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Political Bias against Atheists: Talk Shows Targeting Arabic-Speaking Audiences

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Abstract: Atheism has stirred up controversy in the Arabic-speaking world since the 2011 uprisings, when atheists there began appearing in public. What role does Arabic mass media play in the modern politics of minorities such as atheists, given the heated debates that it hosts on atheism? This question is important because perceptions of media frames influence the behavior of politicians and the electorate—and, as a result, laws that affect minority groups such as atheists. This article focuses on Lebanon, where eight of the nine television channels are affiliated with and funded by religious–political parties. It explores the existence of bias against atheists on televised Lebanese talk shows and news reports (2010–2022). Our findings reveal significant bias (69% overall and over 85% in speaker prominence bias), with channels that promote communal religious practice exhibiting the highest levels. Ultimately, our findings demonstrate that television, as the most influential Lebanese and Arabic mass medium, likely affects the public's negative perceptions of Arabic-speaking atheists. Our findings reflect the decrease in objectivity in conflict-based media and such media's poor understanding or intentional disregard for media's crucial role in building a fair, democratic society.

Keywords: atheism; bias; discrimination; human rights; Lebanon; media; religion; television; talk shows

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1. Introduction

In 2019–2020, the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, Qatar, conducted its seventh annual survey of Arab public opinion. Twelve percent of those polled described themselves as non-religious, but the survey found a different statistic to be more noteworthy—the conspicuous shift in preference toward dealing with religious people. While in the first annual survey, conducted in 2011, the percentage of people who professed no preference was 70%, in 2020 it had fallen to 62%, after rising slightly from its lowest measure of 52% in 2014 (see Figure 1). This decrease resulted from a shift toward greater polarization—those who preferred religious people rose by 5–12% and those who preferred non-religious people rose by 7–9%. Arabic-speaking communities' greater awareness of the non-religious followed heated discussions about atheism in the Arabic mass and social media, catalyzed by a global climate of greater political polarization (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019). To what extent has Arabic media affected this shift in public opinion? And what does this mean for the role that journalism plays in modern politics? (The link between social media and increased preferences to deal with non-religious individuals is beyond the scope of this study, but we encourage future research into it.)

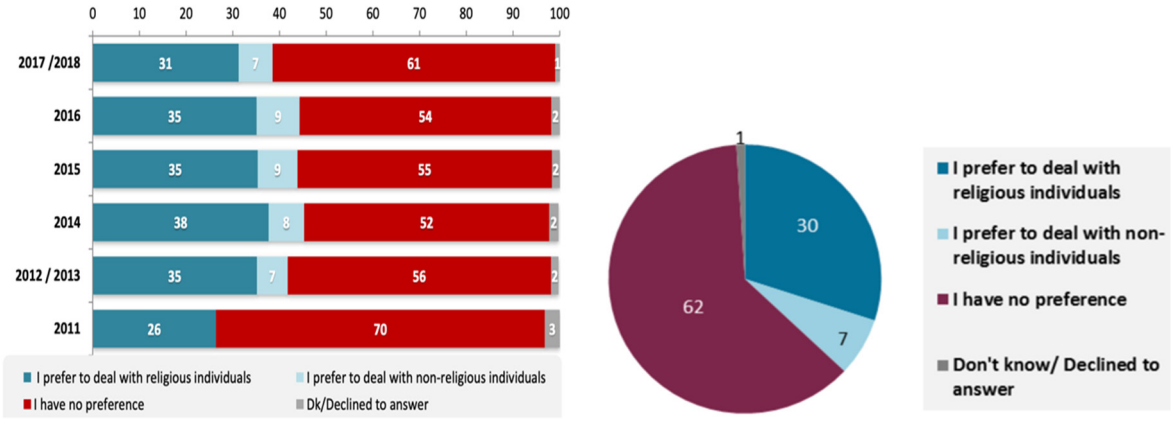


Figure 1. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha, Qatar: "In your day-to-day life, do you prefer to deal with religious individuals?" Data for 2011–2018 (**left**) and 2019–2020 (**right**).[1]

Atheists across Arabic-speaking communities started coming out publicly around 2011. They felt emboldened by the Arab civil rights uprisings and the New Atheist movement, which had inspired public atheism since the early 2000s. Some Arabic-speaking atheists choose to come out under pseudonyms (Khazaal 2017), while others chose to appear openly in local media (Khazaal 2022). In either case, their new openness has sparked discussions about their place in society and their right to be public about their convictions (Khazaal 2023; Benchemsi 2015). These discussions attract massive television viewership. However, there is a shared impression among atheists and some religious Arabs that television has waged a vicious campaign to vilify atheists after it lures them as talk-show guests (Khazaal, Natalie. Personal communication with "Black Ducks" creator Ibrahim Muhammad 2017). For instance, atheists complain that hosts and guest clerics accuse them, insult them, frame them as "an unfortunate phenomenon," do not let them answer the questions, or throw them out to appease a presumed religious audience that is intolerant of atheism.[2] By contrast, hosts and guest clerics claim to represent atheists without negative stereotypes or any anti-atheist agenda.[3] Some audience members even allege that the media represents atheists too positively, corrupting the local youth (Khazaal 2023).

The media reflects and shapes public views on various issues, which, in turn, influences social behavior and political action. But has the media affected public views on non-religion (atheism) in Arabic-speaking communities, as religious and non-religious members of the public allege, albeit in divergent ways? Using Lebanon as a case study, this article puts to the test how local television frames and interacts with open Lebanese atheists. *Does it indeed vilify them, represent them without any bias, or portray them positively, displaying a bias in their favor?*

It is important to answer this question for two reasons: First, the findings can give us a preliminary glimpse into one potential cause for the greater polarization of Arab public opinion when it comes to interactions between the religious and non-religious. Particular political and economic contexts have affected the nexus of religion, journalism, and international issues that we are exploring here, especially in the new millennium. We know that television structures "the broader context through which we establish information about our political world" (Marsden and Savigny 2009, p. 6). In addition, framing is the most powerful mechanism through which the media shapes the public sphere, as it simplifies, ranks, and contextualizes information as a narrative (Entman 1993). As a result, media framing, perceptions, and policy may lead to outcomes that range from hostility and intolerance to discrimination and terrorism. Given such contexts, what insights can the case of Lebanese atheists offer about the nexus of religion, journalism, international issues, and polarization?

The second reason is how deeply atheists in all Arabic-speaking communities challenge a social order organized around public religiosity. Lebanon is a particularly germane

case. A country that prides itself on being a consociational democracy, Lebanon consists entirely of religious minorities, each with its own television, radio, and newspaper outlets, schools, neighborhoods, and personal and family laws. Moreover, Lebanese citizens do not receive citizenship rights directly from the state, but indirectly through a sectarian leader. Such connective heteropatriarchy (Joseph 1993) requires that citizens participate loyally in sectarian practices and the reelection of sectarian leaders. The mandatory religious affiliation was removed from Lebanese identity cards only recently, while the on-again-off-again debate about an optional civil marriage is still unresolved. Public identity in Lebanon is therefore colored by sectarian affiliation, while professing such affiliation has been synonymous in many respects with practicing politics.

With their newly visible public identity, Lebanese atheists threaten the leading position of religion in the organization of society and the power wielded by the religious establishment in maintaining its elevated status. Even more importantly, Lebanese atheists challenge the very core of Lebanese politics, because their public identity threatens the links that politicians and sectarian leaders forge with their supporters. In other words, when it comes to the public presence of atheists, the battle that we see on Lebanese television is a battle over the survival of a sectarian order that has endured several civil conflicts, including the 1975–1991 civil war.

