



Trends of the Iraqi drama between the domination of funding and production problems: An analytical study of the 2020 Ramadan series

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ABSTRACT

The subject of Iraqi drama in Ramadan formed a big controversy between the technical and social media. Therefore, this study addressed the trends of Iraqi drama between the domination of funding and production problems. It aimed at highlighting the real problems that provoked controversy on the television series shown in the 2020 Ramadan on Iraqi and Arab satellite channels. In addition to clarifying how funding imposes ideas on dramatic texts in television broadcasts, whether in television series or programs in general. It also aimed at explaining how satellite channels can change the contents of programs according to the policy of the broadcast channel or according to the funding. It reviewed the effects of modern techniques in production methods on the recipients and their awareness and ideas, as well as the political funding that enters the production companies and tries to change ideologies and facts or falsify them.

Keywords:

Iraqi drama, social media

Introduction

The subject of Iraqi drama in Ramadan formed a big controversy between the technical and social media. Therefore, this study addressed the trends of Iraqi drama between the domination of funding and production problems. It aimed at highlighting the real problems that provoked controversy on the television series shown in the 2020 Ramadan on Iraqi and Arab satellite channels. In addition to clarifying how funding imposes ideas on dramatic texts in television broadcasts, whether in television series or programs in general. It also aimed at explaining how satellite channels can change the contents of programs according to the policy of the broadcast channel or according to the funding. It reviewed the effects of modern techniques in production methods on the recipients and their awareness and ideas, as well as the political funding that enters the production companies

and tries to change ideologies and facts or falsify them.

Section One: Theoretical Framework

1. Research Problem

Research problem is defined by the following question:

- Can technical funding control the ideological content of artistic work?

2. Research Objective

The research aimed to reveal the effects of external or internal funding for dramas, especially television series, where it can change of the original idea.

3. Research Significance

The importance of research stems from its title that addresses funding and technical production of dramas. In this regard, funding is the main factor sponsoring the artistic and media institutions where television works of different forms are performed. Television

drama is the art form that conveys ideas and opinions to the audience through series.

4. Research Method

The survey method was adopted with its descriptive and analytical tools. Using this method, the researcher attempted to rely on the interpretation, analysis and evaluation approaches that correspond to the nature of this research, hoping to reach results and suggestions that support its objectives.

5. Research Scope

A questionnaire was designed to be a major tool for research data to provide the researcher with information required for carrying out this research.

6. Validity of the Questionnaire

The questions were designed to examine the dimensions of research problem. The questionnaire was verified by presenting it to a jury consisting of three specialists ⁽¹⁾ in this area. Based on their opinions, the researcher edited the questionnaire by omitting or amending some questions, thus presenting the questionnaire in its final form.

7. Research Community

The research community was limited to Iraqi Artists Syndicate in Baghdad, in addition to the experts in the field concerned in the same city.

8. Research Sample

The researcher adopted the purposive sampling represented by specialists in television work randomly selected in terms of major, consisting of (125) respondents. Hence, (125) copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents. All of these copies were returned to the researcher by 100%.

Section Two: Literature Review

1. The Concept of Television Works

Television works refer to works shown on television and can be classified into news, drama, cultural and entertainment programs. They stem from the classification of the three objectives of television, namely, educating,

entertaining and informing the audience. The concept leads us to the classification of television works in satellite channels where the artistic production of any television work is followed by a questionnaire applied to the audience to know their opinions about works they view or do not view. Based on criteria of acceptance, desire and passion for a specific type of programs compared to other ones with low percentage of view, channels change the type of production policy and develop the productions as desired by the audience. In this context, talk shows are programs that always attract the attention of the audience. Therefore, most official channels even in broadcasting via the Internet become asking the public to send their own videos to be broadcasted as specified by the channels. For example, the Arabic channel BBC specified a program for the audience to participate with audio and video to express their opinion, as well as a live broadcast to directly discuss a specific topic that is managed by the broadcaster in the channel. Among the most well-known talk shows is Oprah Winfrey, which was broadcast via Arabic channels with Arabic translation and lasted years as being admired by the American and Arab audience.

