Fitting a Structural Media Model to Reduce the Effects and Consequences of Human Rights Violations in Iraq

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A B S T R A C T

Purpose: This study aims to fit a structural media model for reducing the effects and consequences of human rights violations in Iraq by analyzing the relationships among environmental, ideological, structural, and media-related variables.

Methods and Materials: The research employed a quantitative survey design using a correlational approach. The statistical population consisted of human rights activists and experts in Iraq during 2024–2025, with a sample of 384 participants selected via convenience sampling based on Cochran's formula. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire derived from qualitative data analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha were used to assess the measurement model. The structural model was evaluated using SmartPLS 4 and SPSS 27 software to estimate path coefficients, R^2, Q^2, and GOF values, confirming model fit and predictive relevance.

Findings: The results demonstrated that macro-environmental dynamics significantly influenced human rights violations ($t = 9.165$, $p < 0.001$), while human rights violations significantly affected media skills development ($t = 4.107$, $p < 0.001$) but not media awareness ($t = 1.263$, $p = 0.207$). Ideological deviation had a significant effect on both media awareness ($t = 2.335$, $p = 0.020$) and skills development ($t = 2.240$, $p = 0.025$). Structural disintegration significantly impacted media awareness ($t = 4.392$, $p < 0.001$) and skills development ($t = 3.725$, $p < 0.001$). Both media awareness ($t = 3.816$, $p < 0.001$) and skills development ($t = 5.257$, $p < 0.001$) significantly influenced international image optimization. The model's GOF score (0.594) indicated strong overall fit.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the multifactorial nature of human rights violations in Iraq and highlight the critical role of media-related strategies—particularly skill development—in mitigating their impact and enhancing international perception. Structural and ideological barriers must be addressed to fully leverage media's transformative potential.

1. Introduction

The persistent violation of human rights remains one of the most pressing legal, ethical, and political dilemmas in the contemporary international system. Although the global community has taken extensive measures to institutionalize human rights through binding treaties, regional instruments, and international institutions, empirical realities continue to reflect large-scale infringements across conflict zones and authoritarian regimes. Iraq stands out as a focal point in this discourse—not only because of the recurrence of rights violations but also due to the inefficacy of media systems to counteract, document, or prevent these breaches in a meaningful manner (Alizādeh et al., 2024; Shojāʿ et al., 2023; Shokri Bafrājerd, 2023). The multidimensional relationship between media structures, public awareness, and the safeguarding of human rights necessitates the development of an integrated model that can systematically reduce the effects and consequences of such violations.

A foundational tension in human rights theory stems from the dual nature of media as both a liberating force and a tool of hegemony. As Zuboff (2019) argues, the age of surveillance capitalism has turned digital platforms into arenas of data exploitation, thereby undermining democratic freedoms and privacy (Zuboff, 2019). However, this techno-political paradox is not merely theoretical. In Iraq, the instrumentalization of media by state and non-state actors, along with structural disintegration in regulatory frameworks, exacerbates the public's exposure to disinformation, ideological manipulation, and selective reporting on human rights abuses (Shayanfar, 2023; Shojāʿ et al., 2023). The challenge is therefore not just to ensure media access but to elevate media quality and independence as pillars of human rights protection (Hosseini & Rahaee, 2024).

Scholars such as Abbāsi Ashlaghi and Norouzi Firouz (2018) underscore the transformative potential of media in developing human rights norms, particularly in transitional societies grappling with legacies of authoritarianism and ethnic conflict (Abbāsi Ashlaghi & Norouzi Firouz, 2018). Media, in its normative role, is capable of fostering accountability, shaping public discourse, and holding governments to legal and moral standards (Ekpa, 2016; Esref Keles, 2022). Nonetheless, the structural obstacles facing media actors in Iraq—ranging from state repression and

ideological polarization to technological illiteracy and limited access to training—demand a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding of how media can play a mitigating role in contexts of human rights violations (Ahmadzadeh, 2023; Rastami Khorasgani, 2021).

The concept of human rights itself is not immune to instrumentalization. As noted by Sāberi Tavallāʾi (2025), the discourse of human rights has at times shifted from a tool of liberation to an instrument of domination, deployed selectively by international powers to legitimize interventionist agendas (Sāberi Tavallāʾi, 2025). This raises critical questions about the epistemic integrity and universality of the norms being promoted by both state-run and transnational media outlets. It also suggests that any media-based model for reducing rights violations in Iraq must confront the geopolitics of representation, ensuring that local narratives are not subsumed under hegemonic scripts (Bloomfield, 2016; Brutger & Strezhnev, 2017).

Indeed, the performance of international institutions like the UN Human Rights Council and the Security Council has been criticized for inconsistency and politicization. The Council's responses to violations in places such as Bahrain and Gaza have prompted scholarly debate about its efficacy and impartiality (Shokouhi & Abbāszādeh Fathābādi, 2022; Shokri Bafrājerd, 2023). Similarly, the Security Council's inaction in the face of grave rights abuses has highlighted the structural imbalance in the international legal order (Alizādeh et al., 2024; Shāfeʿ & Dolāh, 2016). These shortcomings have motivated a shift in scholarly focus toward bottom-up strategies—particularly those rooted in civil society and media mobilization—to hold violators accountable and promote a culture of rights (Dehbanipour et al., 2025; Montazerān & Musāzādeh, 2021).

