

Political Talk Shows and Prioritization of Political Movement Issues in Iraq

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Abstract

Political talk shows, in their various forms, are among the most eagerly presented programs by contemporary media outlets, as they are considered one of the most effective means of conveying the media message to the audience. It is well-known that political movement issues have a significant impact on the lives of Iraqi citizens in various aspects—political, economic, social, and cultural, among others. Consequently, these issues have become a priority for media outlets in general and talk shows in particular, as they seek to find specific solutions to the discussed issues and achieve specific agendas and objectives through the talk show.

Given the importance of the topic, the researcher in this study aimed to understand the role of political talk shows in shaping and constructing the audience's agenda regarding political movement issues in Iraq. This study is classified as a descriptive study, and the researcher employed the survey method to collect information and data from the respondents. A questionnaire was used to gather data, and it was administered to a purposive, multi-stage sample consisting of 294 respondents from the audience in Baghdad Province.

Keywords: Talk Shows, Agenda Setting, Political Movement.

1. Introduction

Political talk shows have garnered the attention of a wide range of viewers and specialists, as they are considered one of the most important forms of programs that discuss current topics, focus on events and their developments, and address public issues raised in media and political circles. These programs are particularly significant because they rely on freedom of expression to highlight diverse opinions. It can even be said that they have become a crucial media outlet for influencing audiences by providing them with new information and creating a mental image that supports their perspectives. Consequently, talk shows have secured a prominent place in the daily broadcasting schedule of television channels and have become an essential part of the daily routines of many viewers. This is because they are one of the mechanisms for informing the public about everything new and important concerning events, especially in the political arena and ongoing developments.

2. Methodological Framework:

Research Problem:

The research problem revolves around understanding the role that political talk shows play in setting the audience's priorities regarding political movement issues. This research problem can be formulated as the following question:

What is the role of political talk shows in shaping the agenda of political movement issues in Iraq?

From this primary question, several sub-questions emerge:

- What are the most prominent political talk shows that the audience is keen on following, and what are the main features of these programs?
- What political issues does the audience prioritize in talk shows, and to what extent does the audience rely on these programs as a source of information on political movement issues?
- Have political talk shows contributed to arranging the audience's priorities towards changing or modifying their attitudes regarding political movement issues in Iraq?

Research Significance:

The significance of this research lies in its exploration of a new topic concerning the relationship between political talk shows and the audience's agenda-setting regarding political movement issues in Iraq. Additionally, the research aims to uncover the most important issues that the audience follows through talk shows.

Research Objectives

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify the most important political issues that the audience is interested in following and determine the nature of the relationship between the interests of political programs and the interests of the audience.
2. Determine the contribution of political talk shows in directing the audience's attention toward the political issues presented by these programs.

Research Hypotheses

The researcher has formulated a set of hypotheses related to the agenda-setting theory based on the research variables, which aim to achieve the desired objectives:

1. The issues presented determine my current and future priorities regarding the political topics discussed by the talk shows.
2. The selectivity in choosing specific issues according to the funder's policy prevents it from shaping public opinion.

Research Methodology:

This research is a descriptive study aimed at describing the reality of problems and phenomena as they are (Basyuni, 2013). The researcher has also employed the survey method, as it is one of the most prominent methodologies used in the field of descriptive media studies.

Research Fields

Temporal Scope:

The researcher determined the temporal scope of the study to cover the period taken to develop, distribute, and collect the questionnaire. This duration was set at three months, from March 1, 2021, to June 1, 2021.

Human Scope:

The study sample included 294 respondents, distributed as follows: 98 respondents from the Karkh area, 98 respondents from the Rusafa area, and 98 respondents from Sadr City. The sample included both males and females, with a total of 150 males and 144 females.

Research Population and Sample:

The research population consisted of the audience in Baghdad Province. The researcher selected a representative sample from the entire population, relying on a purposive, multi-stage sample that comprised 294 individuals.

Definition of Terms

- Talk Shows: These are programs where discussion and debate on a particular subject form a central or peripheral focus (Al-Tawab, 2010, p. 16).
- Political Movement: This encompasses all political activities, both individual and collective, inside and outside the country (Al-Atabi, 2013, p. 5).

Previous Studies

1. Study by Shaima Abdel Majeed Dhiyab Alawi (2020): "The Role of Political Talk Shows in Shaping the Political Agenda of the Arab Audience: An Analytical Field Study"

- Objective: The researcher aimed to understand the role of political talk shows in analyzing political issues and topics.
- Focus: The study concentrated on two political talk shows during the study period.
- Field Study: The researcher focused on understanding the relationship between talk shows and the formation of the political agenda among university professors.

