importance of inner peace as a foundation for societal harmony, and the subjective experience of freedom. The findings underscore podcasting's role in reshaping public discourse, especially in regions where mainstream media may be restricted. Ultimately, this paper positions independent podcasting as a vital tool in promoting peace, inclusivity, and dialogue in a fragmented media landscape, and as a dynamic platform for grassroots activism and cultural transformation in the Arab world and beyond.

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البودكاست المستقل ودوره في تعزيز السلام المجتمعي

ا.م.د. أحمد عبد الكريم شعبان/ جامعة جيهان- دهوك، كردستان، العراق

عبدة بن ناجي النفزاوي/ طالب دراسات عليا في جامعة ابن خلدون، إسطنبول، تركيا

عائدة علي قَمُور/ طالبة دراسات عليا في جامعة ملقا، إسبانيا

الملخص: تتناول هذه الدراسة دور البودكاست الصوتي كوسيلة رقمية تشاركية في دعم جهود بناء السلام في المجتمعات المعاصرة، مع تركيز خاص على السياق العربي ضمن الأطر النظرية للثقافة التشاركية ودراسات السلام النقدية، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية مساهمة البودكاست في تعزيز الحوار الشامل، وإبراز أصوات الفئات المهمشة، وتعزيز التماسك الاجتماعي من خلال محتوى يُنتج بشكل مستقل ويُوَجَّه للمستخدمين بشكل يخالف طبيعة البث التقليدي الخاضع لقيود مؤسسية وتحريرية، يتميز البودكاست المستقل بإنتاجه اللامركزي، ومرونته الموضوعية، وقدرته على التفاعل المباشر مع الجمهور. وتُظهر هذه الخصائص قدرة البودكاست على تحدي السرديات السائدة، وإنتاج خطابات بديلة تتعلق بالصراع، والهوية، والعدالة، والتعايش والسلام. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجية تحليل المحتوى النوعي، من خلال تحليل حلقات مختارة من ثلاث برامج بودكاست عربية تتناول موضوعات السلام، والحرية. وتكشف النتائج عن أنماط متكررة في كيفية مساهمة التذوين الصوتي في تعزيز التفكير النقدي، والاستجابة العاطفية، وبناء الذاكرة الجمعية، بما يساهم في تشكيل بيئة إعلامية داعمة للسلام. كما تؤكد البيانات قدرة البودكاست على أن يكون أداة تواصل مجتمعية تُحفِّز المستمعين على التفاعل والمشاركة، وتُنمِّي التعاطف عبر الانقسامات الثقافية والاجتماعية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن البودكاست المستقل يُعد منصة رقمية واعدة في بناء السلام، خصوصاً في البيئات التي تعاني من تقييد الإعلام التقليدي أو من غياب التعددية في تمثيل الأصوات المختلفة. الكلمات المفتاحية: البودكاست، بناء السلام، البث الإذاعي، الثقافة الفرعية، الإعلام، الثقافة التشاركية.

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, the internet has emerged as a transformative force, fundamentally altering how media is produced, distributed, and consumed. The convergence of digital technologies has initiated a new era of global connectivity, where individuals are no longer restricted by physical media or geographic boundaries. This shift has not only redefined access to information but has also empowered individuals to become content creators in their own right. As Gül et al.

(2020) observe, the digitization of media has enabled the conversion of diverse formats such as images, audio, text, and video into binary code, making them storable and transmittable within a unified digital ecosystem. Jenkins (2006) refers to this phenomenon as “convergence culture,” wherein media flows across multiple platforms and audiences become increasingly participatory.

The transformation from passive media consumption to active media production has disrupted the traditional monopolies of legacy media institutions. Today, media is no longer the sole domain of broadcasters and publishers. Through accessible and interactive digital tools, individuals can now shape public discourse, challenge dominant narratives, and build communities around shared interests and values. According to Sajat and Abbas (2024), the advent of new media represents a turning point in how societies communicate, marked by a decline in centralized control and a growing role for civil society in shaping narratives. They argue that digital platforms particularly the internet have significantly reduced state and institutional monopolization of information, opening the door for a more democratized model of content creation and dissemination.

Central to this shift is the rise of user-generated content, which places ordinary individuals at the heart of media production. Axel (2016) emphasizes the role of intelligent web services in enabling users to collaboratively develop, personalize, and disseminate digital content. This participatory model is echoed by Sajat and Abbas (2024), who highlight the capacity of new media to actively engage audiences in addressing and critiquing non-purposeful or low-value content. Through its diverse technical, educational, and communicative capabilities, new media fosters societal responsiveness and encourages public dialogue.

