

The Role of Iraqi Satellite Channels in Promoting Active Citizenship in Protest movements on October 25, 2019

Thanaa Ismael Rashid^a, ^aDept. of Media, College of Arts, University of Babylon- Iraq, Email: bus.thanaa.abd@uobabylon.edu.iq

Television channels are competing to facilitate the right of communication, build up information and knowledge for all recipients, achieve different purposes according to their degree of independence and govern intellectual philosophy. We notice their communicative messages intentionally, which come to close depicting the truth. Satellite TV has a clear role in promoting active citizenship if it is independent and free in handling and treatment. This role is embodied in the diversity of credible sources in their reporting, intense media presence in demonstration squares, proactive coverage of events and their developments, portrayal of modern technologies on TV and employment of multimedia in its communicative messages. A serious investigation can uncover the mystery of the circumstances of some events in all areas (political, economic, cultural, legal etc.) that involve a clear violation of human rights. It can do so in a manner that enhances rational decision-making by participants in protest movements, which promotes active citizenship. This is evident in Iraqi satellite channels' press coverage of the protest movements in Iraq on October 25. Iraqi satellite TV has a clear role in promoting active citizenship by performing communicative functions. These include news, explanations, interpretations and education. Even when its purposes differ from these, most of channels were leaning towards the aspirations of demonstrators and supporting their demands. They presented pictures full of doubt and accusation of representatives of the government and parties. Some relied on highly credible sources such as reporters, delegates, experts and civil activists, as well as government representatives and some parties. This was able to present a somewhat clear picture of local, Arab and international public opinions regarding the reality of what is going on in the protest movements in Iraq. This is a result of popular and official positions

that support the demands of demonstrators and sympathise with the violations they are exposed to.

Key words: *Iraqi satellite TV, active citizenship, protest movements.*

Introduction

The intimate relationships among satellite TV, protest movements and active citizenship are what every independent journalist aspires to be involved with. A paradox appears in the dominance of pressure forces in communicative environments that assassinate the truth and distort reality. The media, with its supreme message, has become (through digital communication) a teleological practice. This means it has specific goals and intended audiences. Therefore, the role of satellite channels in protest movements is of utmost importance for the education of citizens. They distinguish between the truth, the false or misleading. In addition, they distinguish between news and rumours, free media and propaganda. This mission seems to be difficult in light of the presence of thousands of satellite channels and press websites. It seems good if it is related to the variable of promoting active (positive) citizenship that requires participation and great loyalty from people. The biggest problem for those in charge of satellite channels is the consequences of the authoritarian ideology of most political systems in Arab countries, including Iraq. These dominate the media and various press sites directly or indirectly.

The Problem

The problem of this study lies in the main question: What is the role of Iraqi satellite channels in promoting active citizenship in the protest movements of October 25?

- From the question above, many questions branch out. This study tries to answer them. They include:
- What are the communicative functions that Iraqi satellite channels have focused on reporting regarding the protest movements of October 25 to promote active citizenship?
- How did the Iraqi satellite channels look to demonstrators, government representatives and other political parties in Iraq to promote active citizenship?
- Was their press coverage balanced regarding the subjects, issues and developments that accompanied the protest movements, so as to promote active citizenship?
- Were the press stories that occurred on the Iraqi satellite channels able to portray a complete picture of what lies in the promotion of active citizenship?
- What is the degree of honesty of the sources that Iraqi satellite channels relied on in promoting active citizenship?
- Have Iraqi satellite channels been able to foster social mobility in a way that promotes active citizenship?
- What communicative arts were prioritised in the reporting of protest movements in Iraq?



- What is the nature of the mental images created through messages about the demonstrators, government and political parties in Iraq?
- What is the nature of the mental images that form through messages involving religious authorities in Iraq regarding the promotion of active citizenship?
- What is the nature of the mental images created by press coverage of some regional parties that interfere with the protest movements in Iraq?