2. Study by Rajia Ibrahim Awad Atallah: "The Role of Talk Shows on Egyptian Satellite Channels in Prioritizing Citizenship Issues Among Egyptian Youth"

- Objective: This study aimed to understand the role of talk shows in prioritizing citizenship issues among Egyptian youth.
- Methodology: The researcher employed both descriptive and analytical research methods.
- Field Study: The study was conducted on a sample of talk shows presented on Egyptian satellite channels.

3. Theoretical Framework: Talk Shows and Prioritizing Political Movements in Iraq

Political talk shows, in their various forms, are among the most eagerly presented programs by contemporary media outlets, as they are considered one of the most effective means of conveying the media message to the audience (Al-Daami, 2016, p. 83). Therefore, media outlets have been keen on presenting these programs to seek specific solutions to the issues presented and to achieve particular agendas and objectives pursued by the media outlet through these programs.

The comprehensive transformations that the world has witnessed across various fields and the structural changes have led to the presentation of numerous issues, phenomena, and developments for discussion. Mass media have managed to become the arena where these activities are conducted. Additionally, journalistic arts that adopt dialogue as a method have succeeded in being the main carriers of this communication process. This explains the increasing importance of dialogue in contemporary media (Al-Kanani, 2018, p. 83).

The Role of Political Talk Shows

Political talk shows have emerged as significant platforms through which visual media, particularly television, can achieve multiple objectives, one of the most important being the arrangement of the audience's agenda to align with the media agenda. Political talk shows are defined as programs presented on satellite and terrestrial television channels that address various political issues and events of interest to diverse segments of the audience, sparking public debate about them. These shows reflect the state of movement or concern experienced by the audience regarding these political events. They often feature experts and specialists who discuss, analyze, and present different perspectives on these issues (Alawi, 2020, p. 84).

Through organizing seminars and political dialogues, by inviting various parties to present their different political views that touch on the interests of the masses, television can persuade the audience about topics that reflect the general policies of states (Al-Taie, 2007, p. 88).

The agenda in talk shows is built through the following methods (Alawi, 2020, pp. 165-169).

1. Programs often focus on certain issues and highlight them more than others. Each type of issue requires different types of coverage, and events that attract attention must be framed conceptually for the audience.
2. The language used by the channel to present an issue can influence the audience's perception and give importance to one issue over others. Agenda-setting studies indicate that media content is closely related to its satisfactions.

3. Talk shows also connect events that attract the audience's attention with symbols and personalities that hold a prominent position in the political sphere. They may use well-known figures to emphasize the importance of an issue, making it clearer to the audience. People need foundations to understand various aspects of an issue.

4. Understanding the needs, desires, and preferences of the target audience and their inclination towards talk shows is crucial. After identifying the target audience and understanding its characteristics, those responsible for talk shows should study their audience's needs and preferences. Audiences typically have diverse needs and desires, necessitating the consideration of these needs by those producing such programs. This requires understanding the audience's familiarity with the issue and its importance to them.

Political Movement in Iraq:

There isn't a specific, universally agreed-upon definition of political movement among political science experts. Before delving into defining the concept of political movement, it's worth noting that the concept itself is relative, tinted with the perspectives of those involved. Generally, political movement is understood as all political activities, both individual and collective, within and outside the country (Al-Atabi, 2013, p. 19).

In reality, political movement is a subset of social movement aimed at transitioning or moving from one political stance or vision to another, based on:

- Highlighting a political and social issue in society with the aim of advocating for it, regardless of whether this transition or transformation satisfies or contradicts the authority (Al-Rubaie, 2012).

After 2003, Iraq witnessed numerous political, economic, cultural, and ideological changes associated with the downfall of the authoritarian regime. These changes affected the formation and construction of modern democracy in Iraq due to various circumstances and factors related to state-building and its political system, including:

1. The method and process of government formation and structure.
2. Issues related to terrorism and their consequences.
3. Inability to find suitable scientific formulas for managing life in the country.
4. Foreign presence on Iraqi soil.
5. Differences in constitution drafting.
6. Parliamentary system and differences in opinions on its formation.

Impact of Ongoing Issues on the Current Situation in Iraq

These issues, along with others, including unresolved matters like regional and federal issues, as well as laws such as the oil and gas law, have directly contributed to the deterioration of the situation in Iraq up to the present time.

4. Field Framework

Primary Data for Research Unit Participants

Table (1): Participant Gender

Gender	Count	Percentage
Male	150	%51
Female	144	%48.9
Total	294	%100

The data in Table (1) indicates that the proportion of males is higher than that of females in the research sample, with a count of 150 participants representing 51% of the total, while females accounted for 144 participants, representing 48.9%.