Among the most significant manifestations of this participatory turn is the growth of podcasting a decentralized, flexible, and creator-driven medium that exemplifies the ethos of digital democratization. Unlike traditional broadcasting systems that depend

on rigid programming schedules and institutional infrastructure, podcasting offers individuals the opportunity to produce and disseminate content with minimal resources. As Millette (2011) notes, podcasting enables creators to reach global audiences from virtually anywhere. This flexibility aligns with the key characteristics identified by Zugher Sajat and Abbas (2024), who describe new media as inherently interactive, asynchronous, accessible, and globally expansive features that make it highly effective for diverse forms of engagement.

Furthermore, digital media and podcasting in particular has contributed to the dissolution of social and cultural isolation by facilitating meaningful cross-cultural dialogue and community formation. As explained by Zugher Sajat and Abbas (2024), contemporary technological developments have effectively collapsed spatial and temporal boundaries, allowing for continuous and multidirectional exchanges across different regions and cultures. This environment enhances not only access to diverse perspectives but also the potential for collaboration, empathy, and understanding among users from varied backgrounds.

Today, podcasting stands at the forefront of this media revolution. With millions of shows spanning a vast array of themes, the podcasting ecosystem has become a dynamic space for civic engagement, storytelling, and peacebuilding. In regions where mainstream media is often constrained by political or institutional limitations, independent podcasting provides an alternative medium for expression and dialogue. This is particularly salient in the Arab world, where digital platforms have enabled marginalized voices to emerge and catalyze discussions around social justice, identity, and coexistence. As highlighted by Zugher Sajat and Abbas (2024), digital media especially podcasting has become a strategic tool for countering superficial and harmful content while promoting critical engagement and inclusive communication.

This study explores the rise of independent podcasting, its cultural and political implications, and its growing role in fostering peace and social cohesion. By examining how podcasting operates within the broader digital media landscape, the research aims to illuminate its potential as a participatory, grassroots mechanism for transformative communication in the Arab context and beyond.

●Methodology:

Research Problem

Independent podcasting has emerged as a medium with significant potential to promote peace by amplifying marginalized voices, fostering empathy, and creating spaces for open dialogue. However, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of how these podcasts achieve such outcomes, particularly in the context of the Arab world, where social tensions and media control often limit freedom of expression

Research Questions

1. How do independent podcasts promote peace building in the Arab world?
2. How do podcast creators engage with their audiences to foster dialogue and understanding?
3. What role does participatory culture play in the success of these podcasts?
4. How do podcasts compare to traditional broadcasting in terms of their impact on social peace?

● Literature Review

The Emergence of Independent Podcasting

Podcasting, while often considered a development of radio (Murray, 2009; Edmond, 2015), represents a significant transition in the media production and consumption landscape. The emergence of independent podcasting has reshaped how audio content is produced and distributed, marking a shift away from institutional control of radio towards a more decentralized model of media creation.

Independent podcasting, as defined by Millette (2011), refers to original audio content produced outside traditional institutional settings. This form of podcasting has redefined the concept of production itself. Historically, media production was associated with professional expertise and institutional backing. However, as Millette (2011) notes, terms like "amateurism" have been replaced by a recognition of the new skills that podcasters possess, including technical knowledge of microphones, devices, and communication. This shift challenges traditional media

hierarchies (McHugh, 2016), demonstrating that high-quality, professional content can be created by individuals without institutional backing.

The skills that independent podcasters possess allow them to produce content that rivals traditional media. This has contributed to the legitimacy of podcasting as a significant form of media expression. In addition to entertainment and information dissemination, independent podcasting has emerged as a platform for cultural and social change, empowering individuals to reclaim ownership of their narratives. As Bonini (2022) argues, podcasting fosters participatory subcultures and enables personalized content creation, offering an alternative to mainstream media and promoting greater diversity and inclusivity in the digital sphere.

One of the key factors driving the increasing popularity of podcasts is the engagement and freedom that creators have to express themselves without editorial constraints. This freedom allows podcasters to craft deeply personal content that reflects their unique perspectives and experiences. Podcasting has become a powerful medium for self-description, playing an important role in shaping both individual and collective identities within various communities.

Bonini (2022) further suggests that podcasting represents a hybrid cultural form that not only draws from traditional radio but also incorporates elements of earlier media technologies. This hybridity reflects podcasting's ability to adapt to changing technology and shifting audience preferences, reinforcing its dynamic nature.