The Aims

The current study aims to:

- Determine the communicative functions that Iraqi satellite channels have focused on in the press coverage of the protest movements of October 25 to promote active citizenship.
- Introduce Iraqi satellite channels' perspective to the demonstrators, government representatives and the rest of the political parties in Iraq to promote active citizenship.
- Diagnose the balance of the press coverage of the subjects, issues and developments which accompanied the protest movements, so as to enable the promotion of active citizenship.
- Determine the completeness of the photos of the press stories of Iraqi satellite channels in order to promote the active citizenship.
- Know the degree of reliability of the sources on which Iraqi satellite channels relied in promoting active citizenship.
- Shed light on the role of Iraqi satellite channels in promoting social mobility in a way that enhances active citizenship.
- Identify the communicative arts that gave it priority in their coverage of the protest movements in Iraq.
- Define the nature of the mental images sought by Iraqi satellite channels through their messages about demonstrators, the government and political parties in Iraq.
- Describe the mental images sought by Iraqi satellite channels through their messages about religious references in Iraq in a way that promotes active citizenship.
- Diagnose the nature of the mental images created by Iraqi satellite channels' press coverage of some regional parties that interfere with protest movements in Iraq.

Methodology

The study relies on a descriptive method observation in answering the questions of the study's problems and achieving its objectives. It does so by determining the characteristics of the press coverage of the protest movements in Iraq of October 25, 2019.

The Community

The community in this study was represented by the communicative messages of Iraqi satellite channels for the period of 25-10-2019 to 14-12-2019. This relates to protest movements in nine Iraqi governorates.

The Fields

- subjective field: the role of satellite channels in promoting protest movements.
- spatial field: TV satellite channels in Iraq.
- timeline: from 25-10-2019 to 14-12-2019.

The Theory

The study is based on a media framework theory and a cultural implantation theory to reach scientific answers to the study questions.

Previous Studies

Hunan's study (Titi, 2013): The problem of the study, (entitled 'The role of the media in activating the values of citizenship among the public opinion, the state of revolutions and the values of belonging for Arab peoples') tried to shed light on the extent of the influence of the media on the values of citizenship and Arab public opinion. It did so by analysing the media's treatment of the Arab revolutions in 2011. These opinions were presented by each of the foreign Arabic news channels (Al- Jazeera and Al-Arabia) and France 24. The results showed the following: The influence of the media on the Arab peoples, regarding the implantation of new values in particular, corresponds with the trends of these channels. It also corresponds with the treatment of satellite channels during the Arab revolutions, according to the funding agencies of the channels. The effect of satellite channels on the activation of citizenship values is dependent on the availability of a democratic climate in a country. Public opinion was affected by the way in which the media provided coverage of events and the influence of satellite channels on the values of peoples regarding a lack of loyalty to political systems.

Ali's Al-madhoun's study (Khalil and Yahya, 2018): This study aimed to know the role of Palestinian satellite channels in promoting the values of citizenship from the viewpoint of university students in the governorate of Gaza. It considered numerous variables, including

gender and university. The results of the study showed that Palestinian satellite channels have a role in promoting the values of citizenship to a high degree (close to eighty percent). It was found that the field of promoting of national affiliation came first, the field of promoting of national unity came second and the field of strengthening political participation came last.

The study of Al Sallal (Badr, 2012): This study aimed to know the role of Kuwaiti satellite channels in promoting citizenship among Kuwaiti youth. One of its results included the general arithmetic mean for the evaluation of the sample individuals. The role of official and private satellite channels was average for the two types of TV channels.

The study of Abdul Aziz and Abbas (Mowafaq and Intssar, 2016): This study is aimed to know the effectiveness of modern media technologies represented by satellite TV channels in developing the values of good citizenship for students.

Lotfi's study (Rasha, 2015): This study aimed to know the role of Egyptian satellite channels in promoting the values of citizenship among Egyptian youth. It concluded that citizenship values are created by the media. It does so not only by expressing citizens and their issues but also by providing and interpreting information; monitoring executive, legislative and judicial authorities; providing citizens with the opportunity to express their opinions through the expansion of public space for discussion; exchanging ideas and views and affirming freedom of expression; creating effective dialogue between different groups in society; and establishing diverse opportunities for public votes and the expression of public opinion. Whatever the degrees of discrepancy between groups and the citizens exercising their individual freedoms, TV has urged people to act and participate after sensitising them to originality and responsibility. The media is assigned many complex roles to advance the values of citizenship. The most important of them is to reinforce public values that connect citizens to their country. The media incites them to abide by their duties and to claim their responsibilities and rights.