There are channels that make the audience an effective participant in voting for characters in artistic programs, such as "The Voice" on MBC channels, and hence the audience choose the most convincing voice for them, regardless of the committee's opinion that evaluates the voice, as the committee's opinion is limited, while the audience is responsible for choosing the voice. As for news programs and news reports, they involve the audience in reports prepared by reporters, making them witnesses to real incidents and taking their opinions on them. This diversity in programs denotes the diversity and artistic creativity of television works, contributing to their production. Moreover, there is indefinite number of programs in various channels. Thus, television works refer to all live and recorded works that cover all social activities including news, entertainment and culture, from which more programs suitable to all social classes and age groups are derived. The concept is related to

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the planning and organizational structure of programs production in any television media institution, whether it is a channel or a production company. Drama among other television works is paid a great attention because it requires a great financial support to achieve the requirements of television drama production.

The various television forms contain a story, which is evidence of an event that leads to the creation of a dramatic composition of that event. Hence, each event is narrated in a smooth, emotional, and understandable way. Any television work, whether a tragic or comedy event, opera musical performance, ballet, short story or adventures and secrets is subject to the elements of dramatic composition of any event where it contains the beginning, middle and end (Abdul Aziz, 2016). Producers responsible for satellite-based channels must take into account the diversity of television technical production. Entertaining the audience and relieving the burden of life on them are among the basic television tasks performed for society. In this regard, television charters in most countries of the world emphasize the necessity for television programs to provide audiences with useful and enjoyable entertainment, and that the percentage of entertainment overcomes other aspects (Nasr, 1984).

If the recipient continues to have access to entertainment, pleasure and useful information, his culture will increase in a comfortable and entertaining way. The issue itself motivates even the lazy person who does not like learning to learn by follow-up made by the element of suspense. This objective is sought by anyone who works to spread knowledge through television channels. This objective is not achieved easily, but the teamwork on television forces the television team to be able to have its technical tools and be creative to reach a high degree of suspense that attracts the recipient. Therefore, if the recipient were not willing to receive the speech, no speech delivered by a speaker would affect him (Karimi, 2016). This means that the inner willingness of the recipient is a factor directly affecting him, and then comes

the factors of beauty, attraction and admiration that promote acceptance and interaction with the work displayed on TV.

The researcher prepared a classification explaining the nature of artistic works on television as follows (2):

1. News: it includes news bulletins, political news programs and talk shows.
2. Dramas: they include series, evens and TV movies.
3. Public work: this includes live programs, such as covering sports matches, religious programs and prayers from mosques, churches or anywhere else dedicated to worship, as well as talk shows with well-known characters.
4. Culture: it covers all cultural news, such as various reportages, daily television newspapers and news reports.
5. Religion: it includes live or recorded talk shows on all religious aspects and are found in Arab channels, such as works on Islam and Christianity, which are the most famous religions in the Arab countries

2. The Role of Dramas in Building Community Awareness

Drama works displayed on TV are viewed freely at home by all members of the family. Since its launch, TV is considered the device that reunites the family to watch works shown on it. In fact, the consequences and temptations become more and more, so the work attracting the recipient depends on the type of product as the satellite channels compete among themselves to attract the audience. This is clear in the Ramadan drama where the satellite channels compete to purchase the most attractive dramas with a percentage of view of

² This is a simplified classification for determining where the artistic work takes place away from the precise technical specialized details. The work of television photography and works concerned with television directing, electronic television montage, technical preparation work for television and lighting arts are specialized works that achieve success for artistic work. They differ from one person to another according to achievement, experience, and the funding mechanism that imposes limitations on workers.

the channel only. Due to the great importance of these works, producers of the drama work compete in choosing the most successful directors, actors and scenarists who are the most desired by the recipients according to the technical experiences followed in measuring the work. For example, Bab Al-Hara (the gate of district) is a famous series and is considered one of the most famous Syrian dramas that shows Syrian life in the capital Damascus, revealing many noble values through its heroes. It also demonstrates the customs and traditions inherited in Syrian society, taking a model of a popular district known as Harat al-Dhaba'a (al-Dhaba'a district) where the scenes are acted. Its first episode displayed in 2006 has received a great success in the Arab society. Its production continues for Ramadan for 11 years by 11 parts. This number of parts is a clear proof of the success of the series and its acceptance by the Arab recipient who watches the Syrian artwork with passion. This kind of successive dramatic productions is a style followed in the television broadcasts adopted by American television, such as the series Friends, which started in 1994 until 2004 and continued for ten seasons successfully in America and the Arab world after translating and broadcasting it on satellite channels. The family views the TV series, which could have good and bad contents. Therefore, attention in choice among all television works with multiple directions technically and literally is the most difficult task. The values of drama, for example, can be used as a weapon to preserve the gains of a particular class. In addition, dramas may highlight certain values and ideas and lifestyle and present them as belonging to the society as a whole. Consequently, television drama may create an imaginary reality that distracts individuals from their real social problems and may create imaginary solutions to real problems (Abdul Hameed, 2017). This illustrates the seriousness of the bad use of drama if it is employed to serve destructive contents or as a soft weapon or the so-called soft war.