In recent years, the convergence between podcasting and broadcasting has become more pronounced. Many podcasts now leverage live streaming platforms like Facebook and YouTube, blurring the lines between traditional podcasting and real-time broadcasting. Additionally, radio stations have adapted to the digital age by streaming their programs online, further blurring the boundaries between different forms of audio content dissemination (Priestman, 2002). The internet, which began as a platform for audio streaming with the first internet radio in 1993 by Carl Malamud (Riismandel, 2018), continues to evolve, offering new possibilities for audio content distribution.

As Lee (2005) describes, internet radio remains a powerful and flexible model of traditional radio, transcending geographical restrictions and offering new features that were previously unavailable. This ongoing evolution is part of the broader transformation of media technologies, where new terms and concepts continuously emerge in response to technological innovations. As a result, the digital landscape remains dynamic and rapidly changing.

Despite the differences in their names and distribution methods, podcasting and broadcasting continue to serve as essential tools for disseminating audio content. Each medium has its unique advantages, but both contribute to the rich, diverse media experiences that reach audiences across the globe. As both podcasting and broadcasting adapt to technological advancements and shifting audience preferences, they ensure that audio content remains accessible, engaging, and relevant in a fast-paced digital world.

In line with the arguments of Bolter (2000) and McLuhan (1964), we can conclude that new media forms should be viewed as the remediation of previous ones. In other words, the rules, forms of expression, and messages of older media are adapted and reworked by new mediums to suit the demands of the modern era. Much like television initially shaped its content through radio influences, podcasting has drawn substantial inspiration from radio content and programs, as highlighted by Gül et al. (2020).

Usage and Subculture in Independent Podcasting

Despite having its roots in radio, podcasting rapidly enabled the growth of a group of independent content creators (Bottomley et al., 2015), allowing communities to flourish on the ideals of peer-to-peer sharing and the cultures called "do-it-yourself", encouraging amateur audio producers to start creating and sharing their work (McHugh, 2016).

Millette (2011) further explores the concept of usage and subculture in independent podcasting, emphasizing the contributive nature of podcasters' online engagement. In media, subculture is defined as a distinct group within a larger society that has its own set of values, beliefs, norms, practices, styles, and behaviors, as highlighted by Chow (2017).

These subcultures often emerge as a response to or deviation from mainstream cultural norms, and they may be based on factors such as shared interests, experiences, identities, or ideologies. Moreover, podcasters in this subculture often add personal touches and genuine authenticity to their content. By sharing their own experiences, insights, and opinions, they build a stronger bond with their listeners, leading to trust and loyalty over time.

Podcasters, through personalized and experiential narratives, develop a stylistic repertoire that resonates with their audience, especially when these podcasts are produced in domestic spaces like garages or homes. This leads to what is described as "double-end domestication or privatization of the experience, where both the production and the consumption occur in the private spaces of homes or with headphone-wearing consumers" (Berry, 2016)."

Gül et al. (2020) contribute to this discussion by examining patterns of podcast usage and user motivations. Their findings reveal shifting towards mobile devices for podcast consumption, reflecting evolving media consumption habits. They identify a diverse audience engaging with podcasts for various reasons, including entertainment, time-shifting, and the social aspect of discussing shows with fellow fans.

However, Millette (2011) discusses how podcasters develop special technical skills in dealing with microphones and devices to create engaging content that satisfies their audiences. On the other hand, since podcasts are considered as participatory culture as Gül et al. (2020) points out. Millette (2011) highlights how it can play a role in change by offering alternative narratives to challenge traditional media.

In this context, Doe and Roe (2017) delve into the intersection of independent podcasting and activism, shedding light on how podcasts can serve as powerful tools for driving social change and facilitating political discourse outside conventional media frameworks. Their analysis underscores the potential of podcasts to amplify marginalized voices, mobilize communities, and challenge dominant narratives, thus contributing significantly to broader societal conversations and movements.

What contributes to this success is that many podcasts feature real-time chat rooms alongside their streams, maintain a strong presence on social media platforms, and provide multiple channels for listener feedback, including email, comment

sections, and voicemail. Comments posted in chat rooms or on platforms like Twitter contribute to ongoing discussions, enabling synchronized interaction and participation among listeners, according to Gül et al. (2020).

The relation between usage and subculture in independent podcasting highlights the symbiotic relationship between creators and consumers. As podcasters navigate online spaces, they not only contribute to the cultural tapestry of independent media but also foster a sense of community and belonging among their listeners. This participatory ethos not only enriches the content of independent podcasts but also serves as a catalyst for broader social and cultural dialogue, shaping the landscape of media production and consumption in profound ways.

Independent podcasting has cultivated vibrant subcultures, fostering unique relationships between creators and audiences. Bottomley et al. (2015) and McHugh (2016) highlight podcasting's roots in do-it-yourself cultures, enabling amateur producers to share authentic narratives.