The present study has the advantage of using observation to provide a description of the cases of influence, effective aspects among those in charge of the protest movements and the nature of the press coverage of Iraqi satellite channels. It appears their role in promoting active citizenship existed in various messages that formed mental images related to events and their related developments. Iraqi satellite channels had a clear role in covering the social movement in the recent demonstrations. They investigated the facts that showed the reality of issues and files related to various fields. These related to the rights of citizens, and some related to the activities of representatives of the government and its institutions. Some related to parties and the nature of their activities and actions. Some related to regional interventions; this increased the public's confidence in most of the satellite channels and created a state of insistence on the continuation of the protest movements until the political system was

changed. The government was overthrown, the constitution changed and an independent government elected. Thus, this study is different from other studies in terms of the instruments used in analysis as well as the spatial domain and approach to the nature of the findings of the research.

Satellite TV and Citizenship

Citizenship and its components

-Citizenship is the individual belonging to a specific country by birth or nationality within the framework of an institutional political society, with the rights that it can afford and assign duties under affiliation, in equality with others discrimination or prejudice, in order to achieve a healthy relationship with the state in a framework of transparency and democracy (Titi Hanan)

- Citizenship is defined by the British Knowledge Department: 'It is the relationship between the individual and the state, as determined by the law of that state and the duties and rights contained in that relationship with the attendant's responsibilities.' The concept is generally conferred with political rights, such as the right to vote and to hold public office (Ibid).

- Citizenship refers to awareness of belonging to a geographic, social and political field. It is defined by common goals, a shared culture and one political system (Badr, 2012).

- Citizenship means an individual who enjoys membership in a country, thus deserving the benefits of that membership. In its political sense, citizenship refers to the rights guaranteed by a state to whoever holds its nationality and the obligations imposed on it. It may mean the participation of an individual in the affairs of their country and what they feel in belonging to it (<https://ar.wikipedia.org>).

- Citizenship is a relationship between a citizen and a state, regulated by law. Each party knows its rights and duties towards the other party. Citizenship can vary in negativity and positivity. Some researchers added to it the character of participation in order to move away from approaching good or active citizenship.

Citizenship has elements that can be summarised as follows (Amani, 2011):

- It provides mutual respect among citizens regardless of race, gender and culture. In other words, a state's constitution includes guarantees of citizens' respect and protection, maintains their dignity and provides them with legal guarantees that protect their civil and political rights. In addition, it gives them the right to participate in decision making regarding matters of their lives.

- It moderates and balances behaviour and work.
- It regards a citizen's sense of justice, social equality, respect for minorities and equal opportunities.

The importance of citizenship

Citizenship is a social, legal and political idea that greatly contributed to the development of the human community. Besides contributing to the development of the state through the principles of equality, democracy and transparency, it is important for the following reasons (Titi Hanan Tawil Nassima):

- It works to raise disputes and differences between the components of society and the state in the context of a civilised stampede. This is done by activating the values of citizenship. It is a viable mechanism to reduce sedition and sectarian and ethnic conflicts in any society.
- Citizenship is a constitutional and political principle and reference. It does not negate the process of competition but rather is based on respect for diversity. It seeks legal means to take advantage of this diversity by valuing the base of national unity. As a result, fields grow to express values in accordance with the principles of everyone. People understand that their future is contingent upon them and they do not negate their privacy and democracy.
- The concept of citizenship is only complete with the emergence of a democratic state that exercises positive neutrality towards the beliefs and ideologies of its citizens.
- A citizen reserves their various rights and has duties towards their country. This leads to mutual trust between the citizen and the state. When creating the social fabric of society, equality, justice and fairness among citizens is ensured before the law and institutional services. This is done by sharing responsibilities and distributing public wealth. This regards duties that are involved in paying taxes as well as preserving and defending the country.