Given these two salient reasons and television's heightened utility for Lebanese audiences, we analyze all shows on local television outlets that discuss atheism between 2010 and 2022. We use content analysis with a modified stratified sampling to assess three aspects of presentation bias (i.e., how to cover atheist stories)—topic introduction, question content, and speaker prominence—in a total of 16 extant shows. Our study demonstrates that Lebanese television is biased against atheists in the ways in which it introduces them, allots them time per speaking turn, and ranks their value as guests and experts on the topic. This is significant because perceptions of media frames influence the behavior of politicians and the electorate—and, as a result, laws that affect minority groups such as atheists.

Below, we describe the existence of stable, robust, widespread prejudice against atheists globally and in Lebanon, and then we theorize the ways in which bias is employed in television programming and the consequences of this practice. The Methodology section discusses the selection criteria, method of analysis, analytical categories, and measuring scales that we used in this study. Finally, in the Discussion and Findings section, we analyze the degree and nature of bias against atheists on Lebanese television shows.

2. Theoretical Framework: Anti-Atheist Prejudice and the Role of Journalism

2.1. Public Atheism in Lebanon

There is a single academic study on atheism in Lebanon (Khazaal 2022) and a report on prejudice against Lebanese atheists (Sarah Harakeh and Abdallah 2021), to the bets of our knowledge. However, the half-dozen studies on Arabic-speaking atheists more generally can also help us better understand public atheism in Lebanon.

While religious skepticism is not new in the Arabic-speaking world (Stroumsa 1999), public atheism became a movement only after the 2011 Arab uprisings, when various minorities began taking assertive action. Nonetheless, the severe psychological, emotional, legal, and interpersonal consequences that public atheists in Arabic-speaking communities incur have forced most of them to appear under pseudonyms on digital media (Khazaal 2017). Their use of pseudonyms does not stem from self-effacement, economic advantage, or aristocratic and gender reticence. It is a form of political action against stigma, discrimination, violence, and the cultural pressure to keep atheism private. One example is the *Arab Atheist Magazine* (Khazaal 2017); another is a large number of individual accounts on Facebook and Twitter (Al Hariri et al. 2019).

Despite efforts to avoid being identified, some Arabic-speaking atheists have been caught and prosecuted for blasphemy (Blumberg 2015; Donnison 2010). Penalizing atheism and the ease of direct outreach through digital media triggered the launch of the first Arabic atheist channels on YouTube under the real names of the creators. For instance, Ismail

Mohamed created the online talk show The Black Ducks in 2013 to counter portrayals of atheism as a form of terrorism (Khazaal, Natalie. Personal communication with Ibrahim Muhammad, 2017). These YouTube channels helped create a lively virtual community, which inspired greater confidence in Arabic-speaking atheists to be public and make demands on society (Elsasser 2021).

Today, atheism is widely discussed in Lebanon and the Arabic-speaking world (Al Hariri et al. 2019). However, despite its visibility and the opportunities for self-expression and community-building on digital media, there has been relatively little progress toward normalizing non-religious convictions. While atheist YouTube channels reach a more educated, younger, and technologically savvy audience, atheist Facebook groups are typically closed to non-atheists. As a result, a large mass audience never hears atheists' direct messaging—or if it does, religious pundits interpret this messaging negatively. The ultimate test, then, is whether atheists can reach a broader, more traditional audience through television—the most influential of all Arabic mainstream media (Khazaal 2022). These findings generate a new set of questions about the role that television itself plays in helping or hurting Lebanese atheists' outreach strategies. Before finding out to what extent Lebanese television weaponizes anti-atheist prejudice, we need to understand what exactly is involved in anti-atheist prejudice.

2.2. Prejudice and Discrimination

Atheists are not a widely organized, coherent social group, but dispersed, heterogeneous, inconspicuous, or hidden individuals (Gervais 2013). Intergroup conflict, which is a well-known driver of prejudice, is typically engendered by widely organized, coherent social groups (Schiavone and Gervais 2017). Therefore, atheists should not arouse prejudice. However, extant research has noted stable, robust, widespread prejudice against them across many countries, rooted in distrust and linked to discrimination (Speed and Brewster 2021; Gervais et al. 2017; Edgell et al. 2016; Clobert et al. 2014; Swan and Heesacker 2012; Weiler-Harwell 2011). Even when atheists are described with stereotypically Christian attributes in studies, theist participants admit that they trust atheists considerably less than they trust other believers (Grove et al. 2020). Such experimental outcomes demonstrate that anti-atheist prejudice is involved in the formation of group identity and is insensitive to differences among individuals. This broad social prejudice is linked to seeing atheists as immoral (Gervais 2014; Franks and Scherr 2014), lacking compassion (Simpson and Rios 2017), or prone to criminal behavior (Gervais et al. 2017; Giddings and Dunn 2016).

In Lebanon, legally speaking, atheists should not have a problem. The constitution endorses freedom of conviction (§ 9); however, under Penal Code §§ 473–5, blasphemy and insulting religious practices are punished with up to three years of imprisonment. In practice, several activists, journalists, and even musicians have been sued for blasphemy and silenced from social media, in violation of the constitution (Ghattas 2019; Man Arrested on Blasphemy Charges Turns Out to Be Poet Mustafa Sbeity 2017). Moreover, religious sectarian courts litigate all personal status matters, such as marriage, custody, inheritance, etc. This is bad for atheists, because these courts do not recognize atheists' existence.

Socially speaking, Lebanese atheists face a somewhat hostile environment as well. According to a 2021 report (Harakeh, Ayat, and Abdallah), anti-atheist prejudice in Lebanon results in serious abuse, including death threats, psychological and physical violence, forced veiling, employment discrimination, illegal detention, and restrictions on freedom of expression, education, and social services. Almost all female interviewees were "forced to wear the veil at some point during their lives, are currently forced to wear it, or are facing the consequences of refusing to wear it, from physical to emotional abuse" (ibid). In addition, several interviewees were arrested for apostasy, fired, abducted by a religious party, or took their own lives because of the abuse they faced. In sum, public atheists in Lebanon face serious anti-atheist prejudice and discrimination that are often legally, socially, or psychologically costly for them. Indeed, communal religious practice tends to promote intolerant attitudes (Hoffman 2020). So, from where does the public acquire its negative attitudes toward atheists?

2.3. Anti-Atheist Prejudice in the Media

To understand whether the media is a potential source of negative attitudes toward atheists, van der Veen and Bleich (2021) analyzed a corpus of over 15,000 news articles published in the US and the UK in 2000–2018. They demonstrated that atheists there are portrayed negatively, which suggests that the media affects anti-atheist prejudice, given its dual role in reflecting and creating public opinion, public and private life, and the place of religion in it (Hoover 2006).

Similar negative portrayals of atheists hold true in Germany, in the context of a late-2000s backlash that painted them as a dangerous militant movement. According to Thomas Zenk (2012), the integration of a vast atheist population from East Germany, diminishing church attendance, and vocal atheist activism has led to a vehement attack against atheists by the religious establishment in public space and the media.

Mainstream British television also rarely represents atheism in a positive light. In a longitudinal study (1982–2009), Knott et al. (2013) debunk the popular myth that the media is liberal and anti-religious. Instead, they show that religion is deeply rooted in the media's unspoken values as a constituent element of British culture, while "atheists [are] generally represented as intolerant, arrogant, quarrelsome, and eager to denounce religious people as wrong or 'lazy'" (110). In fact, British media calls moderate Christianity "good" secularism and atheism "bad" secularism. Furthermore, while it sees Christians as experts on morality and the common good, atheists are never portrayed in that role.