Millette (2011) emphasizes the technical skills podcasters develop, while Gül et al. (2020) explore user motivations, identifying entertainment, time-shifting, and social engagement as key drivers. Podcasts' participatory nature aligns with McHugh's (2019) analysis of their anti-racist potential, amplifying marginalized voices and challenging systemic inequities.

Berry (2016) describes podcasting's "double-end domestication," where production and consumption occur in private spaces. This intimacy fosters community-building, as highlighted in Lindroos's (2020) analysis of the *Kujenga Amani* podcast. By prioritizing local narratives, Lindroos critiques the reliance on liberal frameworks, advocating for context-specific solutions.

Gül et al. (2020) further note that real-time chat rooms and social media interactions enhance listener engagement, creating dynamic participatory spaces. Doe and Roe (2017) extend this discussion by examining podcasts' role in activism,

showcasing their potential for driving social change and amplifying marginalized perspectives.

The Difference Between Podcasting and Broadcasting

In the contemporary landscape of media production, podcasting and broadcasting stand out as prominent mediums for delivering audio content. While they share similarities in disseminating information and entertainment to audiences, they diverge significantly in their production, distribution, and audience engagement dynamics, as Cebrián and Herreros (2008) highlight.

Technological advancements have blurred traditional boundaries between media platforms, facilitating media convergence. Jenkins (2006) emphasizes how this integration reshapes media creation and consumption. Podcasting epitomizes this shift, representing a transformative evolution in media production.

Brown (2020) positions podcasting as a contemporary revival of older audio formats, marked by its democratizing potential and alignment with ideals of user-generated content. McHugh (2016) reinforces this, highlighting podcasting's role in fostering an open digital public sphere. Defined as pre-recorded audio files distributed online for on-demand streaming or download (Brown, 2020), podcasts provide creators with autonomy and flexibility. Robinson (2024) underscores this flexibility, enabling creators to explore diverse topics without the constraints of traditional broadcasting.

Broadcasting, represented by radio, contrasts sharply with podcasting. Tennant (2023) notes that radio involves the live transmission of audio content, fostering immediacy and real-time audience interaction. Robinson (2024) highlights how this immediacy supports dynamic engagements like live call-ins. However, traditional broadcasting faces significant constraints, including airtime restrictions and advertiser influence. These limitations, as Millette (2011) argues, hinder

creativity and diversity, whereas podcasting offers an inclusive and participatory media environment.

Accessibility further distinguishes the two. Podcasts transcend geographical and temporal barriers, accessible globally at any time (Gül et al., 2020). In contrast, radio broadcasting's reach is often localized and constrained by schedules. This flexibility positions podcasting as a listener-centric medium that caters to individual preferences.

Grunewald and Hedges (2021) provide a broader context, introducing the concept of sociotechnical consciousness to explain how technologies like podcasting mediate human experiences. They advocate for an integrative approach to content creation, emphasizing critical engagement over traditional methods. This underscores podcasting's transformative potential compared to the structured framework of broadcasting.

The Role of Podcasts in Promoting Peacebuilding

The increasing reliance on digital media has significantly reshaped the landscape of peacebuilding, offering innovative tools for dialogue, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. Recent scholarship underscores the broader potential of digital media in fostering sustainable peace and societal transformation. As part of the wider digital ecosystem, podcasting benefits from the unique capabilities of digital platforms to create spaces for inclusive dialogue and civic participation. Digital media can contribute to driving social change toward more sustainable communities by fostering dialogue and the exchange of ideas (Jawabreh & Kamel Mohamed, 2024). Through its ability to amplify diverse perspectives and promote collective engagement, it facilitates a participatory environment that aligns with peacebuilding objectives. In this context, recent studies have indicated that digital media can play a pivotal role in encouraging community engagement and promoting participatory involvement in sustainable development efforts (Jawabreh & Kamel Mohamed,

2024). These findings reinforce the argument that podcasting—as a dynamic form of digital media—is not only a tool for expression but also a meaningful platform for mobilizing dialogue, fostering inclusion, and advancing social peace.

Unlike traditional media, which often disseminates information in a top-down manner, podcasts enable dynamic and interactive engagement. They allow for the inclusion of diverse voices in peacebuilding discourse, challenging dominant narratives and providing alternative perspectives. As Idris (2020) asserts, media plays a crucial role in fostering peace by promoting understanding, enabling cross-cultural dialogue, and encouraging collective action. Given their unique ability to connect deeply with niche audiences, podcasts serve as an instrumental medium in advancing these objectives.