Digital media, despite its challenges, has emerged as a powerful vector for documentation and resistance. Social networks enable decentralized reporting, amplify marginalized voices, and bypass traditional gatekeepers (Hajmohammadi, 2022; Nemkova et al., 2023). However, in conflict zones like Iraq, these platforms are often weaponized, either through state-sponsored surveillance or cyber warfare aimed at silencing dissent (Qolizādeh, 2023; Shojāʿ et al., 2023). The dual-use nature of social media technologies, as illustrated during the Russia-Ukraine war, necessitates a strategic and ethically grounded framework for their deployment in human rights advocacy (Nemkova et al., 2023).

The role of education and media training in developing a resilient media ecosystem cannot be overstated. Studies suggest that enhancing media literacy among citizens—especially journalists, legal experts, and youth—strengthens the public's ability to recognize violations and demand accountability (Alquraan & Aduse, 2022; Azadi, 2024). In Iraq, where the media landscape remains fragmented and ideologically charged, building professional skills through systematic programs is a crucial step toward empowering actors capable of advancing a human rights agenda (Ahmadzadeh, 2023; Biparva, 2016). Moreover, fostering collaboration between local and international media institutions can lead to the diffusion of best practices and mitigate the risks of reporting in hostile environments (Bozorgmehri & Kia Rostami, 2017; Esref Keles, 2022).

From a legal perspective, the evolution of international norms has placed increasing responsibility on states to uphold rights even during emergencies. The doctrine of due diligence, as highlighted by Hosseini and Rahaee (2024), underscores the duty of states not only to refrain from violating rights but also to protect individuals from third-party abuses (Hosseini & Rahaee, 2024). This dual obligation implies that media freedom and access to information must be preserved even under national security pretexts—a standard rarely met in the Iraqi context (Omāni et al., 2023; Sharīʿatī Aṣl, 2023).

What is needed, therefore, is a structural model that integrates environmental, political, and technological variables to enhance media's role in reducing human rights violations. Such a model must account for macro-environmental dynamics (e.g., sanctions, foreign interventions, and regional instability) as well as endogenous factors such as ideological deviation, institutional weakness, and legal fragmentation (Dehbanipour et al., 2025; Shayanfar, 2023). The implications of this model extend beyond Iraq, offering a scalable framework for other post-conflict and authoritarian contexts.

While the relationship between media and human rights remains complex and contingent, the normative and functional capacities of media systems can and must be strengthened through empirical research and policy innovation. The present study builds upon the works of scholars such as Bloomfield (2016), Skarstad (2016), and David (2022), who argue for a critical interrogation of power relations within both international law and media discourse (Bloomfield, 2016; David & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2022; Skarstad & Strand, 2016). By proposing a structural media model tailored to the specific context of Iraq, this research aims to fill a critical gap in the literature and offer actionable strategies for mitigating the effects of rights violations through informed and ethical media practices.

2. Methods and Materials

Given that the objective of the present study is "Fitting a Structural Model to Reduce the Effects and Consequences of Human Rights Violations in Iraq," the research approach is quantitative, and a survey research method was employed. The goal of this phase is to validate the media model in order to reduce the effects and consequences of human rights violations based on findings from the qualitative phase.

To assess construct validity, first-order and second-order confirmatory factor analysis and item analysis methods were used. For reliability assessment, Cronbach's alpha was utilized. The statistical population in the quantitative phase consisted of all human rights activists and experts in Iraq during the 2024–2025 period, the total number of whom is unknown. Based on Cochran's formula, a sample of 384 individuals was selected using a convenience sampling method.

Data collection in the quantitative section of the study was conducted using a questionnaire derived from qualitative data analysis. Since the content of the questionnaire reflects components with the highest importance coefficients and the items were validated by experts, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed.

With respect to the reliability of the questionnaire, it should be noted that Cronbach's alpha was initially calculated to confirm its reliability for statistical testing. Additionally, construct reliability was examined using three indices: composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), construct reliability is established when the composite reliability values exceed 0.7 and the AVE values exceed 0.5. However, MacKenzie et al. (1996) considered AVE values above 0.4 to be acceptable. The AVE value indicates the extent to which the variance of the observed variables is explained by the latent variable. In other words, the latent variable must account for at least 50% of the variance in its observed indicators.

The results reported in the table demonstrate that all composite reliability values exceeded 0.6, indicating acceptable construct reliability.

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS version 27 and Smart PLS version 4 software. In this study, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage of frequency, frequency distribution tables, and charts were used to describe the data and the characteristics of questionnaire respondents. For inferential analysis, factor analysis methods were employed.