Media and citizenship (cooperation and conflict)

Citizenship is a higher value associated with the response of political systems to social construction through the exchange of ideas and opinions. The media is a part of contemporary life that works to consolidate this value by spreading awareness and participation. This leads societies to move towards modernity and democracy. The media has become a standard for measuring the development of societies and their commitment to civilized values (Titi Hanan).

The media is an influential element in the life of societies. As the publisher and the main promoter of thought and culture, it actively contributes to the process of forming the social awareness of individuals. It does so along with families, educational institutions and civil

institutions. In many countries, culture is produced through interaction and mutual human influence. In recent years, the media has acquired various dimensions, with new dimensions that have increased its influence on individuals and groups. The media is a major source for the public to seek information on all issues (Mussa and Nasser, 2010).

On the other hand, UNESCO and many media and academic organisations have endeavoured to adopt digital media education and work to spread this concept in many countries. The most prominent tasks are to create great media openness as well as to promote peaceful coexistence and good citizenship. Digital media education teaches citizens the skills of analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the information they receive. This means that the recipients are critical in obtaining any news or information. They do not receive it as if it were Muslim. This also teaches citizens to be technically aware through the acquisition of the skills of dealing with the media and communication (Sahar, 2014).

The role of satellite TV in promoting active citizenship

The role of independent satellite channels is represented by the tasks of digital media education embodied in the process of building a person. It aims to form a culture of interaction and develop it in a purposeful and conscious manner. This means the use of media in an active and dynamic manner, with the aim of effective social participation (Rhea, 2019). In other words, it means receiving messages, understanding and analysing them scientifically and being able to actively participate in digital communication. The role of satellite TV acquires its necessity from two factors: First, power is no longer represented in political or military power, in alliances, or in crowds. Rather, power lies in information. Humans, in this period, have become a product of the influence of the media (Mohammed, 2009). Second, TV tries to enable citizens to deal with changes in the new communication environment, enable them to deal with discrimination and enable them to discover the truth.

The positive effects of the role of satellite channels in promoting effective citizenship include the following (Titi Hanan):

- Spreading awareness and culture: Satellite TV plays a major role in spreading culture and consolidating values, especially values of citizenship, loyalty and belonging, which are considered civilisational constituents.
- Establishing positive values and habits that contribute to the progress and development of society.
- Providing citizens with the correct information about history, civilisations and their affiliation with their homeland.
- Emphasising, through its programs, the importance of values (loyalty, belonging and patriotism) and respect for others.

- Creating the national character by urging participation in programs aimed at deepening the culture of citizenship, adherence to national affiliation and respect for pluralism (political, social and intellectual). It is a factor that guarantees the unity and cohesion of the community and encourages a culture of dialogue and improvement among members of society.

Results

1. Most satellite TV channels prioritised their coverage of news, reports and interviews. As such, guidance, counselling and educational functions were not their top priorities.
2. Most coverage was characterised by a tendency to represent the demonstrators. On the one hand, it provided an inspirational picture full of doubt and distrust of government and party representatives embodied by questions asked in interviews and timing the presentation of news and press reports in a way that gave the recipients an atmosphere of mistrust. On the other hand, this deepened suspicion, distrust of representatives of the government and parties. It contributed to the escalation of the demonstrators' demands.
3. Coverage managed to form a somewhat complete picture of the demonstrators and their various peaceful activities, which added to crowding in the protest movements. However, coverage failed to produce a documented image of the violations carried out by various parties in conflict with the demonstrators.
4. Most Iraqi satellite channels, through their daily monitoring of the events and developments in the demonstrations, have contributed to the movement of international organisations in order to stop repeated violations (by unknown parties) of human rights. These violations involve freedom of expression, personal security and social justice.
5. Some Iraqi satellite channels relied on reporters and delegates for press coverage of the protest movements. They represented highly credible sources. This increased communication and formed of an image closer to the truth, which contributes to enhancing public participation in the demonstrations, thus strengthening active citizenship. This included statements from some local people, experts, government representatives and parties. Explicit sources of a second degree of credibility were represented in order to form an image (whatever its credibility) of the nature of the government and party positions on the protest movements.
6. Press coverage from news, reports and TV interviews prioritised the developments of the protest movements and related issues and events.
7. The mental images presented involved religious messages and ideal authorities in Iraq. This is because religious references were with the demands of the demonstrators. Coverage defended their demands and described the performance of government representatives negatively. It charted a clear path for demonstrators and the government to achieve social justice and to promote active citizenship.
8. Coverage contributed to the consensus by repetitive press coverage of the events involving the demonstrations and the appeals of the majority of the demonstrators. This provided a

picture that rejected the interference of some regional parties in Iraqi affairs, especially regarding Iran.