The process of creating an image before the production of the series is a well-thought-out artistic act by television specialists. The topics

derived from that image extend to build bridges between it and the one resembling it. This image refers to the subject expressed only through its self-nature (Al-Tamimi, 2016). The audience was able to recognize the characters of the series and their pictures and the connotations of each character through the image previously provided by the writer and embodied in separate and connected advertisements as characters and heroes of the series. The process of advertising continues during the broadcast of series daily through programs hosting heroes who become favorite for the audience who view them daily. The promotion through social media has a clear effect by gaining more audience, as those who did not watch the first part joined to watch the second part of the series, so the spread was larger and wider. The audience is at the producer's sympathy, who can influence them a little or a lot by will (Qandil, 1970).

The producer's sympathy is the core of the communication process that carries the goal, idea and policy of the channel and all the contents that direct the idea towards what is required of it. Several contents change because the financial policy of the channel funds the idea and direction, but the Arab audience, particularly the Iraqi audience, considers this a topic for the daily talk or Facebook, which becomes the daily street in Iraqi society. In this regard, the audience forgets that TV shows are subject to funding; so if the channel does not produce them, it will purchase them but under conditions that the director is aware of. These conditions are related to the producer who imposes his ideas on the scenarist and as a result on the director and the actors. Although the works are Iraqi, but they are broadcast from non-Iraqi satellite channels. They are not necessarily a carrier of a national ideology if they are not intended to offend or glorify that ideology. Therefore, television dramas sometimes range in content and production based on the producers' attitude, especially if there are more than one productive body that can present dramatic works in Iraq and adopt a direction and a purpose intended and desired through it (Fadhel, 2020). The political changes in the country and their reflection on the social

changes represent one of the most prominent topics covered by drama in television series. In addition to topics of the modern history of the country and the most prominent figures that led the country to present them in biographies, as well as the actors. For example, the series of "Basha", which is a historical drama produced by Al-Sharqiyeh channel in 2008, addressing the story of the British mandate in Iraq. At the same time, it is a self-biography of the history of Iraq through the figure of the then Iraqi Prime Minister Basha Nouri al-Saeed.

Also, the series of "The Last King", which is classified as a tragic drama, produced by Al-Sharqiyeh channel in 2010, focusing on the life of King Faisal II of Iraq during the period of ruling Iraq for 23 years. The social changes, the contradictions they cause in social norms and competition among individuals about gaining influence and wealth and showing their ambitions, all of which crystallize the scary social conflicts that reflect on society (As-Sanjari & Shawi, 2021).

3. The Role of Funding In the Trends of Dramatic Works

Technical funding is the supporting element in the production of any artwork. It is concerned with the selection of text and director and sometimes intervenes even in the selection of actors and TV works. Funding allows people completely away from art and artists to experience technical production because they have the capital only from the products of major multinational companies, which focus on the manufacture of electronic devices and petrochemicals in addition to the film industry affecting the status of the distinctive film in the cultural context (El-Masri, 2010). Conditions that are applicable to the companies of film production are applicable to television production as well. Television drama series of its various productions and funding witness types of intervention and ideological intrigue that produce new concepts to society that touch the core of the political or social problem witnessed by the Arab society in general. For example, the series of Gharabeeb Sood (the black crows), which aired in 2017 with twenty episodes as a Ramadan drama presented on more than one Arab channel and seven

countries participated in the production of the series. It is a series documenting real events that took place inside the camps of organization well-known as ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Drama in the series reported the real crimes and events as narrated by witnesses. The cost of the series was 10 million U.S. dollars, and this huge production figure indicates the importance of the topic where seven countries participated to produce and communicate the idea behind it, showing the truth of the crimes committed. This indicates that the huge funding was intended to produce a work fighting terrorism with its ideas by highlighting crimes with a huge work of art. Moreover, the Egyptian series al-Ikhtiar (Choice) was a Ramadan drama aired in 2020 dealing with the idea of complexity in war on terror. It focused on that terrorism is a betrayal of the homeland, which may be ambiguous to some people. The series also carried national values, such as sacrifice and love of the homeland, circulating in the Egyptian street.