3. Findings and Results

In the first phase (qualitative section) of the study, the paradigm model of the research includes seven axial codes that, based on their significance and qualitative data analysis, were placed in the appropriate components of the model.

Accordingly, the axial code "human rights violations" with four components—(1) intolerance toward minorities, (2) absence of centralized mechanisms, (3) absence of oversight mechanisms, and (4) lack of respect for individual rights—was identified as the core category influencing strategies.

Additionally, the axial code "macro-environmental dynamics" with four components—(1) legal stimuli, (2) political stimuli, (3) military stimuli, and (4) social stimuli—was introduced as the causal condition influencing the core category.

Subsequently, the axial code "ideological deviation" with three components—(1) systemic inefficiency, (2) political repression, and (3) soft suppression—was identified as the contextual condition affecting the strategies.

Moreover, the axial code "structural disintegration" with three components—(1) lack of restructuring, (2) absence of discourse consensus, and (3) lack of promotional justice—was defined as the intervening condition influencing the strategies.

The axial code "media awareness" with three components—(1) online platforms, (2) online reporting, and (3) online campaigns—was identified as a strategy affecting the outcomes.

This model also included another axial code in the strategy section titled "media skills development," which comprises three components—(1) digital content creation, (2) media networking, and (3) media storytelling—each recognized as strategic influencers.

Finally, in the outcome section of the model, the axial code "international image optimization" was introduced with four components—(1) freedom development, (2) fundamental reforms, (3) civil society participation, and (4) comprehensive facilitation.

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the study variables, as detailed in the following table. The table includes the study variables along with descriptive statistics such as mean, variance, and standard deviation. As observed, *International Image Optimization* has the highest mean score, while *Media Skills Development* has the lowest mean score.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Studied Variables

Statistical Index	Human Rights Violations	Macro-Environmental Dynamics	Ideological Deviation	Structural Disintegration	Media Awareness	Media Skills Development	International Image Optimization
Valid N (Sample Size)	384	384	384	384	384	384	384
Missing Data	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.9504	3.9849	3.8867	3.8364	3.9091	3.8030	4.0771
Standard Deviation	0.68179	0.68962	0.70730	0.69188	0.70667	0.74320	0.77267
Variance	0.465	0.476	0.500	0.479	0.499	0.552	0.597
Minimum	2.10	1.53	1.88	1.25	1.33	1.36	1.05
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

In Partial Least Squares (PLS) modeling, two models are tested. The first is the *outer model*, which is equivalent to the measurement model, and the second is the *inner model*, equivalent to the structural model in covariance-based approaches. Thus, in the first stage, the measurement model is assessed through validity and reliability analyses, and in the second stage, the structural model is evaluated by estimating path coefficients and determining model fit indices.

To assess the measurement model fit, three criteria are used: (1) indicator reliability, (2) convergent validity, and (3) discriminant validity. Indicator reliability itself is evaluated
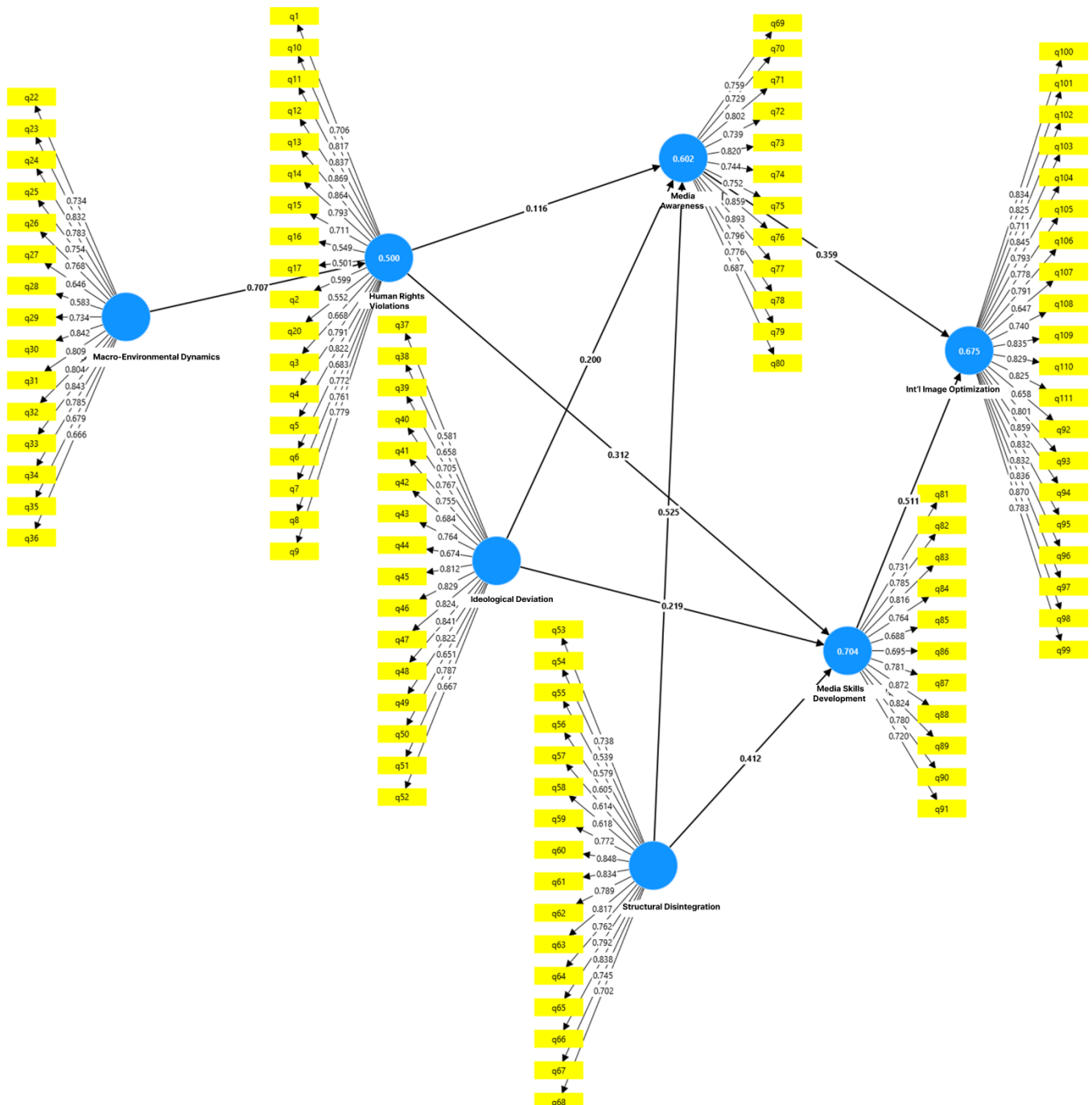
using three indices: (1) Cronbach's alpha, (2) composite reliability (Rho), and (3) factor loading coefficients.