As far as anti-atheist bias in Lebanese media is concerned, our contribution is the first academic study on this topic. Other studies on media bias in the MENA region have been carried out; however, they focused on different parties involved in regional conflicts. For instance in the 1980s, they studied the Arab–Israeli conflict (Vallone et al. 1985; Kressel 1987), while after the Arab uprisings they shifted to revolutions in Yemen and Syria. Studies on media bias toward cultural groups, such as Arab citizens in Israel (Tsfati 2007) and homosexuals (Al-Abbas and Haider 2021), have been noticeably fewer.

Exposure to bias in the media also has negative consequences similar to those of participating in communal religious practice. For example, it can affect voting behavior (DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007) and foster intolerance, segregation, and antagonism (Glynn et al. 2015). Multiple experimental cognitive studies have proven that media consumption can increase anti-atheist prejudice specifically (Grove et al. 2020; Andersson 2016). But are there means to help diminish this level of prejudice and discrimination? And if so, is television one such means?

Several cross-sectional and experimental studies have demonstrated that anti-atheist prejudice is dynamic and can be manipulated and reduced, even though it is entrenched (Andersson 2016; Norenzayan and Gervais 2015; Gervais 2011, 2013, 2014; Swan and Heesacker 2012; Gervais and Norenzayan 2012; Ritter and Preston 2011). For instance, the actual or perceived prevalence of atheists lessens it, as does trust in the government and in science (Gervais 2013). Such findings suggest that the media likely affects prejudice against atheists (Andersson 2016), especially since we already know empirically that it affects attitudes toward minorities in general (Mastro and Tukachinsky 2014) and toward specific religious minorities such as Muslims (Schmuck et al. 2020; Saleem et al. 2017).

2.4. The Grip of Religion on Lebanese Television

A viable strategy that Arabic-speaking atheists can follow to bridge the gap that separates them from the public is gaining access to mainstream media, because of its enormous sway on viewers. Most of the Lebanese population watches local television outlets, follows Arabic programs (99%), uses television for news or headlines (96%), and does so daily (79%) (Dennis et al. 2019).

With such high stakes, it is not surprising that several Lebanese atheists have appeared on local television channels. However, their experience has been colored by sectarianism's grip on the medium. Lebanese television first launched in 1959, but shortly after the beginning of the 1975–1991 civil war its two extant private channels were on the brink

of bankruptcy, and the government bought them out to create a national channel with no religious affiliation called Télé Liban (TL). In the 1980s and 1990s, cheap technology allowed various sectarian factions to set up their own pirate channels (Boyd 1991), many of which were legalized by Audiovisual Media Law No. 382 of 1994, ending Télé Liban's monopoly (El Meouchi and Dib 2016). Today, in addition to TL, there are eight politically affiliated channels owned by 10 Lebanese families and one party (Media Ownership Monitor Lebanon 2018). They cater to their own sectarian constituents, and political parties remain an important source of funding for all eight (Kraidy 1998). By comparison, TL is severely underfunded, because politicians have a vested interest in their own sectarian media and the power to decide TL's fate, which is regulated by the multi-sectarian government. Examples of sectarian rivalry over installing their hacks to censor TL have led to long periods where the station lacked a CEO or a board of directors (Khazaal 2020).

The history of Lebanese television then shows how much it depends on ideological bias to attract a particular kind of audience and sustain itself financially. Until now, little research has been conducted on the portrayal of religious minority groups—such as atheists—on Lebanese television networks. The current contribution is intended to assess such bias.

3. Methodology

Selection criteria: We searched for Arabic-language programs aired on Lebanese television that dealt with atheism exclusively or in a substantial, meaningful way from 2010 to 2022. After compiling a list of the most watched local channels (based on Media Ownership Lebanon's ranking),[4] two individuals conducted an independent search. They scraped each televisions website and YouTube channel to compile a list of episodes, using the keywords "mulhid*" and "ilhad" ("atheist*," "atheism"); they also examined shows that did not use these keywords but featured famous Lebanese atheists talking about atheism; the name of each famous atheist served as a keyword for the search. Two channels returned zero hits. Some channels, such as Télé Lumière, had relevant news articles but no video material. Noursat—Télé Lumière's satellite covering MENA and Europe—was excluded because it does not target Lebanese audiences. In the end, 16 episodes from seven channels met the criteria.

Method of analysis: We analyzed the 16 shows by adapting categories consistent with content analysis from studies on political interviews and talk shows, including in MENA (D'Alessio and Allen 2000; Saez-Trumper et al. 2013; Huls and Varwijk 2011; Ali and Rahman 2019). We analyzed all 16 shows, stratifying them according to guest representation, channel, and type of program, to check whether the different strata yielded different results (e.g., shows with guests may use different strategies to represent atheists than those without guests).

Bias and analytical categories: Bias may arise from a host's partisan position, or when they allow guests different opportunities for participation (Bode et al. 2018). Research shows that content is one of several factors that produce bias and should be studied together with the television format, program structure, and contextual and situational features for shaping viewer perceptions (Hoffman 2013; Vraga et al. 2012; Bracken 2006). Bias in opportunities for participation is a subtler form, and viewers tend to notice it less. However, Lindsay Hoffman (2013) showed that viewers notice it in some program brands more than others. Other studies have demonstrated that viewers identify elements of a program's brand to assess bias (Baum and Gussin 2008; Chan-Olmstead and Cha 2007).

We explore several types of bias to identify relevant analytical categories: gatekeeping (selection) bias, i.e., whether and how often channels select atheist stories; and different aspects of presentation bias, i.e., whether and how often channels skew the story's content in favor of/against atheists. The aspects of presentation bias that we assess include "topic introduction bias," i.e., whether shows introduce atheists favorably or not; "question content bias," i.e., how anchors formulate and deliver their questions to atheists; and "speaker prominence bias," i.e., how much attention is given to atheists. It is often difficult to identify gatekeeping bias. Is our sample's small size evidence for gatekeeping bias or for

lack of it, since this taboo topic is covered sometimes? Our guide to understanding this comes from earlier research, which suggests that atheism is widely discussed in Arabic-speaking communities and is relevant to atheists and theists (Al Hariri et al. 2019). That is why, in this study, we focus on the remaining three types of bias.

We explore topic introduction bias, question content bias, and speaker prominence bias using six analytical categories—direction of introduction, question tone, allegation-based questions, participant's rank, time per speaking turn, and interruptions by host, which we have adapted from earlier research and modified to better suit our dataset and the purposes of our analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1. Political bias index measuring bias on talk shows and news reports toward Lebanese atheists.

Aspect of Political Bias	**Category of Political Bias Index**	**Score for Each Category 1 Point**	**2 Points**	**3 Points**
Topic introduction bias	Direction of introduction	Pro-atheism	Neutral	Anti-atheism
Question content bias	Question tone	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
	Allegations in questions	Praise	No allegation or relevant allegation with source	Allegation without source
Speaker prominence bias	Ranks of participants	Atheist participant invited first or seated as a guest while other participant was seated among audience	Participants invited at the same time and seated similarly	Atheist participant invited later or seated among audience
	Time per speaking turn	More time allocated to pro-atheist participant	Equal time to all participants	Less time to atheist participant
	Interruptions	Fewer interruptions of atheist participant	Equal interruptions of all participants	More interruptions of atheist participant

A. Topic introduction bias:
   - A.1. Direction of introduction: The way in which atheism or atheist guests are introduced compared to non-atheist guests. Topic introductions can be favorable, unfavorable, or neutral to atheism.

B. Question content bias:
   - B.1. Question tone: The tone used by the anchor when asking atheist guests a question. The tone can determine existing bias toward the guest.
   - B.2. Allegation-based questions: Questions in the form of allegations or accusations. Whether such questions exist, and whether the allegations are relevant or delivered without sources, are indicators of possible bias.