However, research also points to the risks that digital platforms pose when misused. Digital media, especially social networks, have been shown to play a dual role, while they offer tools for peace, they can also propagate hate speech and division. Hussein (2023) notes that online platforms have increasingly become environments for spreading hatred and incitement, threatening community cohesion and national identity. Moreover, social media was found to contribute to behavioral and verbal violence, particularly among youth, highlighting the importance of intentional, positive media practices like podcasting.

In contrast to these negative trends, podcasts have the potential to counteract digital toxicity. Hussein (2023) emphasizes that despite the prevalence of harmful content, digital platforms still hold promise in promoting dialogue and reducing extremism provided they are harnessed with a peacebuilding framework in mind. This reinforces the value of podcasting as a curated, purposeful form of digital communication.

A sustainable peacebuilding strategy requires more than political agreements; it necessitates cultivating a culture of nonviolence, tolerance, and inclusivity at both

institutional and societal levels. According to Izzat and Younis (2018), the culture of non-violence rooted in tolerance and the acceptance of others plays a crucial role in fostering societal development and progress. Tolerance encourages bonds of love, peace, cooperation, and cohesion, unlike violence, extremism, and fanaticism, which contribute to societal decline, fragmentation, and the breakdown of social unity. Building such a culture requires tolerance as a fundamental value, which plays a crucial role in shaping events. Societies must foster an intellectual and spiritual environment that supports peace, and individuals who promote tolerance share a collective responsibility in embedding nonviolence within society.

Podcasts contribute to this imperative by amplifying narratives that challenge intolerance, mitigate polarization, and promote constructive dialogue. Their format allows for the exploration of diverse perspectives, enabling discourse on human rights, social justice, and historical reconciliation. By offering firsthand testimonies from individuals affected by conflict and oppression, podcasts humanize abstract political discussions, fostering empathy and deepening the listener's understanding of systemic challenges. As Izzat and Younis (2018) further emphasize, the promotion of a culture of nonviolence has become a social necessity in contemporary society, as increasing violence continues to erode social relationships. Through fostering awareness and critical reflection, podcasts serve as vehicles for transforming public attitudes toward nonviolence and social harmony.

Beyond their function as discussion platforms, podcasts play a pivotal role in peace education by integrating both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Grunewald and Hedges (2021) advocate for a practice-oriented approach to peace education, emphasizing the need to engage both intellect and emotion to foster meaningful change. Podcasts embody this pedagogical model by providing immersive storytelling that evokes empathy while simultaneously delivering

evidence-based analyses of conflicts, human rights issues, and reconciliation processes.

A compelling example of this is Kujenga Amani, a podcast series in Africa that, as Lindroos (2020) highlights, amplifies local voices, deconstructs stereotypes, and fosters inclusive peace narratives. These findings align with Neiger, Meyers, and Zandberg's (2011) assertion that media—particularly podcasts—serve as repositories of collective memory, preserving marginalized narratives that are often excluded from mainstream discourse. The ability of podcasts to document oral histories allows communities to reclaim their narratives, address historical injustices, and foster intergenerational dialogue on conflict resolution. McHugh (2019) further reinforces this notion by illustrating how podcasts empower historically oppressed communities to articulate their experiences, thereby reinforcing Halbwachs's (1992) concept of collective memory in shaping societal identity.

Unlike traditional media, which primarily broadcasts pre-structured content to passive audiences, podcasts thrive on participatory culture. They encourage audience interaction through listener feedback, social media discussions, and user-generated content, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility in peace initiatives. This participatory ethos is particularly critical in conflict-affected societies, where dialogue, representation, and collective agency are essential for rebuilding trust and cohesion.

As Thomas (2024) posits, peacebuilding is a multidimensional process encompassing reconciliation, structural transformation, and the establishment of sustainable peace mechanisms. Podcasts contribute significantly to this process by offering an interactive space where individuals from diverse backgrounds can engage in meaningful discourse, challenge hegemonic narratives, and co-create solutions to social conflicts. Unlike conventional media, which is often constrained by editorial policies and external influences, podcasts provide a decentralized

platform for grassroots activism, independent journalism, and advocacy efforts that prioritize community-driven solutions.

Moreover, the ability of podcasts to sustain long-form discussions allows for nuanced explorations of socio-political issues, providing deeper context and critical analysis than traditional soundbite-driven news formats. Hill, Carrigan, and Lybeck (2021) highlight that podcast serve as vehicles for fostering hope and solidarity during crises by promoting critical reflection, emotional resilience, and collective action. Jenkins (2006) reinforces this argument by emphasizing the transformative potential of participatory media in fostering social cohesion, democratic engagement, and resistance against misinformation.