The first factor to consider in model evaluation is the unidimensionality of model indicators. This means that each indicator should have a high factor loading on only one latent variable. The acceptable threshold for factor loadings is above 0.40. Factor loadings below 0.40 are considered weak and must be removed from the set of indicators. This is typically done manually by excluding those indicators with loadings below 0.40. After computing the factor loadings and removing the indicators with loadings below 0.40, the values shown in Figure 1 were obtained.

Figure 1

Factor Loadings Coefficients

Another important measure for evaluating the internal consistency reliability of the model is Cronbach's alpha, which ranges from 0 to 1. Values above 0.70 are considered acceptable, while values below 0.60 are regarded as

undesirable (Cronbach, 1951). Evaluation of the outer (measurement) model involves checking the reliability and validity of the constructs and the research instruments.

While Cronbach's alpha is a traditional criterion for assessing construct reliability, PLS employs a more modern measure called *composite reliability*. This measure, introduced by Werts et al. (1974), is superior to Cronbach's alpha because it calculates construct reliability based on the intercorrelation of indicators rather than assuming equal loadings. For better reliability evaluation in PLS, both measures are employed. Some researchers refer to composite reliability as CR or Rho (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013, p. 80). If the CR value for a construct exceeds 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), it indicates acceptable internal consistency for the measurement model; values below 0.60 suggest lack of reliability.

After computing the CR values for the study variables, the composite reliability values were compiled into the following table.

Table 2

Composite Reliability Values

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)
Media Awareness	0.942	0.944	0.949
Ideological Deviation	0.945	0.950	0.951
International Image Optimization	0.970	0.972	0.972
Media Skills Development	0.931	0.935	0.941
Macro-Environmental Dynamics	0.945	0.953	0.952
Structural Disintegration	0.940	0.947	0.948
Human Rights Violations	0.947	0.952	0.954

Fornell and Larcker (1981) introduced the criterion of *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) for assessing convergent validity, asserting that the critical threshold for this indicator is 0.5. This means that an AVE value above 0.5 indicates acceptable convergent validity.

After calculating the AVE values for the research variables, the convergent validity table was completed as follows. Since all AVE values are greater than 0.5, convergent validity is deemed acceptable.

Table 3

Convergent Validity (AVE) Values

Variable	Convergent Validity (AVE)
Media Awareness	0.611
Ideological Deviation	0.552
International Image Optimization	0.638
Media Skills Development	0.594
Macro-Environmental Dynamics	0.569
Structural Disintegration	0.535
Human Rights Violations	0.540

Another key criterion for evaluating discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct relates more strongly to its own indicators than to those of other constructs. Fornell and Larcker (1981) stated that acceptable discriminant validity exists when the AVE for each construct is greater than the shared variance between that construct and others—i.e., when the square root of AVE exceeds the correlation coefficients between constructs.

In Partial Least Squares (PLS), this is assessed using a matrix in which diagonal cells contain the square roots of AVE, and the off-diagonal cells show inter-construct correlation coefficients. A model is considered to have acceptable discriminant validity if the diagonal values are greater than the corresponding off-diagonal values in each row and column.