Table (2): Participant Gender by Age Group

T2	Age Group	Male	Female
-1	30 - 18	(%24) 72	(%20) 60
-2	40 -31	(%9.5) 28	(%16) 48
-3	50 – 41	(%10.20) 30	(%6) 20
-4	60 -51	(%2) 8	(%4) 14
-5	60+	(%3) 10	(%0.06) 2
Total		150	144

The data and percentages indicate that the age group (18 - 30) has the highest representation in the sample, with a total count of 132 participants and a percentage of 44%.

Table 3: Educational Attainment of Participants

	Educational Attainment	Males	Females
1	Can Read and Write	(%2) 6	(%5) 16
2	Elementary	(%4.7) 14	(%12) 38
3	Intermediate	(%7.4) 22	(%10.2) 30
4	Secondary	(%6) 18	(%9.5) 28
5	Diploma	(%10.2) 30	(%5.4) 16
6	Bachelor's Degree	(%17) 50	(%5.4) 16
7	Master's Degree	(%3.4) 10	
	Total	150	144

The table above illustrates that the majority of the sample participants hold a Bachelor's degree, with 66 individuals comprising 22.4% of the total sample.

Table 4: Viewer Habits

Gender / Viewing Habits	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely
males	(%20.4) 60	(%19.7) 58	(%10.8) 32
females	(%10.8) 32	(%15.6) 46	(%22.4) 66
total	(%31.2) 92	(%35.3) 104	(%33.3) 98

From the table above, it is evident that the majority of the sample watch political talk shows occasionally, with a total of 104 individuals, constituting 35.3% of the sample.

Table 5: Issues Addressed in Political Talk Shows

Issues Addressed / Gender	Male	Female
1- Formation of Government	72	102
2- Terrorism	116	116
3- Relationship between Political Blocs and Parties	34	40
4- Relationship between Center and Region	34	52
5- Elections	78	84
6- Protests	110	96
7- Constitutional Amendments	68	74
8- Presence of Foreign Forces in Iraq and Prioritization of their Objectives to You	26	22
Total	538	586

From the table and the frequencies, it is evident that the issue of terrorism occupied the first place among the discussed topics addressed by political talk shows. It garnered a total of 232 occurrences, indicating the significance and emphasis placed on addressing this issue by these programs.

Table No. (8) illustrates the extent of respondents' viewership of talk shows.

Gender / Level of Engagement	Follow Them Closely	Follow Them Occasionally	Do Not Follow
male	(%20.4) 60	(%25.8) 76	(%0.4) 14
female	(%19) 56	(%21) 62	(%0.8) 26
total	(%39.4) 116	(%46.9) 138	(%13.6) 40

From the table above and based on the frequencies and percentages, it is evident that the highest category in the table is "Follow Them Occasionally," indicating that respondents tend to follow political talk shows only occasionally, with a total frequency of 138 and a percentage of 46.9%.

Table No. (9) illustrates the hours of viewership of political talk shows by the respondents.

Gender / Viewing Time	Less Than an Hour	From One to Two Hours	Three Hours or More
Male	80 (27%)	46 (15.6%)	24 (0.8%)
Female	10 (34.6%)	32 (10.8%)	10 (0.3%)
Total	182 (61.9%)	78 (26.5%)	34 (11.5%)

From the table above, it is evident that the respondents' viewership of political talk shows is predominantly less than an hour, with a total frequency of 182 and a percentage of 61.9%.

Table No. (10) illustrates the average viewership of the respondents for political talk shows:

Gender Viewing Rate	Watch it Entirely	Watch Half of the Program	Partial Viewing
Male	(%19.7) 58	(%10.2) 30	(%21) 62
Female	(%12.9) 38	(%10.8) 32	(%25.1) 74
Total	(%36) 106	(%21) 62	(%46.2) 136

From the table above, it is evident that the average viewership of the respondents for political talk shows is partial viewing, with a total frequency of 136 and a percentage of 46.2%.

Table No. (11) illustrates the extent of increased viewership for political talk shows during crises:

Gender	Degree of Increase in Viewership	Yes, A Lot	Yes, A Little	Not at All
Male		(%27.8) 82	(%16.3) 48	(%0.6) 20
Female		(%12.9) 38	(%27.2) 80	(%0.8) 26
Total		(%40.8) 120	(%43.5) 128	(%15.6) 46

From the table above, it is evident that the rate of increased viewership for political talk shows during crises is slight, with a total frequency of 128 and a percentage of 43.5%.