Amplifying Marginalized Voices

Podcasts have become crucial platforms for amplifying marginalized voices. Digital platforms such as podcasts act as archives for collective memory, preserving and amplifying the narratives of underrepresented communities (Neiger, Meyers, & Zandberg, 2011). This process challenges dominant social narratives and promotes a nuanced understanding of complex social issues. By highlighting the stories of those who are often silenced, podcasts contribute to reshaping public discourse and offer alternatives to mainstream narratives that frequently perpetuate inequality and division.

The nature of podcasts based on dialogue plays a critical role in promoting social peace. Many podcasts feature interviews, panel discussions, and listener engagement, creating an interactive platform where active listening and critical reflection are encouraged. This format facilitates broader conversations within communities, particularly about contentious societal issues such as racial inequality, gender discrimination, and other forms of injustice. By addressing these sensitive topics, podcasts help foster greater understanding and empathy among listeners, contributing to collective efforts toward social peace.

Auditory storytelling, provide an intimate listening experience that bridges divides and builds trust among diverse audiences. Collaborative storytelling episodes, where individuals from different backgrounds share their experiences and perspectives, are particularly powerful in promoting understanding and cooperation. This shared experience fosters a sense of connection and empathy, which are essential components of social peace.

The on-demand nature of podcasts enhances their effectiveness in promoting social peace. By allowing listeners to engage with content at their own pace, podcasts facilitate deeper reflection and assimilation of ideas. The ability to pause, reflect, and revisit content encourages more thoughtful engagement, allowing listeners to internalize the lessons and values presented in episodes. Addressing universal themes such as justice, reconciliation, and coexistence, podcasts help cultivate a shared understanding of the principles underpinning social peace.

Podcasts and Peacebuilding in the Arab World

In the Arab world, podcasts address complex socio-political challenges, offering platforms for dialogue on issues like human rights and gender equality. Lindroos (2020) highlights the importance of local actors in peacebuilding, emphasizing context-specific narratives. This aligns with Grunewald and Hedges' (2021) emphasis on co-creating environments that foster critical engagement, suggesting that podcasts can mediate human experiences and influence collective behaviors. By leveraging their unique auditory format, podcasts amplify marginalized voices, fostering resilience and challenging stereotypes.

Podcasts serve as archives for collective memory, preserving and disseminating diverse narratives. Halbwachs (1992) underscores the role of collective memory in shaping societal identity. Similarly, McHugh (2019) explores how podcasts amplify marginalized voices, challenging systemic inequities and promoting nuanced understandings of social issues. In the Arab world, this role is

particularly significant as podcasts offer alternative platforms for discussing sensitive topics often suppressed in mainstream media.

Through curated storytelling and participatory dialogue, podcasts construct shared narratives essential for cohesive societies. Ferrer, Lorenzetti, and Shaw (2019) emphasize podcasting's pedagogical potential in fostering reflective dialogue and social justice advocacy. These elements resonate within the Arab context, where podcasts offer hope and mutual understanding amidst regional conflict and change. By blending personal stories with broader societal themes, podcasts not only entertain but also educate and inspire transformative action toward peacebuilding. Podcasts in the Arab world are thus not just tools for disseminating information but active agents of change. They bridge divides, amplify underrepresented voices, and foster empathy, contributing significantly to the region's peacebuilding endeavors.

● Research Practical Framework

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach to explore the role of independent podcasting in promoting peacebuilding. The methodology involves a purposeful selection of three podcast episodes that represent a variety of cultural and social contexts within the Arab world. The selection process was guided by specific criteria to ensure a comprehensive and nuanced analysis.

Sample Analysis

1. Podcast Title: "How Can We Use Our Voice to Build Peace"

Podcast Overview: The podcast "How Can We Use Our Voice to Build Peace?" produced by Hakawati Podcast explores the transformative power of voice in creating peaceful societies.

1.1. Category: Thematic Unit:

- **Analysis:** Voice as a Peacebuilding Tool The podcast consistently portrays "voice" as a central tool for fostering peace. Voice is not just the literal act of speaking; it is presented as a means of challenging societal norms, addressing

injustices, and advocating for marginalized communities. Speakers emphasize that through dialogue, individuals can break down stereotypes and contribute to resolving conflicts in non-violent ways.

1.2. Category: Idea Unite:

- **Analysis:** The podcast starts by emphasizing that voice is not merely about speaking, but a tool for action to break stereotypes and promote peace. It suggests that individuals can create meaningful change by raising their voice, confronting injustices, and making space for marginalized groups.

Analysis:

In this Podcast, the relationship between voice and peacebuilding was explored, with a focus on the role of individuals in influencing social and political change. The discussion highlighted that voice is not just a tool for communication, but a powerful means through which injustice can be challenged and social impact can be made. It was emphasized that voice represents a privilege not everyone has, creating a gap in social and political engagement.