Table 4

Fornell–Larcker Discriminant Validity Matrix

Variable	Media Awareness	Ideological Deviation	Int'l Image Opt.	Media Skills Dev.	Macro Env. Dyn.	Structural Disintegration	Human Rights Violations
Media Awareness	0.782						
Ideological Deviation	0.684	0.743					
Int'l Image Optimization	0.756	0.670	0.799				
Media Skills Development	0.778	0.722	0.790	0.771			
Macro-Environmental Dynamics	0.634	0.657	0.746	0.705	0.755		
Structural Disintegration	0.761	0.702	0.792	0.712	0.688	0.731	
Human Rights Violations	0.569	0.551	0.723	0.702	0.707	0.654	0.735

Based on the values in Table 4, the square roots of the AVE values (diagonal elements) are higher than the corresponding off-diagonal correlation values in each row and column. Therefore, the model demonstrates relatively acceptable discriminant validity.

The R^2 value connects the measurement and structural sections of a structural equation model and indicates the extent to which an exogenous variable influences an endogenous variable. It should be noted that R^2 is only calculated for endogenous constructs; it is zero for exogenous constructs (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013, p. 91). This value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better model fit. Chin (1988) categorized values near 0.67 as substantial, near 0.33 as moderate, and near 0.19 as weak.

Table 5

R-Squared (R^2) and Adjusted R^2 Values

Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Media Awareness	0.602	0.592
International Image Optimization	0.675	0.669
Media Skills Development	0.704	0.696
Human Rights Violations	0.500	0.495

Mean R^2: 0.620

The obtained R^2 values suggest a moderately acceptable structural model fit.

Introduced by Stone and Geisser (1975), the Q^2 criterion assesses the predictive relevance of the model. According to their view, a model with an acceptable structural fit should be able to predict the indicators of its endogenous constructs. If the Q^2 value for an endogenous variable is zero or negative, it indicates that the structural relationships in the model are poorly defined, and the model needs revision.

Henseler et al. (2009) identified three benchmark levels for predictive strength: 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (strong). If Q^2 is close to 0.02, the model's predictive power is weak (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2014, p. 96).

Table 6

Q^2 Predictive Relevance Values

Variable	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (= 1 − SSE/SSO)
Media Awareness	1440.000	653.983	0.546
Ideological Deviation	1920.000	969.642	0.495
International Image Optimization	2400.000	970.326	0.596
Media Skills Development	1320.000	632.138	0.521
Macro-Environmental Dynamics	1800.000	904.519	0.497
Structural Disintegration	1920.000	989.792	0.484

Human Rights Violations	2160.000	1108.161	0.487

Since all Q^2 values are greater than 0.35, the model exhibits strong predictive power. Therefore, the overall model adequately predicts the relevant variables.

The shared variance for each indicator is calculated using the second-order average of its correlation with its respective latent construct—i.e., its factor loadings (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013, p. 89). The *Redundancy* criterion reflects the degree of variability in an endogenous construct's indicators that is explained by one or more exogenous constructs. It is obtained by multiplying the shared variance of an endogenous construct by its corresponding R^2 value. Higher *mean redundancy* values indicate a better-fitting structural model.

The overall model encompasses both the measurement and structural components. With the confirmation of its fit, the evaluation of the full model is considered complete, and it is assessed using a single index called the *Goodness of Fit* (GOF). Values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are interpreted as weak, moderate, and strong, respectively (Davari, 2014).

Table 7

Redundancy and GOF Values

Variable	Redundancy Value
Media Awareness	0.342
International Image Optimization	0.418
Media Skills Development	0.398
Human Rights Violations	0.256
Mean Redundancy	0.353
GOF Value	0.594

According to the above table, the average variability influence across variables is approximately 35%. Additionally, the obtained GOF value of 0.594 indicates a strong model fit, as it exceeds the 0.36 threshold.

The most basic criterion for assessing the relationships between constructs in the structural model is the *t-value*. If the t-value exceeds 1.96, the relationship between the constructs is statistically significant, confirming the research hypothesis at the 95% confidence level.

Table 8

t-Statistics for the Structural Model Paths

Pathway	Factor Loading	Std. Error (STDEV)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
Media Awareness → International Image Optimization	0.359	0.094	3.816	0.000	Accepted
Ideological Deviation → Media Awareness	0.200	0.086	2.335	0.020	Accepted
Ideological Deviation → Media Skills Development	0.219	0.098	2.240	0.025	Accepted
Media Skills Development → Int'l Image Optimization	0.511	0.097	5.257	0.000	Accepted
Macro-Environmental Dynamics → Human Rights Violations	0.707	0.077	9.165	0.000	Accepted
Structural Disintegration → Media Awareness	0.525	0.120	4.392	0.000	Accepted
Structural Disintegration → Media Skills Development	0.412	0.111	3.725	0.000	Accepted
Human Rights Violations → Media Awareness	0.116	0.092	1.263	0.207	Rejected
Human Rights Violations → Media Skills Development	0.312	0.076	4.107	0.000	Accepted

Hypothesis 1: Macro-environmental dynamics have a significant impact on human rights violations.