C. Speaker prominence bias:
   - C.1. Ranks of participants: The order and lag time for introducing each guest. Guest seating is another important parameter, i.e., beside the anchor or in the audience.
   - C.2. Amount of time per speaking turn: The time atheist guests are given to answer questions compared to other guests.
   - C.3. Interruptions by anchor: The frequency with which the anchor interrupts atheist guests compared to other guests.

These six categories are relative. For example, interruption by the anchor is relative to how the anchor usually interacts with other non-atheist participants. We do not analyze outros, because ending shows with a concluding statement is not common on Lebanese television. We assign one of three scores for each of the six categories: one point for material

favorable to atheism, two points when neutral, and three points when biased against atheism (see Table 1).

For each assessed material we obtained a score between 6 and 18 to determine the degree of bias, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Degree of bias.

Final Score	Degree of Bias
Between 6 and 8	Favorable
Between 9 and 11	Slightly favorable
12	Neutral
Between 13 and 15	Somewhat biased
Between 16 and 18	Highly biased

Depending on guest representation, certain categories do not apply. For example, when no guests are present, topic introduction bias is the only relevant aspect. Similarly, in cases of one-sided guest representation, the speaker prominence bias categories "ranks of participants" and "interruptions" do not apply. To account for this, the total score obtained using the bias scale above was divided by the number of applicable categories. This score was multiplied by 6 to obtain a final score between 6 and 18, and then compared to the values in Table 2 to determine the degree of bias. The formula below captures this:

$$\text{Degree of bias} = \frac{\text{sum of scores for each political bias}}{\text{number of applicable biases}} \times 6$$

For example, if an episode only has values for three of the six categories, we divide the sum by three and then multiply by six to rescale the score. Table 3 below displays the number of applicable categories for different show types.

Table 3. Count of applicable categories for different levels of guest representation.

	Topic Introduction Bias	Question Content Bias	Speaker Prominence Bias	Total
No guest representation	1	0	0	1
One-sided guest representation	1	2	0	3
Two-sided guest representation	1	2	3	6

4. Discussion and Findings

The analysis of our sample reveals that Lebanese media rarely deals with atheism and non-belief, much like its counterparts from the MENA region. Most of the 16 hits that comprise our sample come from interview talk shows. The rest include two comedy talk shows, one issue-based talk show, and one news story (see Table A1, Appendix A). Although our sample cannot prove or disprove the existence of selection bias, it clearly shows that atheists are under-covered on Lebanese television and, whenever present, they are depicted negatively. This resembles the case of media representation of homosexuals in Arabic-language news outlets (Al-Abbas and Haider 2021).

4.1. General Assessment

There are six main topics covered in the sample: freedom (3), scandals (3), refuting atheism and affirming the existence of God (3), other shows discussing atheism (2), disambiguation (2), and morality and religion (1) (Table A1).

The shows vary in terms of guest inclusion (see Table 4 below). About half (44%, 7/16 episodes) include a theist and an atheist side. In three of the six instances where only one side is present, that side is pro-atheism. On three other occasions (3/16), the hosts engage in monologues or discussions among themselves without guest representation.

Table 4. Guest representation.

Guest Representation			Count	TV Channels
With guest representation	One-sided	Pro-atheism	3	Al-Jadeed TV
		Opposed	3	Al-Manaar, NBN
	Two-sided		7	Future TV, MTV, al-Jadeed TV, TL, LBC
Without any representation			3	Future TV, al-Jadeed TV, LBCI

Most of the shows are highly or somewhat biased against atheists (69%, 11/16). Five of the sixteen episodes showed no signs of bias toward atheists (31%). No episodes are biased in favor of atheists (0/16). The scoring for each of the categories of bias is shown in Table 5, and the final scores for the degree of bias are shown in Table 6.

Table 5. Political bias scores of the assessed materials.

Representation		Source	Show	Topic Introduction Bias	Question Content Bias		Speaker Prominence Bias		
				Direction of Introduction	Allegations in Questions	Question Tone	Ranks of Participants	Time per Speaking Turn	Interruptions
No representation		Al-Jadeed TV	*Tony Khalife*	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Future TV	*Tele Stars*	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
		LBCI	*BBCHI*	2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
One-sided	Only pro-atheist	Al-Jadeed TV	*The news*	2	2	2	NA	NA	NA
		MTV	*Talk of the Town*	2	2	3	NA	NA	NA
		Al-Jadeed	*This is How I Am*	3	1	2	NA	NA	NA
	Only opposed	Al-Manaar	*Abelmosk seed*	3	2	3	NA	NA	NA
		Al-Manaar	*Communication*	3	3	3	NA	NA	NA
		NBN	*Your opinion*	3	3	3	NA	NA	NA
Two-sided		TL	*Our Street*	2	2	2	2	2	2
		Future TV	*Speaking of*	2	2	2	3	3	3
		MTV	*Starting with us*	2	2	2	2	3	3
		Al-Jadeed TV	*Eye for an Eye*	3	2	3	1	2	3
		Al-Jadeed TV	*For publication*	3	2	3	3	3	3
		Al-Jadeed TV	*This is How I Am*	3	2	3	3	3	3
		LBC	*In Bold Red*	NA	NA	NA	2	1	3

Table 6. Degree of bias in the assessed materials.

Representation		Source	Show	Score	Degree of Bias
No representation		Al-Jadeed TV	*Tony Khalife*	18	Highly biased
		Future TV	*Tele Stars*	18	Highly biased
		LBCI	*BBCHI*	12	Neutral
One-sided	Only pro-atheist	Al-Jadeed TV	*The news*	12	Neutral
		Al-Jadeed TV	*This is How I Am*	12	Neutral
		MTV	*Talk of the Town*	14	Somewhat biased
	Only opposed	Al-Manaar	*Abelmosk seed*	16	Highly biased
		Al-Manaar	*Communication*	18	Highly biased
		NBN	*Your opinion*	18	Highly biased
Two-sided		TL	*Our Street*	12	Neutral
		LBC	*In Bold Red*	12	Neutral
		Future TV	*Speaking of*	15	Somewhat biased
		MTV	*Starting with us*	14	Somewhat biased
		Al-Jadeed TV	*Eye for an Eye*	13	Somewhat biased
		Al-Jadeed TV	*For publication*	17	Highly biased
		Al-Jadeed TV	*This is How I Am*	17	Highly biased

4.2. Detailed Analysis

In this section, we analyze the shows in terms of guest representation and bias.

4.2.1. Shows without Guests

As shown in Table 7 for the episodes where no guests are included, al-Jadeed TV and Future TV are highly biased against atheism, while LBCI is neutral.

Topic Introduction Bias on Shows without Guests

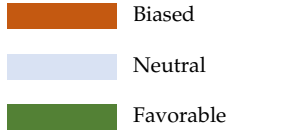
Direction of introduction

Direction of introduction (from topic introduction bias) is the only category that applies to shows without guests. Although only three examples are identified in our search, show hosts' monologues are highly biased against atheism on two occasions. As the quote below shows, Tony Khalife engaged in a biased rant during his show's monologue, airing his opinion that atheists abuse freedom of speech to hurt believers' feelings. The hosts of the LBCI comedy talk show, BBCHI, attempt to disambiguate secularism by humorously emphasizing that being secular does not require being an atheist:

> In the current era of religious debate among Christians, among Muslims, between Christians and Muslims, and more alarmingly now the atheists want to take part. We always say that we respect each person regardless of their convictions. If you're an atheist, I respect you and I respect your convictions, but I won't allow you to insult me, belittle my dignity, and assault my sanctities. You're free to be atheist. Practice your atheism like you want. May Allah judge you as he finds fit. You're free to believe in God or not. In the end, your account is with our Lord. But more abominable than being atheist, how do you dare ridicule our sanctities, prophets, and saints? How do you dare use those despicable expressions of yours to make fun of what we revere? No, we won't allow you. If you are foulmouthed, and you have ill-spoken followers on social media, insult us all you want. You're incapable of accomplishing anything with your insults. We're ready to accept you despite your issues. We have no problem with your issues, my brother. If you're an atheist, practice your atheism as you wish. Bon appétit. I don't have any problems with you. I'm a believer. I want to practice my faith, and you're forbidden from having any business with my faith. You're forbidden from offending my faith. It's impermissible for you to approach my religion or any of my sanctities, in any way. You're atheist. You're free. I don't have a problem with you. As an atheist, do you think you're free to insult my saints and my prophets? Never.
>
> Al-Jadeed TV (2020, March 9). *Tony Khalife*, 09/03/2020 (0:00:00–0:01:28).