Table No. (12) illustrates the extent to which respondents rely on talk shows as a source of information:

Gender	Degree of Reliance	Rely Heavily	Rely Moderately	Rely Slightly
male		(%10.8) 32	(%31.2) 92	(%0.8) 26
female		(%11.2) 34	(%18.3) 54	(%20.4) 66
total		(%22.1) 66	(%49.6) 146	(%21.2) 92

From the table above, it is clear that the majority of respondents rely on talk shows as a source of information to a moderate degree, with a frequency of 146 and a percentage of 49.6%.

Table No. (13) illustrates respondents' evaluation of the importance of political movement issues in talk shows:

Gender Evaluation	Highly Important	Moderately Important	Slightly Important
1- male	(%12.2) 36	(%31.2) 92	(%8) 24
2- female	(%0.7) 22	(%26.5) 78	(%14.9) 44
total	(%23.1) 58	(%55.1) 170	(%21.7) 64

The table shows that respondents rate the importance of political movement issues presented in talk shows as moderately important, with a total frequency of 170 and a percentage of 55.1%.

Table No. (14) illustrates the extent to which talk shows contribute to changing respondents' attitudes.

Gender / Degree of Contribution	Yes, significantly	Yes, slightly	Not at all
1- male	(%15.6) 46	(%28.5) 84	(%0.6) 20
2- male	(%0.7) 22	(%26.5) 78	(%14.9) 44
total	(%23.1) 68	(%55.1) 162	(%21.7) 64

The table shows that talk shows slightly alter the attitudes of respondents, with a total frequency of 162 and a percentage of 55.1%.

5. Results and Recommendations

Results

Findings Related to the Research Hypotheses:

1. The first hypothesis is confirmed by the presence of a positive correlation between intentional exposure to talk shows and the increase in respondents' knowledge of the issues presented in political talk shows.
2. There is a statistically significant relationship between the priorities of political talk shows and the current and future priorities of respondents regarding the political topics presented in these shows.
3. A statistically significant positive correlation exists, demonstrating that selective viewing of political talk shows based on the financier's policy distances respondents from forming public opinion on those issues.
4. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the presentation of political talk shows and the audience's interests in the issues presented.
5. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the interests of respondents and the interests of political talk shows in following issues of political movement in Iraq.
6. The study confirms that political talk shows are among the most effective means in directing attention towards issues of political movement in Iraq.

Field Results

1. The highest percentage of respondents watch talk shows intermittently, predominantly males, followed by weak viewership, predominantly females, indicating that males follow talk shows more than females.
2. The Iraqi channel received the highest viewership, followed by Al-Sharqiya, then Dajla, and Al-Sumaria.
3. The talk show "With Mulla Talal" had the highest followership among respondents, followed by "The Game of Chairs," "The Decision is Yours," and "Dialogue Circle."
4. Males are more frequent viewers of talk shows compared to females.
5. Key advantages of political talk shows for respondents include comprehensive coverage of political events, professional technical teams, meeting audience needs, and presenting diverse viewpoints and opinions.
6. Main objectives for respondents watching political talk shows are to follow national events, understand different perspectives on ongoing events, and follow content that aligns with their interests.
7. Issues related to terrorist activities and their implications were the most followed by respondents, followed by political reform issues and government support for various societal groups.
8. Demonstrations were the most frequently addressed issue in talk shows, followed by terrorism and the formation of the Iraqi government.

9. The study confirms a correlation between the audience's following of crises covered in talk shows and their reliance on these shows as a source of information.
10. There is a correlation between the audience's evaluation of political movement issues presented in talk shows and the modification of their attitudes.

6. Conclusions

After completing the study and presenting the results, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Political talk shows prioritize political movement issues due to a positive correlation between the interests of the talk shows and those of the audience.
2. Political talk shows direct audience interests toward specific issues emphasized by the shows.
3. Demographic variables have an impact on the priorities and interests of respondents regarding political movement issues viewed by the audience.
4. Political talk shows primarily present issues that align with the interests and desires of the media institution's funders.
5. A segment of the audience relies on political talk shows as a source of information about current events in the country.
6. Respondents show a significant interest in following political talk shows during political crises.
7. The majority of the audience prefers to follow talk shows presented by professional teams of hosts, directors, and program creators.

7. Recommendations

Several recommendations were made after completing the study and drawing the conclusions. These recommendations can be summarized as follows:

1. Satellite channels should focus on presenting political talk shows with unique styles, approaches to discussion, and management of dialogue to break away from the usual monotonous presentation of political issues.
2. Increase the airtime dedicated to political education programs related to political and societal issues.
3. Raise awareness about political movement issues as they concern a large segment of society.

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