The t-value is 9.165 and the p-value is 0.000. Since t > 1.96 and p < 0.05, the relationship is significant. This hypothesis indicates that large-scale environmental factors—such as international politics, global economic shifts, regional instability, and socio-cultural transformations—significantly influence the human rights situation in Iraq. In essence, human rights violations in Iraq are not solely a domestic matter but are deeply affected by complex transnational forces including regional wars, international sanctions, foreign military presence, global economic fluctuations, and geopolitical developments.

Hypothesis 2: Human rights violations have a significant impact on media awareness.

The t-value is 1.263 and the p-value is 0.207. Since t < 1.96 and p > 0.05, the relationship is not significant. This result may be explained by the presence of mediating or moderating factors such as political structures, media restrictions, or security conditions that hinder the transmission of human rights issues through the media. Potential reasons include:

- **Weak independent media**: Due to political pressures, censorship, and intervention, Iraqi media may be unable to report adequately on human rights violations.
- **Data limitations**: The quality and availability of data related to media awareness and human rights violations may be insufficient to reflect the true relationship.
- **Media focus elsewhere**: Media in Iraq may prioritize urgent topics such as security crises or economic instability over human rights reporting.

Hypothesis 3: Human rights violations significantly impact media skills development.

The t-value is 4.107 and the p-value is 0.000. Since t > 1.96 and p < 0.05, the relationship is significant. Explanatory considerations include:

- **Decreased motivation and job security for media professionals**: Under threat of violence or arrest, journalists may be less able to focus on skill development or creative production.
- **Restricted access to educational resources**: Governments that violate human rights often also limit access to open educational platforms, including those for media literacy and digital journalism.
- **Suppression of civic engagement**: Effective use of media skills for advocacy requires a free and supportive environment, which is often suppressed under human rights violations.
- **Media professional migration or withdrawal**: Skilled media actors may either emigrate or withdraw from public discourse, depriving society of their potential.

Hypothesis 4: Ideological deviation significantly influences media awareness.

The t-value is 2.335 and the p-value is 0.020. Since t > 1.96 and p < 0.05, the relationship is significant. Ideological deviation, often driven by political influence or sectarian interests, can distort media messaging, shifting it away from objective reporting toward agenda-driven narratives. In Iraq, media are frequently affiliated with political, ethnic, or religious factions, leading to biased reporting and selective dissemination of information instead of impartial media awareness.

Hypothesis 5: Ideological deviation significantly impacts media skills development.

The t-value is 2.240 and the p-value is 0.025. Since t > 1.96 and p < 0.05, the relationship is significant. Iraq's political and social climate is heavily influenced by ideological frameworks. As a result, media training and capacity-building programs may become politicized, focusing on propagandistic messaging instead of empowering critical media practices. When training is ideologically skewed, it compromises the development of authentic media skills by limiting access to unbiased content and critical thinking.

Hypothesis 6: Structural disintegration significantly affects media awareness.

The t-value is 4.392 and the p-value is 0.000. Since t > 1.96 and p < 0.05, the relationship is significant. Fragmentation in Iraq's media landscape—characterized by competing narratives, lack of centralized oversight, and divergent objectives—leads to confusion among audiences and diminished media effectiveness. The breakdown of regulatory frameworks further exacerbates this problem, allowing inaccurate or biased content to circulate without proper quality control, thereby undermining public awareness.

Hypothesis 7: Structural disintegration significantly impacts media skills development.

The t-value is 3.725 and the p-value is 0.000. Since t > 1.96 and p < 0.05, the relationship is significant. Structural failures, particularly in political, legal, and media institutions, limit the capacity of journalists and media professionals to build or apply new skills. This leads to fragmented messaging, low-quality outputs, and a broader inability of the public to engage meaningfully in political and social discourse.