Quote: *"Voice is more than just what we say; it's the way we challenge injustice and stigmas through dialogue."*

One of the main issues discussed was the need to give everyone a chance to express their views and contribute to the dialogue, especially those who may be marginalized or silenced. Conflict is part of daily life, but violence arises when different voices are marginalized or spaces for these voices are eliminated. The interview stressed that through advocacy and empowerment, individuals can work towards changing social and political realities.

Quote: *"When we speak, we disrupt the status quo, and this disruption is the foundation of peacebuilding."*

Based on this, the analysis points to the fact that the role of voice in peacebuilding lies in using it as a tool for constructive interaction, rather than as a means to deepen

division or conflict. The interview calls for everyone to participate in this process to ensure that peace is genuine and sustainable. In this context, it emphasizes that each individual has the ability to make a difference, and that peace begins with oneself and in one's immediate environment.

Quote: *"Each of us has the ability to impact peace in our own spaces."*

Quote: *"We cannot wait for others to act; our voice is our contribution to a more peaceful world."*

The role of voice is also underscored as essential for preventing violence and fostering a peaceful environment. Violence arises when certain voices are ignored or silenced. A key part of peacebuilding is to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and that no one is excluded from the conversation.

Quote: *"Conflict is inevitable, but how we deal with it makes the difference between peace and violence."*

Quote: *"Violence arises when voices are silenced or ignored."*

Finally, the conversation reinforced that empowerment begins with having the freedom to speak out and advocate for what is right. By advocating for others, individuals contribute to a larger movement for change and peace.

Quote: *"Empowerment starts with the ability to speak up and advocate for what is right."*

Quote: *"When we speak on behalf of others, we amplify their voices and create a ripple effect of change."*

2. Podcast Episode Title: "The Path to Peace"

Podcast Overview: Podcast Overview: In this first episode of (The Path to Peace), Somaya Al-Hassam discusses the concept of peace and its role in society. The episode emphasizes that peace is not just about resolving conflicts between warring parties, but about achieving personal, familial, and societal harmony.

2.1. Category: Thematic Unit:

- **Analysis:** The podcast underscores peace as a multifaceted concept that includes personal peace, societal peace, and national peace. Somaya Al-Hassam explains that true peace begins within the individual, extends to family dynamics, and eventually fosters societal and national peace. The discussion moves beyond political conflicts and addresses the need for self-acceptance, societal tolerance, and mutual respect to build lasting peace.

2.2. Category: Idea Unit:

- **Analysis:** The episode stresses that peace starts with individual inner harmony, which then expands to family and community peace. Somaya explains that peace is a continuous process that requires understanding oneself and others. The ultimate goal is a peaceful society, where individuals live harmoniously, despite differences in background or belief.

Analysis

In this episode, peace is framed not only as the absence of conflict but as the active presence of harmony, understanding, and mutual respect. The podcast links individual peace with broader societal peace, suggesting that peacebuilding starts with self-awareness and extends outward. The conversation reveals the importance of addressing internal conflicts and promoting emotional and social well-being to foster peace.

Quote: *"Peace begins within, in our hearts and minds."*

The importance of dialogue and mutual understanding is highlighted, as Somaya emphasizes that peace cannot be achieved without addressing personal conflicts and societal disparities. She advocates for the need to respect different cultures and beliefs, ensuring inclusivity in peace processes.

Quote: *"True peace comes when we understand and respect the other, even if we differ."*

Furthermore, the episode introduces peacebuilding as an ongoing process involving personal growth, social understanding, and cooperation. By recognizing and addressing the root causes of conflicts, societies can work towards a peaceful existence.

Quote: "Peace is not just a goal, but a continuous journey."

3. Podcast Episode Title: "Fadi's Podcast"

Podcast Overview: This podcast hosted by Talal Malek, focuses on the concept of freedom from a personal perspective. He explores freedom as a subjective and internal feeling, emphasizing that it isn't confined to laws, religions, or societal systems. According to Talal, freedom is a mindset that allows individuals to think, act, and exist without the constraints imposed by others, as long as they don't harm others.

3.1. Category: Thematic Unit:

- **Analysis:** Social Judgement and Freedom, Personal Space and Public Behavior, Cultural Sensitivity and Freedom, Freedom vs. Social Norms, The Role of Personal Experience in Defining Freedom.

3.2. Category: Idea Unit:

- **Analysis:** The judgment of others' freedoms, Freedom in private vs. public, the importance of respecting different cultural views on freedom, balancing individual freedom with societal expectations, how individual experiences shape the understanding of freedom.