Table 7. Political bias index category scores.

Representation	Source	Show	Topic Introduction Bias	Question Content Bias		Speaker Prominence Bias		
			Direction of Introduction	Allegations in Questions	Question Tone	Ranks of Participants	Time Given to Answer	Interruptions
No representation	Al-Jadeed TV	*Tony Khalife*						
	Future TV	*Tele Stars*						
	LBCI	*BBCHI*						
One-sided (atheist only)	Al-Jadeed TV	*The news*						
	Al-Jadeed TV	*This is how I am*						
	MTV	*Talk of the Town*						
(opposed)	Al-Manaar	*Abelmosk seed*						
	Al-Manaar	*Communication*						
	NBN	*Your Opinion*						
Two-sided	TL	*Our Street*						
	LBC	*In Bold Red*						
	Future TV	*Speaking of*						
	MTV	*Starting with Us*						
	Al-Jadeed TV	*Eye for an Eye*						
	Al-Jadeed TV	*For Publication*						
	Al-Jadeed TV	*This is How I Am*						

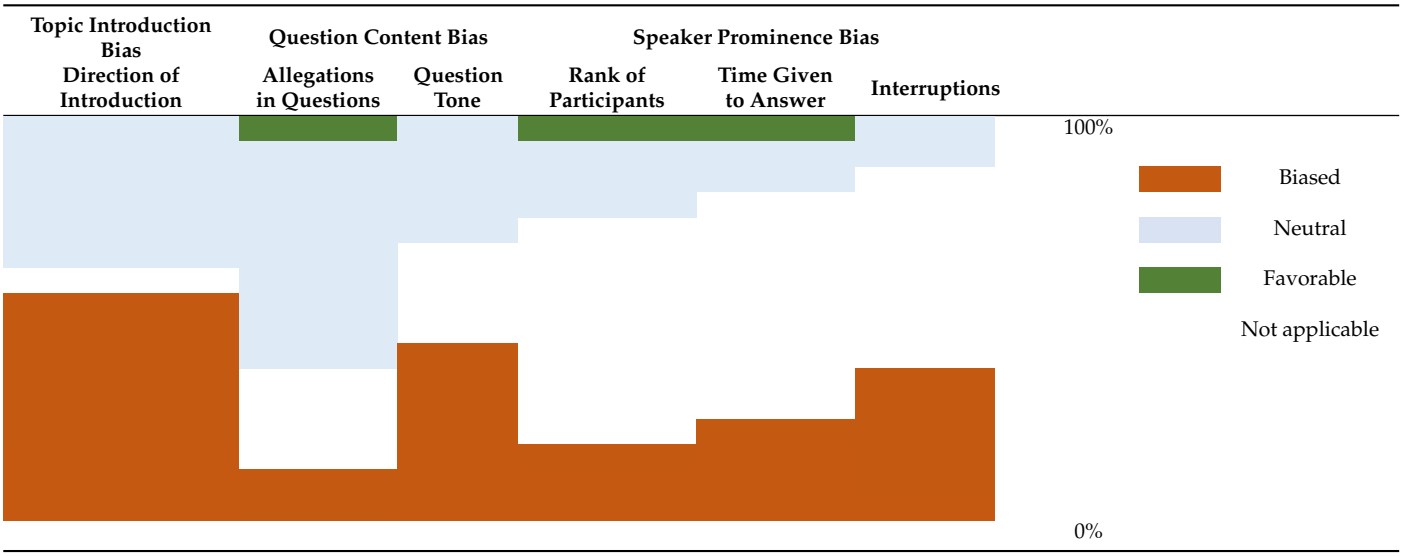


4.2.2. Shows with Guests

Around half of the episodes with guests (7/13) include guests both favorable and unfavorable to atheism. Two channels, al-Manar and NBN (three episodes) do not host guests favorable to atheism, while al-Jadeed TV and MTV (three episodes) host only pro-atheism and neutral guests. The scores for episodes with guests can be found in Table 7 above.

As Table 8 shows, bias against atheists on Lebanese television generally appears in the form of unfavorable question tone and direction of introduction opposed to atheists. When applicable, i.e., on shows that include atheist participants, unfavorable coverage is signaled mostly by interrupting them.[5] The only two favorable instances occur when Tony Khalife hosts the agnostic Ziad Noujeim—both long-celebrated television journalists—and when atheists are included as participants in an episode of Malek Maktabi's show *In Bold Red*, critical of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Table 8. Aggregation of political bias index category scores for all analyzed material.



Topic Introduction Bias on Shows with Guests

Direction of introduction

The introductions of shows with guests on TL, Future TV, and MTV from our sample are neutral. Their direction is never pro-atheism, similar to shows with no guests. On the other hand, all introductions of shows on al-Manar, NBN, and al-Jadeed TV—accounting for 7 of 13 shows with guests—are consistently biased against atheism. The only exception is a 2011 news story on al-Jadeed TV with a neutral introduction.

Note how in the following quote from *Tawasol* (*Communication*), aired on al-Manar, the host Doaa al-Hajj describes atheism as a deviance from an innate state of religiosity—a condition that is best kept to oneself, as she alludes:

> As-salamu alaykum. Quoting the Noble Prophet, may God's prayers and peace be upon him and his family, who said: "Every child is born with the innate knowledge that God Almighty is His Creator." What drives people to deviate from this instinct and turn toward atheism? What is atheism? What are the types of atheism? Are questions that emanate from doubt considered infidelity? What's parents' role in raising a son who's a believer or one who's an atheist? Dear viewers, these questions and others will be the focus of our conversation today with our guest in the studio, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad Choucair, so welcome to you, Honorable Sheikh.
>
> Al-Manaar (n.d.). *Tawasol*, 0:00:32–0:01:10.

Question Content Bias on Shows with Guests

Question tone

Question tone in the sample is generally unfavorable to atheism (58% of the assessed material). In an extreme case on al-Jadeed TV, Rima Karaki interview Khalaf Abou Khalaf—a former Muslim sheikh critical of orthodox Islam—blaming his atheism on his homosexuality:

> You chose to be atheist. This's your business. Why did you declare this on YouTube and insult religion?
>
> Al-Jadeed TV (n.d.). *Lin-Nashr (For Publication)*, 0:08:46–0:08:55

Allegations in questions

Although the presenters do not frame their questions as allegations in most of the assessed material, in some instances they quote social media posts making allegations against atheist guests indirectly. Allegations without sources appear more frequently on shows without atheist guests, involving claims of atheist proselytizing and mobilization against religion. For instance, in NBN's interview with Nour al-Assi about her master's thesis, the host asks if she reconsidered her faith after engaging with atheists:

> Last question: Did the atheist statements you encountered while shooting your film persuade you to reconsider your faith as a believer and a veiled woman?
>
> NBN (n.d.). *Ra'yak (Your Opinion)*, 0:05:17–0:05:25.