Figure 2

Model with T-values
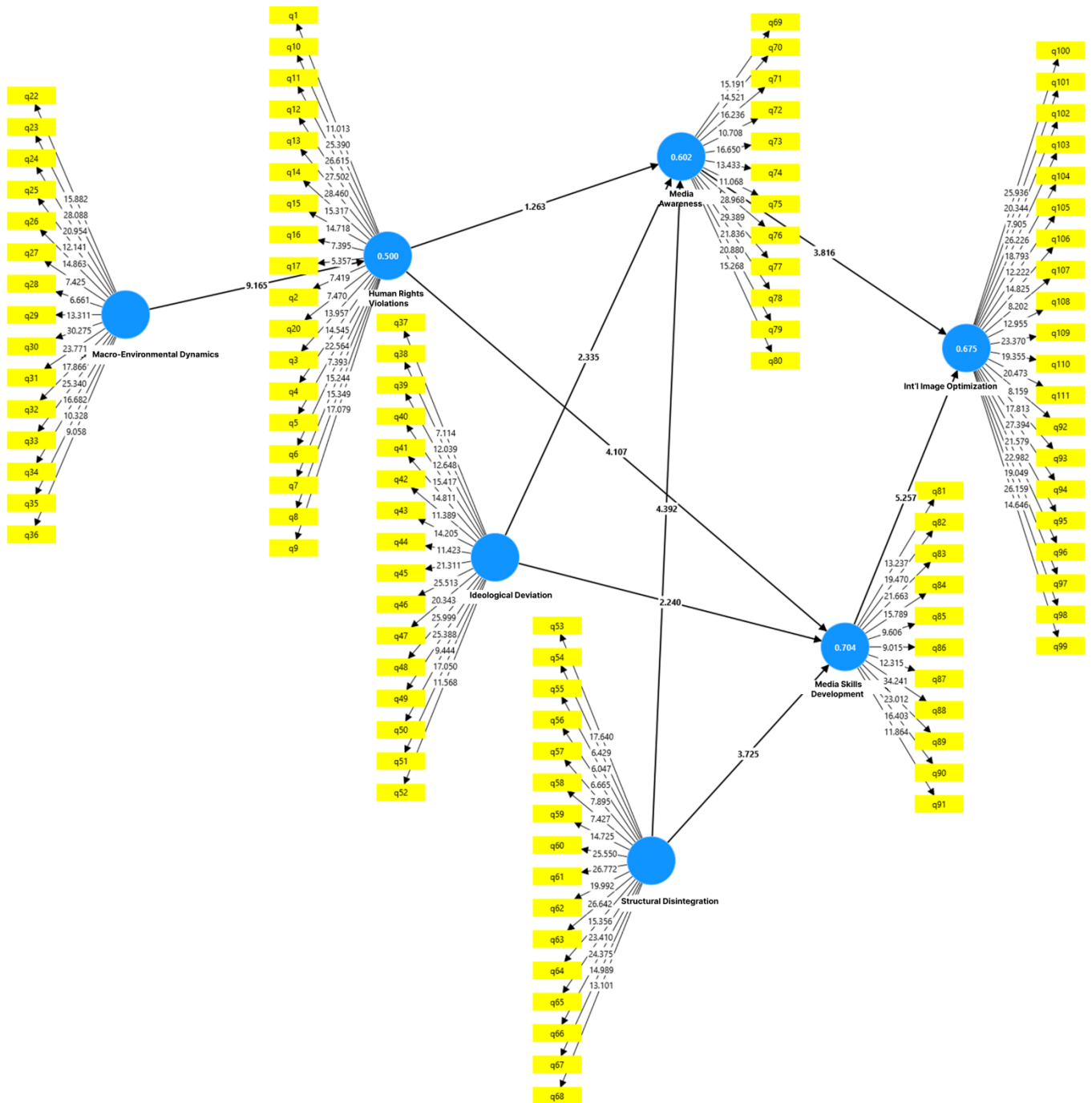
4.   Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study, which aimed to fit a structural media model for reducing the effects and consequences of human rights violations in Iraq, reveal a number of significant relationships among the examined constructs. The model, which integrates structural, ideological, environmental, and media-related variables, demonstrated a strong overall fit (GOF = 0.594), indicating a robust framework capable of explaining substantial variance across the targeted variables. Seven hypotheses were tested, six of which were confirmed, reflecting a high degree of theoretical coherence and empirical support. The results highlight the importance of macro-environmental

dynamics, structural disintegration, and ideological deviation as predictors of both human rights violations and media performance, with downstream effects on international image optimization.

The first confirmed hypothesis indicated that macro-environmental dynamics significantly influence human rights violations in Iraq. This finding aligns with prior studies that emphasize the role of geopolitical instability, international sanctions, and regional conflicts in exacerbating rights violations in fragile states (Bozorgmehri & Kia Rostami, 2017; Shayanfar, 2023). For instance, the extraterritorial effects of unilateral sanctions have been shown to directly affect civilian welfare, leading to restricted access to medicine and essential services, which in turn violate fundamental human rights (Montazerān & Musāzādeh, 2021). The significance of this relationship underscores the necessity of addressing international structures and their spillover effects when designing localized human rights interventions.

The study also found a significant relationship between human rights violations and the development of media skills, even though no direct effect was observed between rights violations and media awareness. This duality points to a complex reality: while rights violations may incentivize skill-building among media professionals as a form of resistance or documentation, they do not automatically translate into greater media-based public awareness. This is consistent with previous literature suggesting that repressive environments often compel activists and journalists to invest in technical and strategic competencies to navigate censorship and surveillance (Ahmadzadeh, 2023; Biparva, 2016). Yet, the same environments can limit their actual reach and public impact due to institutional and legal constraints (Abbāsi Ashlaghi & Norouzi Firouz, 2018; Hosseini & Rahaee, 2024).

The non-significant relationship between human rights violations and media awareness is particularly noteworthy. It suggests that structural or contextual mediators—such as media regulation, political censorship, and public trust—may inhibit the transformation of violations into public discourse. As Ekpa (2016) and Shokouhi (2022) have observed, in countries where media independence is compromised, even widespread abuses may fail to elicit collective consciousness or policy response (Ekpa, 2016; Shokouhi & Abbāszādeh Fathābādi, 2022). This disconnect was also evident in the study by Alquraan and Aduse (2022), which demonstrated that despite high levels of rights-related discourse on social media, the actual cultural internalization

of human rights norms remained weak among university students (Alquraan & Aduse, 2022).