As for the Iraqi Ramadan drama, it has raised controversy between cultural and social media and some works have been criticized because of negatively affecting the historical and social values of the Iraqi citizen, for example, the series Ahlam al-Asneen (Dreams of the Years) Part 5, which aired in Ramadan 2020. Some people call for the criminalization of channels that broadcast such contents. In this context, the cultural committee in parliament is working on legislation law regulating and governing the media and media institutions and criminalizing anyone who tries to spread his agenda and corrupt ideas to the Iraqi society (Al-Saadi, 2020). This proposition is true if the series or any other series is deliberately offending a value. The researcher supports such controls that restrict the dramatic production, but it is necessary to correctly diagnose the abuse by the specialists in drama who are able to separate trend from the artistic performance and the ability to determine the offensive or misleading text.

There are opinions about the reality of Iraqi drama, describing it as having crises. Some of these crises are related to the selection of topics imitating the Iraqi societal patterns,

which did not exceed the past decade as if there are no social problems, which must be overcome. It superficially considers the topics it raises and does not address the essence of social problems and societal concerns as much as the insignificant issues (Fadhil, 2020). This critical trend of Iraqi drama diagnoses the problem of choosing topics with recurring ideas that focus on temporal identification of superficial social problems without providing effective solutions to them by the scenarist of the television series. It is not clear how these topics are simulated through the mechanisms of directing the television work and what is the type of performance for actors who played roles in it. However, the television drama text remains the basis on which all topics, proposals and ideas are built.

Section Three: Findings, Conclusions, and Suggestions

1. Results and Discussion

Part 1: Participants' Demographic Data

This part includes four questions related to gender, age, academic qualification and major.

Part 2: The Items of Questionnaire

a. The Concept of Television Works

Item 1: Satellite channels adopt the survey method to collect the recipients' opinions

In this item, "agree" got 67% with a frequency of 84 out of 125, while "disagree" got 26% with a frequency of 32 out of 125, and neutral obtained 7% with a frequency of 9 out of 125.

Item 2: Satellite channels adopt the method of continuous development in their artistic works

Here, "agree" obtained 21% with a frequency of 26 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 83 by 66%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 15 by 13%.

Item 3: Live broadcast of television programs takes into account the issues of gender difference and the diversity of age groups

In this regard, "agree" obtained 26% with a frequency of 33 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 72 by 58%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 20 by 16%.

Item 4: Modern technologies in television production affect public opinion

In this item, "agree" obtained 73% with a frequency of 91 out of 125, while "neutral" got

a frequency of 21 by 17%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 13 by 10%.

Item 5: Television programs establish to build modern and advanced ideas

Here, "agree" obtained 71% with a frequency of 89 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 25 by 20%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 11 by 9%, as shown in table (9).

b. Drama Works and Building Community Awareness

Item 1: The director's name and the names of actors determine the weight of drama for the recipient

In this item, "agree" obtained 72% with a frequency of 90 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 23 by 18%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 12 by 10%, as shown in table (10).

Item 2: Drama has the ability to spread destructive contents that do not serve the society

Here, "agree" obtained 71% with a frequency of 89 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 21 by 17%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 15 by 12%.

Item 3: Drama has the ability to document important events of different kinds

In this regard, "neutral" ranked the first with a frequency of 87 out of 125 by 70%, followed by "agree" with a frequency of 20 by 16%, while "disagree" got the lowest percentage by 14% with a frequency of 18.

Item 4: Television drama has the ability to change the ideological contents of the recipient

In this item, "agree" ranked the first by 70% with a frequency of 88 out of 125, followed by "neutral" with a frequency of 25 by 25%, and then "disagree" got a frequency of 12 by 10%.

Item 5: Television director is the final writer of the ideas of the author

Here, "agree" obtained 65% with a frequency of 65 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 30 by 30%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 16 by 13%.

Item 6: Making a symbol for the heroes of any television work before its broadcast helps to establish its characters in the recipient's mind regardless of the actions and performance of the characters within that work

In this regard, "neutral" ranked the first with a frequency of 79 out of 125 by 69%, followed by

"agree" with a frequency of 31 by 18%, while "disagree" got the lowest percentage by 13% with a frequency of 15.

c. The Role of Funding in the Trends of Drama Works

Item 1: Television drama is under the producers' mercy

In this item, "agree" ranked the first by 70% with a frequency of 87 out of 125, followed by "neutral" with a frequency of 30 by 24%, and then "disagree" got a frequency of 8 by 6%.

Item 2: There is a correlation between television and politics with common interests

Here, "agree" obtained 24% with a frequency of 29 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 77 by 61%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 19 by 15%.