9. Some demonstrators had the opportunity to present their visions, perceptions and observations. This contributed to the formation of a collective mind characterised by similar thinking among the general demonstrators and sympathisers of the protest movements.

10. Most Iraqi satellite channels described the demonstrators' demands as true and legitimate, while a negative image was presented of government representatives in Iraq and the rest of the parties in Iraq. This suggested to citizens that participation in protest movements leads to the fulfilment of their legitimate demands.

Recommendations

1. Encourage international organisations concerned with human rights to take effective international measures that enable the media to carry out their press messages freely, in safety and with professional independence.

2. Encourage Iraqi satellite channels to stay away from the effects of their owners and financiers in their press coverage, especially with regard to protest movements.

3. Encourage Iraqi satellite channels not only to cover the social mobility of protesters in protest movements, but also to investigate the files that violate the rights and interests of citizens thoroughly and objectively.

4. Urge the Iraqi judiciary to play an active role in the fields of orientation, guidance and education for demonstrators in protest movements through various press arts in a way that contributes to the promotion of active citizenship.

5. Encourage Iraqi satellite channels to avoid depicting bloody scenes and dead bodies and to replace these with eyewitness accounts.

6. Necessitate Iraqi satellite channels to avoid slandering, insulting, accusing and presenting news without evidence and proof.

7. Encourage Iraqi satellite channels to choose people who are able to speak and express in a decent manner and who represent the different segments of society.

REFERENCES

- Amani, G. J. (2011). *Global Citizenship*, Amman: Wael House for Publishing & Distribution, p. 43.
- Badr, H. A.-S. (2012). *The role of official and private Kuwaiti satellite channels in promoting citizenship among Kuwaiti youth* : Master Thesis, Middle East University / College of Media and Political Science.
- Badr, H. A.-S. (2012). *The role of official and private satellite channels in promoting citizenship for Kuwaiti youth*, : Master Thesis, Middle East University / College of Information, , p. 8.
- Ibid. p.29-30.
- Khalil, A. A. and Yahya, I.A.-M. (2018). *The role of Palestinian satellite channels in promoting the values of citizenship from the viewpoint of university students in the governorates of Gaza*, *Al-Azhar University Journal* : Humanities Series, Volume 20, No. 1.
- Mohammed, A. (2009). *Blogs and Alternative Media*, Cairo: The Science of Kent, p. 33.
- Mowafaq, A. A.-H. and Intssar, I.A.A.-H. (2016). *The effectiveness of modern media technologies in developing the values of good citizenship for students* : *Media Researcher*, Volume 8, No. 31.
- Mussa, A. R. H. and Nasser, A. M. (2010). *The role of the media in shaping social awareness among Palestinian youth*, *Al-Azhar University Journal*, Gaza, Volume 12, No. 2, p. 136.
- Rasha, A. L. (2015). *Egyptian satellite channels (official and private) and their role in promoting the values of citizenship among Egyptian youth* : *Media Research Magazine*, No. 16.
- Rhea, N. (2019). *Lectures in Media and Digital Education* : Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research - Dejla University-Department of Information, 2018-2019, pp. 1-2.
- Sahar, K. A. (2014). *Digital media education.. the only option !!* available online: <http://aoija.org>.
- Titi, H. (2013). *The role of the media in activating the values of citizenship among public opinion* : The status of revolutions and the values of belonging to Arab peoples, Master



International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change. www.ijicc.net
Volume 11, Issue 3, 2020

Thesis, University of Muhammad Khidir Biskra / College of Political Rights and Sciences / Department of Political Science and Relations.