Another significant finding was the strong effect of structural disintegration on both media awareness and skills development. In environments like Iraq, where legal, political, and institutional fragmentation prevails, the media landscape becomes disjointed and vulnerable to both state and non-state manipulation (Omāni et al., 2023; Shojāʿ et al., 2023). This result reinforces arguments by Zuboff (2019) and Shayanfar (2023), who contend that in the absence of cohesive governance and regulatory oversight, digital media may be repurposed for surveillance or ideological indoctrination, rather than transparency and empowerment (Shayanfar, 2023; Zuboff, 2019).

Additionally, the results showed that ideological deviation significantly affects both media awareness and skill development. This aligns with the findings of Bloomfield (2016), who noted that "norm antipreneurs"—actors who resist or distort global norms—often leverage media to subvert genuine human rights reporting (Bloomfield, 2016). In Iraq, sectarian and partisan media channels frequently propagate ideologically motivated content, thereby weakening the neutrality and factual accuracy necessary for constructive media-driven advocacy (Sāberi Tavallāʾi, 2025; Sharīʿatī Aṣl, 2023). The study by Shojāʿ et al. (2023) further supports this by showing that authoritarian regimes exploit digital space to advance ideological control and stifle dissent (Shojāʿ et al., 2023).

Perhaps most crucially, both media awareness and skills development were shown to significantly influence international image optimization. This suggests that media functions not merely as a reactive tool to human rights violations but also as a proactive mechanism to reconstruct global narratives and national legitimacy. The ability to project a positive and credible image internationally depends on local media's capacity to report accurately, contextualize violations, and frame them in ways that align with international human rights discourse (Alizādeh et al., 2024; Rāʿī Dehqāni & Maghāmi, 2022). Studies by David and Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2022) and Brutger and Strezhnev (2017) confirm that international audiences are significantly influenced by media portrayals of conflict and human rights, and that states can strategically employ media to either mitigate backlash or attract sympathy (Brutger & Strezhnev, 2017; David & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2022).

These findings collectively support the theoretical premise that media is a mediating mechanism—not just a passive mirror—of structural and ideological variables

influencing human rights outcomes. The strong R² values and predictive relevance (Q²) obtained across the model confirm its empirical robustness and predictive utility. In particular, the high R² value for media skills development (0.704) indicates that structural and ideological factors account for a substantial portion of the variance in media capacity, reinforcing the need for institutional reforms and targeted training programs (Azadi, 2024; Dehbanipour et al., 2025).

Moreover, the use of digital media as a means of resistance and advocacy has gained traction globally, as seen during the Russia-Ukraine conflict and in responses to racialized violence in Israel-Palestine (David & Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2022; Nemkova et al., 2023). However, as studies by Shokri Bafrājerd (2023) and Skarstad (2016) suggest, the presence of digital tools does not inherently guarantee protection; rather, their effectiveness depends on institutional independence, narrative credibility, and legal safeguards (Shokri Bafrājerd, 2023; Skarstad & Strand, 2016).

Finally, the structural model confirms the integrative potential of a holistic framework that simultaneously considers environmental catalysts, internal fragmentation, and media system capacities. This approach advances the current literature by moving beyond normative appeals toward a quantifiable model with policy relevance. It also challenges reductionist views of rights violations as purely domestic phenomena by empirically demonstrating the importance of exogenous pressures and systemic breakdowns (Bloomfield, 2016; Rāʿī Dehqāni & Maghāmi, 2022).

While the study offers a comprehensive model grounded in empirical data and supported by contemporary literature, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires introduces the potential for social desirability bias, especially in politically sensitive contexts like Iraq. Second, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference, and thus longitudinal studies are necessary to verify the stability of these relationships over time. Third, the generalizability of findings may be limited by contextual particularities unique to Iraq, such as sectarian politics and security dynamics, which may not be present in other countries experiencing human rights challenges.

Future research should consider incorporating longitudinal methods to assess how shifts in political regimes, media regulations, or international interventions affect the relationships outlined in this model. Mixed-methods designs combining quantitative modeling with qualitative interviews from journalists, policymakers, and civil society actors could provide a richer understanding of contextual nuances. Additionally, future studies may explore the role of transnational media collaborations and diaspora networks in circumventing local restrictions and enhancing global advocacy for human rights in conflict zones.

Practitioners should prioritize capacity-building programs that target both technical media skills and normative literacy in human rights. Interventions should be designed to improve institutional resilience against ideological manipulation and regulatory fragmentation. Policy actors and NGOs are encouraged to leverage the findings of this model to advocate for legal reforms that protect media independence and enhance international accountability mechanisms. Strategic alliances between local and international media entities can also help amplify credible reporting and contribute to improving Iraq's global human rights image.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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