Item 3: The political finance invested in television works only expresses itself

In this regard, "agree" obtained 34% with a frequency of 43 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 68 by 54%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 14 by 12%.

2. Findings

- 1) Because the survey is the prevailing method to measure others' opinions in a field, satellite channels adopt it to collect recipients' opinions. In this item, "agree" got 67% with a frequency of 84 out of 125, while "disagree" got 26% with a frequency of 32 out of 125, and neutral obtained 7% with a frequency of 9 out of 125. This percentage indicates that the channels rely heavily on the survey according to the opinion of specialists.
- 2) Satellite channels adopt the method of continuous development in their artistic works. Here, "agree" obtained 21% with a frequency of 26 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 83 by 66%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 15 by 13%. This indicates that there is a vague part in this regard, whether these channels actually develop its workers or keeps them the way they are.
- 3) Live broadcast of television programs takes into account the issues of gender difference and the diversity of age groups. In this regard, "agree" obtained

26% with a frequency of 33 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 72 by 58%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 20 by 16%. This is a sign that taking into account the type of audience is not transparently exposed in the channels.

- 4) Modern technologies in television production affect public opinion. In this item, "agree" obtained 73% with a frequency of 91 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 21 by 17%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 13 by 10%. This indicates that the techniques have a great impact on the recipient.
- 5) The director's name and the names of actors determine the weight of drama for the recipient. In this item, "agree" obtained 72% with a frequency of 90 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 23 by 18%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 12 by 10%. This confirms that the public follows the name and fame for the choice.
- 6) Drama has the ability to spread destructive contents that do not serve the society. Here, "agree" obtained 71% with a frequency of 89 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 21 by 17%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 15 by 12%.
- 7) Drama has the ability to document important events of different kinds. In this regard, "neutral" ranked the first with a frequency of 87 out of 125 by 70%, followed by "agree" with a frequency of 20 by 16%, while "disagree" got the lowest percentage by 14% with a frequency of 18.
- 8) Television drama has the ability to change the ideological contents of the recipient. In this item, "agree" ranked the first by 70% with a frequency of 88 out of 125, followed by "neutral" with a frequency of 25 by 25%, and then "disagree" got a frequency of 12 by 10%.
- 9) Television director is the final writer of the ideas of the author. Here, "agree" obtained 65% with a frequency of 65 out of 125, while "neutral" got a

frequency of 30 by 30%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 16 by 13%.

- 10) Making a symbol for the heroes of any television work before its broadcast helps to establish its characters in the recipient's mind regardless of the actions and performance of the characters within that work. In this regard, "neutral" ranked the first with a frequency of 79 out of 125 by 69%, followed by "agree" with a frequency of 31 by 18%, while "disagree" got the lowest percentage by 13% with a frequency of 15.
- 11) Television drama is under the producers' mercy. In this item, "agree" ranked the first by 70% with a frequency of 87 out of 125, followed by "neutral" with a frequency of 30 by 24%, and then "disagree" got a frequency of 8 by 6%.
- 12) There is a correlation between television and politics with common interests. Here, "agree" obtained 24% with a frequency of 29 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 77 by 61%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 19 by 15%.
- 13) The political finance invested in television works only expresses itself. In this regard, "agree" obtained 34% with a frequency of 43 out of 125, while "neutral" got a frequency of 68 by 54%, and "disagree" got a frequency of 14 by 12%

3. Conclusions

- 1) Satellite channels should adopt a scientific method to collect recipients' opinions through accurate questionnaires that determine these opinions on the television programs that they broadcast in order to develop the type of programs so that they take into account the diversity of age groups and the difference in gender.
- 2) The audience that watches television is interested in the glory of well-known characters, as it is looking for the names of actor and director to evaluate the

work before watching it through the choice of glory.

- 3) Television dramas have the ability to spread new ideological contents and end outdated beliefs through mature artistic performance.
- 4) The television director takes full responsibility for the work in terms of idea, acting and directing.
- 5) Work to establish the characters of artistic works by creating symbols for each character and promoting them before broadcasting these works.
- 6) Work to preserve the proper ideological contents by cooperating with producers and convincing them that the public interest is most likely to have a meaningful work and to stay away from restricts imposed by the producer.
- 7) Political finance has become a ghost in the media and maintaining a drama that hold an identity and homeland is better than contaminating works with political finance

4. Suggestions

- Conduct a research related to television drama as in: the Iraqi drama in Iraqi channels: the necessity of content and the challenges of production.

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