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### Open Access

### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## The Portrayal of the Autumn 2022 Iranian Protests in the Television Program 'Shiveh'

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### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

#### Introduction

This study aims to analyze the content of the television program "Shiveh" concerning the dimensions of the 2022 protests that followed the death of Ms. Mahsa Amini. The dialogue-oriented program "Shiveh," which was broadcast regularly on Channel 4 (Sima) almost from the onset of the protests in Iran, represented a notable attempt to address issues related to governance from a critical perspective. Through establishing a dialogical framework, the program sought to contribute to the elucidation of matters surrounding the recent civil protests and to assist in navigating the country's critical situation. Given the program's dialogue-centered format, this research focuses on analyzing the content of expert discussions across various thematic dimensions.

### **Methods:**

The present study employed quantitative content analysis. Each episode of the dialogue-oriented program "Shiveh" was treated as a unit of enumeration, defined as the full duration of the broadcast on Channel 4 (Sima), lasting 90 minutes. The unit of registration was a theme, identified according to predefined categories and subcategories. The statistical population comprised all broadcast episodes of "Shiveh" from its inception (September 20, 2022). The sample population included all 24 episodes aired between September 20, 2022, and November 2, 2022. Purposeful sampling was utilized. Accordingly, all 24 selected episodes were systematically observed, and the required data were recorded during observation.

### **Findings:**

The findings indicated that the proportion of programs in which at least one of the dialogue participants was from the seminary community (29%) was less than half of that in which both interlocutors held university education (71%). This discrepancy may be attributed to the program creators' perception that academics, due to their closer alignment with the intellectual milieu that generated and fueled the 2022 unrest, possessed greater authority than seminarians in analyzing the aforementioned events; consequently, university-affiliated invitees predominated.

Programs in which at least one participant was female (16.7%) constituted roughly one-fifth of those with exclusively male participants (83%), reflecting a significant predominance of male guests. This suggests that the program creators did not consider the 2022 protests—despite originating from a female-centered incident—as exclusively related to women's issues. Hence, due to the broad range of topics connected to the events, no substantial effort was made to address them from a female perspective.

In 83.3% of the programs, at least one participant was a university-affiliated guest, underscoring the importance attributed by the program makers to the academic institution in analyzing and investigating the 2022 events, as well as their effort to foster an authentic and scientific discourse around the subject. Moreover, the share of programs with at least one expert participant (37.5%) and at least one participant affiliated with the governing apparatus (33.3%) indicates an almost equal weight assigned by the program creators to these two professional categories for the analysis of the issues. Notably, no program featured both conversation parties holding a governing position, suggesting that the program makers consistently intended for the governing guest to be answerable to the critiques raised by others.

Since, in 87.5% of the episodes, at least one guest revealed their discursive bias during the conversation, it is evident that the production team acknowledged the well-known and prevailing discursive currents within the country and considered them responsible for analyzing the 2022 events. Furthermore, the presence of opposing discursive biases among guests in a debate provides the audience with the opportunity to hear both sides' critiques and to exercise judgment. Consequently, sound arguments become more persuasive to the audience, while simultaneously increasing viewer satisfaction through the consumption of challenging and engaging media content.

The analysis showed that in 83.3% of the episodes, time allocation between conversation parties was at an average or good level. Given that, according to the program's host, the producers' goal was to facilitate a well-rounded, engaging conversation with relative (rather than absolute) balance in time allocation, the production team appears to have succeeded in achieving this objective.

## Conclusions:

The results demonstrate that the moderator, through managing the flow of conversation, maintaining relative balance in time allocation, and exhibiting acceptable neutrality in commentary, prevented digressions and ensured progress toward the program's primary goals. Guests enhanced the program's appeal by expressing their views during the dialogues, while simultaneously highlighting different facets of the issues through their discursive biases. Additionally, experts' attention to two categories—"political" and "social"—was measured. The findings indicate that political categories received greater attention (59% allocation), with governance-related issues being the most emphasized by experts (48% of the time allocated to political categories). Regarding the "analysis of positions in the talks between host and guests," 48% of experts held a positive view toward the category of the people's right to protest, and 54% of experts agreed with the category concerning the role of foreign intervention in the formation and escalation of the protests.

### Data Availability Statement

Data available on request from the authors.

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### Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

### Funding

Not applicable.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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