Speaker Prominence Bias on Shows with Guests

This aspect of bias only applies when pro- and anti-atheism guests are included in the same episode (7/16 episodes). Over 85% of the shows exhibit high bias against atheists in at least one of the three categories of speaker prominence bias. In fact, only a single show—TL's *Shari'ana* (*Our Street*)—is entirely neutral in them.

Ranks of participants

When it comes to ranking participants' value, about half of the shows (3/7) are neutral. The remaining four shows are split 25% in favor of atheists (1) and 75% against them (3). Two of the three negatively biased shows—both on al-Jadeed TV—introduce atheist guests very late. *Ana Hek* (*That's How I Am*) introduce Dr. Ali Talal Haidar—a lecturer of geology at the American University of Beirut and an outspoken atheist—after 73% of the episode has been dedicated to his opponent—a "penitent evildoer" serving the role of a religious apologetic. *Lin-Nashr* invites ex-sheikh Khalaf Abou Khalaf to debate Sheikh Jamil Halim only after the latter has used 34% of the episode to share his experience unchallenged. As for the third show, Future TV's *Sira w-Infatahit (Speaking of)*, it ranks its guests as main and peripheral. The main guests—a religious family patriarch and a psychologist—are seated with the host, while the pro-atheist guests are seated in the periphery among the audience. The shorter time allotment and the peripheral seat arrangement betrays the lower ranking that the channels attribute to atheist guests compared to religious ones.

An exception to such lower ranking is the most interviewed pro-atheist guest, Ziad Noujeim; however, he is not representative of atheists. Noujeim is a famous, respected journalist and oral surgeon who rose to prominence in the 1980s as a critic of Lebanese culture and politics and a host of taboo topics such as incest and same-sex marriage. Many also see the self-labeled "emperor of provocation" as a chaser of controversy. Noujeim has never explicitly labeled himself an atheist. However, show hosts introduce him as such and bring up the topic of atheism, intending to provoke controversy.

Time per speaking turn

Around 57% of the relevant seven shows systematically allow atheists less time to answer questions. Although this category does not apply to shows without atheist guests, excluding them altogether is an alternative strategy to deprive them of time to answer and signal their lower value as speakers. Al-Manar and NBN use this strategy consistently. Although *Sira w-Infatahit* (Future TV) allow the atheist guests seated in the audience to participate, the main, pro-religious guests are given precedence. *Lin-Nashr*'s host (Al-

Jadeed TV) openly admits being forced to allow the atheist guest to speak instead of yielding his time to the religious guest: "Were it up to me, I'd give you the whole episode, but management [wouldn't allow it]." (n.d., 0:12:55–0:13:00).

Interruptions

Presenters in 75% of the shows with both pro- and anti-atheist guests interrupt the former more than the latter. Cumulatively, interruptions signal the lower value of the speaker's input and prominence. Hosts use interruptions to prevent even non-atheist guests from criticizing blind religiosity. For instance, Pierre Rabbat—the host of MTV's comedy talk show *Menna w-Jerr*—interrupts the guest Ghassan Rahbani (not an atheist) less than 10 words into his pro-atheist statement, terminating the segment:

> **GR:** Am I allowed to make a statement although I shouldn't?
>
> **Host:** Why shouldn't you speak?
>
> **GR:** I shouldn't because I didn't watch the episode [we're discussing]. En grosso modo in Lebanon, there are many worshipers and little faith. I mean . . . .
>
> **Host:** Very nice. Let's give a round of applause. Another show you might have missed this week was . . .
>
> MTV (2016, Dec 5) *Menna w-Jerr*, 0:11:33–0:11:50.

5. Conclusions

This article discusses how television treats and represents atheists as a religious minority in international contexts (Lebanese, Arabic-using outlets, 2010–2022). We analyzed three main aspects of bias in our corpus of 16 shows on the topic of atheism: topic introduction bias (direction of introduction), question content bias (question tone and allegations), and speaker prominence bias (ranks of participants, time per speaking turn, and interruptions).

Our most important finding is that most shows (69%) exhibit overall bias against atheists, and over 85% exhibit speaker prominence bias. In line with the notion that communal religious practice tends to promote intolerant attitudes (Hoffman 2020), we find that channels engaged in promoting communal religious practice in Lebanon—such as al-Manar—exhibit the highest levels of bias against atheists.

> In the old days, an atheist wouldn't publicly reveal their condition. They'd try to disguise their disbelief. They wouldn't even share their thoughts with others. Today, because of social media, on the contrary, we have pages where atheists boldly speak their minds. That's clear if we thoroughly inspect social media [content].
>
> Al-Manar (n.d.). *Tawasol*, 0:01:19–0:01:44.

Our second significant finding is that topic introduction bias (direction of introduction) and one dimension of speaker prominence bias (interruptions) are the two categories with the highest levels of bias. Most of the shows (58%) present atheism unfavorably in their introduction, while none present it favorably. The "direction of introduction", then, is the preferred strategy for introducing bias across shows with and without guests. Atheists are presented there as a foreign other, often lumped with "unnatural phenomena" such as suicide and devil worship:

> **Host:** Hallelujah.
>
> **TF:** Amen.
>
> **Host:** After the break, Ziad, the religious apologetic, versus the other, Dr. Ali Haidar.
>
> Al-Jadeed TV (n.d.). *Ana Hek*, 1:02:41–1:02:49.

As these results show, the typical serious discussion of atheism on Lebanese television seeks to either demonize or alienate this subgroup. Such demonization and alienation

persists, given that most Lebanese channels are owned or run by representatives of sectarian groups.

On shows that invite atheist guests, the "interruptions" category of speaker prominence bias is the main strategy for introducing bias (75%), followed by a negative "direction of introduction" and the categories of "time per speaking turn" (from speaker prominence bias) and "question tone" (from question content bias). These shows allot less time to atheist guests by (1) significantly delaying the atheists' appearance—that is, giving them a lower rank—(2) seating pro-atheist guests in the audience—again, giving them a lower rank—and (3) interrupting them to limit the time for expressing pro-atheist ideas. This means that controlling how much atheist guests are allowed to talk is a crucial strategy in signaling to audiences that anti-atheist prejudice is considered natural.

The only category where we detect no bias is "allegations" (from question content bias), which is 75% neutral. Nevertheless, hosts often sneak in allegations indirectly by quoting material shared on social media—in particular, allegations of contempt of religion, which can be legally incriminating for atheists.

Our third significant finding is that Lebanese television either denigrates atheism or treats it as an empty label that stokes controversy and, therefore, higher ratings. As mentioned, the most interviewed pro-atheist guest, Ziad Noujeim, is not representative of Lebanese atheists, but in line with the scandalous facet of talk shows that usually raise this topic. The genuine topic of atheism, then, may be under-covered on Lebanese television. This indicates not so much that the connection between dislike of atheists and traditional media consumption is a tenuous one, but that traditional media such as Lebanese television has so far opened its gates to negative or provocative coverage of atheism and closed them to positive or compellingly neutral coverage. In any case, there is greater complexity that needs further exploration, given the lively discussion of atheism on social media, unencumbered by political money and the need to attract advertising revenue.

Although Lebanon has a unique sociopolitical makeup, our sample can still serve as the starting point for a conversation on the connection between dislike of atheists and media consumption in the region. This is because Lebanon resembles other Arab countries in ways that are important for our argument related to religious-based strife—especially in the wake of colonialism—and a defining political divide between secular and religious-based claims. In addition, Lebanese television is deeply enmeshed in regional developments. On the one hand, it frequently exports television cadres (e.g., Tony Khalife has hosted shows on atheism both on Lebanese and Egyptian television). On the other hand, the Arab world affects how Lebanese television frames issues related to religious convictions (e.g., Lebanese–Gulf corporate media mergers have made Lebanese television particularly sensitive to the lucrative and conservative Gulf audience market (Kraidy and Khalil 2009), while the oversaturated Lebanese advertising market has forced outlets to resort to "political money," i.e., funding from political groups and influential regional Arab players (Khazaal 2020), which makes them further vulnerable to outside impact over how they frame issues). Most importantly, the Arab world is diverse, and a sample that represents it in its entirety may not be feasible.