Analysis:

In this podcast, freedom is framed not as a simple external state but as a deeply internal, personal experience that transcends societal boundaries. The podcast explores the idea that true freedom is not something material or external but rather a state of mind and personal autonomy. The conversation emphasizes how freedom is felt within the individual and cannot be dictated by external circumstances.

Quote: *“Freedom, for me, is something internal, not material. You can't touch it; it's an internal feeling.”*

The discussion also addresses the tension between societal norms and individual freedom, illustrating how cultural customs are often mistaken for religious mandates. This distinction is important because it shows how society's restrictions can be mistaken for moral or religious imperatives, limiting personal freedom. The podcast calls for a reassessment of these societal norms and encourages individuals to seek their own path.

Quote: *“We confuse social customs with religion. This is not from religion, it's just customs.”*

Additionally, the episode highlights that freedom is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Each person expresses freedom differently, shaped by personal experiences and individual circumstances. The podcast stresses that freedom is subjective and cannot be universally defined by a single standard. It suggests that the true essence of freedom lies in embracing the diverse ways people define and experience it.

Quote: *“Freedom is not a fixed idea. Everyone expresses it in a different way.”*

However, the episode also reflects on the paradox that, as one strives for greater freedom, one often encounters increased scrutiny and judgment. Despite the desire for autonomy, societal judgment can create barriers that inhibit full expression of personal freedom. This dynamic reveals the complex relationship between personal desires and external societal pressures.

Quote: *“You cannot act as you wish in our societies because there is always someone who criticizes and judges.”*

The podcast also acknowledges the irony that greater freedom can expose individuals to greater vulnerability. The more openly one pursues personal freedom, the more susceptible one becomes to criticism and marginalization from society.

This reflects the idea that true freedom often challenges societal expectations, making the individual a target for judgment.

Quote: *“The more free you are, the more you are exposed to criticism.”*

Finally, the episode emphasizes that freedom is not only about liberation from external constraints but also about the ability to make choices. It suggests that true freedom is realized when individuals are empowered to choose their own path, free from imposed limitations and societal expectations.

Quote: *“Freedom is not just liberation from constraints, but also the ability to choose the path you want.”*

● Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the three sample podcasts highlighted the role of independent podcasting in promoting peacebuilding through participatory storytelling, inclusivity, and fostering dialogue. which are include:

1. **Amplifying Marginalized Voices:** Podcasts like "How Can We Use Our Voice to Build Peace" emphasize the importance of giving a platform to voices that are often overlooked or silenced. Speakers highlighted how using one's voice can challenge societal norms, address injustices, and advocate for marginalized communities. This aligns with McHugh's (2019) findings on podcasting as a space for amplifying underrepresented narratives and promoting anti-racism.

2. **Encouraging Dialogue and Understanding:** Podcasts such as "The Path to Peace" explore peace as a multifaceted concept, starting from personal harmony and extending to societal and national levels. Discussions highlighted the importance of dialogue and mutual respect in resolving conflicts, fostering understanding, and building a culture of peace. This resonates with Lindroos's (2020) emphasis on local narratives and context-specific solutions.

3. **Freedom and Self-Expression:** The podcast "Freedoms Podcast" explores freedom as an internal state, highlighting the tension between societal norms and

personal autonomy. The discussion revealed how individuals can redefine freedom to align with personal values while respecting societal diversity. This mirrors Bonini's (2022) perspective on podcasting as a hybrid cultural form that bridges personal and collective identities.

4. **Participatory Culture:** Across the analyzed episodes, participatory culture emerged as a cornerstone of podcasting's success. The use of interactive features such as social media and real-time feedback allowed creators to engage deeply with their audiences, fostering trust and collaboration. This aligns with Jenkins's (2006) emphasis on participatory media as a transformative force.

●Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the role of independent podcasting in peacebuilding:

1. **Expand Accessibility:** Efforts should be made to improve access to podcasting tools and platforms, particularly in underserved regions. This would allow more individuals to share their stories and contribute to peacebuilding dialogues.

2. **Support Local Content Creation:** Encourage the production of locally relevant content that addresses specific cultural and societal issues. This ensures that podcasting remains inclusive and context-sensitive.

3. **Promote Education and Training:** Provide training programs for aspiring podcasters on technical skills, storytelling, and ethical content creation to enhance the quality and impact of podcasts.

4. **Foster Collaborative Networks:** Develop networks that connect podcasters, activists, and peacebuilding organizations to amplify their collective impact.

5. **Leverage Technology for Engagement:** Integrate advanced technologies like AI-driven analytics to understand audience preferences and improve content delivery.

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