Ultimately, our findings demonstrate that television, as the most influential Arabic mass medium, likely affects the public's negative perceptions of Arabic-speaking atheists. Lebanese television weaponizes anti-atheist prejudice as one of the unspoken yet visible constituent elements of Lebanese group identity and culture. Framing atheists as socially and politically unacceptable, Lebanese television is likely a potential cause for the greater polarization of Arab public opinion when it comes to interactions between the religious and the non-religious.

Our findings, then, reflect the decrease in objectivity in conflict-based media. The 20th-century norm of objectivity and bias avoidance has been declining globally with the rise of cable and online news outlets (Marchi 2012; Harrington 2008a, 2008b; Hallin and Mancini 2004). Competition pressures that demand outlets to create their own unique brand and distinguish themselves from competitors also encourage bias (Morris and Francia 2010) and lead to

the production of sensational, conflict-based shows (Forgette and Morris 2006; Morris 2007; Vettehen et al. 2008).

However, the preference for congruent information has limits, as Bode et al. (2018) explain. Participants in their study tend to prefer non-partisan hosts over partisan hosts that agree with them, which suggests that norms of balance and objectivity are deeply engrained in viewers' understandings of good journalism. "Being aware, tracking, and overcoming bias in news reporting is important for a fair society, as media indeed has the power to shape a democratic society" (Saez-Trumper et al. 2013, p. 1679). In sum, we find that the portrayal of atheists on Lebanese television reflects a poor understanding or an intentional disregard for media's crucial role in building a fair, democratic society. This study is the first step toward understanding the portrayal of atheists in Lebanese (and Arab) media, and we encourage future research to focus on finding out why Arabic-speaking atheists are framed negatively and why they cannot get a fair hearing. What factors are at play? How are sectarianism and conservatism related to anti-atheist prejudice? How do show hosts' expectations of an anti-atheist audience or corporate concerns about political stability affect such prejudice?

6. Limitations

One of our method's shortcomings is that it gives equal weight to each of the six categories of bias. Depending on context, one category may be more relevant than another and, thus, deserving of more weight. Our categories are highly relevant, but others could also be included. For instance, future research could explore whether indicators for question design bias such as *initiative*, *directness*, *accountability*, *assertiveness*, *opposition*, and *persistence* (see Huls and Varwijk 2011) afford a better instrument and a broader estimate of bias, since atheists' television appearances often involve interview-style segments.

Television content is not uniformly archived or publicly shared. Consequently, an internet search may not find all material on atheism produced in the last 12 years. In one case, only an abridged episode was available online, so we conducted phone meetings with some of the participants to compensate for the unavailability of the full material.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Lebanese television material analyzed for bias against atheists.

Guest Representation		Serial	Source	Show	Type	Title	Host	Guest	Topic
No guest representation		106	Al-Jadeed TV	*Tony Khalife*	Interview talk show	09/03/2020	Tony Khalife	Not Applicable	Freedom (abuse of freedom of speech)
		95	Future TV	*Tele Stars*	Interview talk show	Ziad Noujeim, an atheist or not?	Carine Salame	Not Applicable	Other shows discussing atheism
		44	LBCI	*BBCHI*	Comedy talk show	Episode 23	Fouad Yammine, Salam al-Zaatari	Not Applicable	Disambiguation
One-sided	Only atheist	71	Al-Jadeed TV	*The news*	News story	Atheists in Lebanon	Ramez al-Kadi	Mario Ramadan, Sami Ab, Mazen Abou Hamdan, Bilal al-Husseini	Disambiguation
		107	MTV	*Talk of the Town*	Issue-based talk show	Ziad Noujeim	Mona Abou Hamza, Simon Abi Ramia, Michel Abou Sleiman	Ziad Noujeim	Scandal
		108	Al-Jadeed	*This is How I Am*	Interview talk show	The writer Joumana Haddad	Nishan Der-haroutyounian	Joumana Haddad	Scandal
	Opposed	96	Al-Manaar	*Abelmosk seed*	Interview talk show	29/12/2013	Mohammad al-Bandar	Tawfeek Masroor	Refuting atheism and the existence of God
		103	Al-Manaar	*Communication*	Interview talk show	Atheism	Doaa al-Hajj Hassan, Ahmad Taha. Ali Rida Sbeiti	Mohammad Shoukeir	Refuting atheism and the existence of God
		100	NBN	*Your Opinion*	Interview talk show	Infidel, believer, or atheist, what do you think?	Kassem Doghman	Nour al-Assi	Scandal

Table A1. *Cont.*

Guest Representation	Serial	Source	Show	Type	Title	Host	Guest	Topic
Two-sided	72	TL	*Our Street*	Interview talk show	Freedom of Belief in Lebanon: Between Atheism and Religiosity	Maya Majzoub	Maher Abou Shakra, Sahar Ghaddar	Freedom (freedom of religion)
	102	Future TV	*Speaking of*	Interview talk show	The suicide of the Lebanese activist Nour Merheb	Zaven Kouyoumdjian	Shawky Bassil, Jamal Awar, Chadi Moawad, Nadine Dib	Scandal (suicide of an activist)
	93	MTV	*Starting with us*	Comedy talk show	Atheism as presented by the TV show *Eye for Eye*	Pierre Rabbat	Joseph Tawk, Habib Ghobril, Ghassan Rahbani, Mona Saliba, Antoine Kassabian, Roula Kehdi	Other shows discussing atheism
	1	Al-Jadeed TV	*Eye for an Eye*	Interview talk show	Atheism	Tony Khalife	Ziad Noujeim, Ahmad Harkan (apologized), Edgar el-Haibi, Khaled Abed El Fattah	Refuting atheism and the existence of God
	70	Al-Jadeed TV	*For Publication*	Interview talk show	A Sheikh shares his experience . . .	Rima Karaki	Jamil Halim, Khalaf Abou Khalaf	Freedom (abuse of freedom of speech)
	94	Al-Jadeed TV	*This is How I Am*	Interview talk show	The atheist vs. the penitent evildoer	Nishan Der-haroutyounian	Tony Franjieh, Ali Haidar	Morality and religion
	109	LBC	*In Bold Red*	Interview talk show		Malek Maktabi	Fadia Nakouzi, Toni Daoud, Rita Hanna, Boulos Fighali, May al-Khatib	

Table A2. Quotes in original language.

Serial	Segment	Arabic Text
70	0:12:55–0:13:00	ريما كركي: انا بالنسبة الي فيني أعطيك كل الحلقة بس ادارة التلفزيون الشيخ: الله يسلمك
106	0:00:00–0:01:28	في هذا السجال الديني يلي صاير مسيحياً مسيحياً وإسلامياً إسلامياً ومسيحياً أسلامياً والأكتر من هيك رحنا بمطرح تاني إلحادياً دينياً. يعني فاتوا جماعة الإلحاد على الخط. الي دايماً نحن منقول أنا أحترم كل شخص على قناعاته. أنا كملحد أحترمك وأحترم قناعاتك بس ما بسمحلك لأنك ملحد تهينني وتهين كرامتي وتهين مقدساتي. إنت ملحد حر. مارس إلحادك متل ما بدّك. الله بحاسبك. إذا تؤمن بالله أو ما تؤمن بالله إنت حرّ. بالنتيجة حسابك عند ربّنا. بس إنّك تكون ملحد وفوق إلحادك تنكّت على مقدّساتنا، تنكّت على أنبيائنا، وعلى قدّيسينا، وتستعمل عبارات حقيرة متلك؟ لأ ما رح نسمحلك. لو إنّك شتّام وعندك متابعين على السوشال ميديا وبتشتموا. اشتموا من هلق لميت سنة، ما بتغيروا شي بشتيمتكن. بس نحن مستعدين نتعايش معكن على عللكم. ما عندنا مشكة، خيّي. إنت ملحد. مارس إلحادك. صحتين على قلبك. أنا ما عندي أي مشكلة معك. وأنا مؤمن بدّي مارس إيماني وممنوع إنت تطعاطى بإيماني وممنوع تسيء لإيماني وممنوع تقرّب على ديني وممنوع تقرّب على مقدّساتي. إنت تكون ملحد، اسطقل، تنضرب. ما عندي مشكلة معك. بس تكون ملحد وتوصف لي قديسيني وأنبيائي وأدياني بأوصاف بتشبهك وبتشبه نفسيتك وحقارتك؟ فشر على رقبتك ورقبة الي متلك.
70	0:08:46–0:08:55	ريما كركي: اخترت إنك تلحد، هيدا شأنك، وإنّما ليش إعلان هيدا الشي والكلام على يوتيوب بهيدا الشكل وإهانة الدين بهذه الطريقة؟
103	0:00:32–0:01:10	السلام عليكم. عن النبيّ الأكرم صلّى الله عليه وآله وسلّم أنّه قال: كلّ مولود يولد على الفطرة يعني المعرفة بأنّ الله عزّ وجلّ خالقه. فما الذي يدفع الأشخاص للانحراف عن هذه الفطرة والتحوّل نحو الالحاد؟ وما هو الالحاد؟ هل الالحاد أنواع؟ هل تعتبر أسئلة الشك كفراً؟ ما هو دور الأهل في الحصول على ابن مؤمن أو ملحد؟ مشاهدينا الكرام، هذه الاسئلة وغيرها حتكون محور حديثنا لليوم مع ضيفنا في الاستوديو، فضيلة الشيخ الدكتور محمد شقير، فأهلاً بكم فضيلة الشيخ…
103	0:01:19–0:01:44.	بفترة سابقة، الملحد ما كان يكشف عن حاله. كان يتستّر عن الموضوع. حتى يمكن ما كان يحكي عن أفكاره قدّام العالم. أمّا اليوم، بسبب وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، بالعكس، صار في عندنا صفحات. صار في الملحدين صاروا يحكوا عن أفكارن بكلّ جرأة. وهيدا الشي إذا منترصّد أكتر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، واضح للعيان.
93	0:11:33–0:11:50	بفترة سابقة، الملحد ما كان يكشف عن حاله. كان يتستّر عن الموضوع. حتى يمكن ما كان يحكي عن أفكاره قدّام العالم. أمّا اليوم، بسبب وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، بالعكس، صار في عندنا صفحات. صار في الملحدين صاروا يحكوا عن أفكارن بكلّ جرأة. وهيدا الشي إذا منترصّد أكتر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، واضح للعيان.
100	0:05:17–0:05:25.	غسان رحباني: فيني قول جملة مع إنو أنا مش لازم احكي؟ بيار رباط: ليش مش لازم تحكي؟! غسان رحباني: مش لازم احكي بالموضوع لأن أنا ما حضرت الحلقة. بس أنا بقول en grosso modo بلبنان، هناك كثيراً من المصلّين وقليلاً من الإيمان. يعني هني يلي بفوتوا يصلوا.... بيار رباط: حلو. بدها زقفة هيدي. تاني موضوع معقول راح عليكن....
94	1:02:41–1:02:49	نيشان ديرهاروتنيان: هاليلويا. زياد فرنجية: آمين. نيشان ديرهاروتنيان: بعد الفاصل، طوني والآخر، الدكتور علي حيدر.

Appendix B

Table A3. Arabic show/episode titles.

Guest Representation	Serial	Source	Show	Transliteration of Show Name	Type	Arabic Title	Transliteration of Arabic Title
One sided (atheist only)	71	Al-Jadeed TV	الأخبار	Al-Akhbar	News story	الملحدين في لبنان	Al-Mulhideen Fi Lubnan
	107	MTV	Talk of the Town		Issue-based talk show	زياد نجيم	Ziad Noujeim
	108	Al-Jadeed	أنا هيك	Ana Hek	Interview talk show	أنا هيك مع نيشان—الكاتبة جمانة حداد	Ana hek maa Nishan—al-Katiba Joumana Haddad
One sided (opposed)	96	Al-Manaar	حبة مسك	Habbat Misk	Interview talk show	حلقة 29/12/2013	Halakat 29/12/2013
	103	Al-Manaar	تواصل	Tawasol	Interview talk show	الإلحاد	Al-Elhad
	100	NBN	رأيك	Ra’ayak	Interview talk show	كافر، مؤمن، أم ملحد انت شو رأيك؟	Kafer, Mumin, Enta Shu Ra’ayak?
Two-sided	72	TL	شارعنا	Shari‘ana	Interview talk show	حرية المعتقد في لبنان: بين الإلحاد والتدين	Huriyat El-Mu’atakad Fi Lubnan: Bayn Al-El’had wa-Tadayyun
	102	Future TV	سيرة وانفتحت	Sira w-Infatahit	Interview talk show	انتحار الناشط اللبناني نور مرعب	Intihar An-Nashit Al-Lubnani Nour Merheb
	93	MTV	Menna w-Jerr		Comedy talk show	الالحاد على طريقة العين بالعين	Al-Elhad Ala Tarikat El-Ayn Bil-Ayn
	1	Al-Jadeed TV	العين بالعين	El-Ayn Bil-Ayn	Interview talk show	الالحاد	Al-Elhad
	70	Al-Jadeed TV	للنشر	Lin-Nashr	Interview talk show	شيخٌ يحكي تجربتَه...	Shaykhun Yah’ki Tajribatah . . .
	94	Al-Jadeed TV	انا هيك	Ana Hek	Interview talk show	الملحد في مواجهة الفاجر التائب	Al-Mulhid Fi Muwajahat Al-Fajir At-Ta’eb
	109	LBC	أحمر بالخط العريض	Ahmar Bil-Khat El-Arid	Interview talk show	حقيقة شهود يهوه	Hakikat Shuhood Yahweh
No guest representation	106	Al-Jadeed TV	طوني خليفة	Tony Khalifa	Interview talk show	حلقة 2020/03/09	Halakat 09/03/2020
	95	Future TV	Tele Stars		Interview talk show	زياد نجيم ملحد أو لأ	Ziad Noujeim Mulhid Aw La’a
	44	LBCI	BBCHI		Comedy talk show	Episode 23	

Notes

[1] https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/Lists/ACRPS-PDFDocumentLibrary/2017-2018%20Arab%20Opinion%20Index%20Main%20Results%20in%20Brief%20-%20final%20(002).pdf (accessed on 14 June 2023).

[2] For example, on *90 Daqiqa* (al-Mihwar TV, November 2013) and *al-Shari' al-Masri* (al-Hadath al-Yaum TV, February 2018) (Khazaal 2023).

[3] For example, on *Sabaya al-Khayer* (al-Nahar TV, May 2014) and *Sabah al-'Asima* (al-Assema TV, November 2015) (Khazaal 2023).

[4] The Media Ownership Lebanon https://lebanon.mom-gmr.org/en/media/tv/ (accessed on 14 June 2023).

[5] We consider "time per speaking turn" to be neutral when participants are given equal time to answer questions, and favorable when atheists get more time and are interrupted less.

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