

# Political Satire in Jordan: Exploring the Satirical Online Video Show Man Saf Baladi from Multiple Perspectives

Rami Alalawneh

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Primary Supervisor: Associate Professor Darryl Hocking

Secondary Supervisor: Associate Professor Graeme Couper

2025

School of Social Sciences and Humanities

Faculty of Culture and Society

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Rami Alalawneh

3 March 2025

## **Ethics Approval**

This study was granted ethics approval by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 6 July 2021, AUTEC Reference Number 21/106 (Appendix M).

## Acknowledgements

Embarking on my PhD journey coincided with a period of global uncertainty, a time in which the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic for more than two years. It was a time marked by stress, fear, isolation, and profound challenges to every person in the world. Against this backdrop, I found myself navigating the academic demands of doctoral research and the personal challenge of settling in a new country with my family and overcoming the many hurdles that come with such a transition during the outbreak of the pandemic. Looking back, this journey has been life-changing, and I owe a great deal of gratitude to those who have supported me along the way.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my primary supervisor, Associate Professor Darryl Hocking, whose unwavering support, kindness, and intellectual insights have been instrumental in shaping this research. His guidance and encouragement have made this challenging journey practically manageable and intellectually enriching. I am also grateful to my secondary supervisor, Associate Professor Graeme Couper, who, despite joining my supervisory team at a later stage, contributed critical feedback, significant discussions, and valuable input that enhanced the quality of this work.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Associate Professor Philippa Smith, who co-supervised my research during its early stages. Although she had to leave the university midway through my PhD, her insights were invaluable in shaping the foundation of this study and drawing the roadmap for its completion.

My sincere thanks go to the Faculty of Culture and Society, whose generous PhD doctoral fee scholarship made this academic endeavor possible. Without their financial support, embarking on my doctoral journey and pursuing this research would have been impossible.

I am grateful to Mr. Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi, the satirist and creator of *Man Saf Baladi*, for participation in this study. His participation, permission to use video and social media data and facilitation of the audience survey data collection process were crucial to this research.

I wish to extend my appreciation to Ms. Rima Misk for her meticulous translation of the datasets used in the study and to Dr. Mohammad Dagamseh for reviewing the datasets and ensuring the accuracy of the translations.

I also wish to acknowledge Dr. Omar Migdadi for providing assistance with the statistical analysis of the survey data. His assistance in using the SPSS software was invaluable in interpreting the data.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, whose love, patience, and support have sustained me through this long and demanding journey. To my wife, Rasha, my son, Faris, and my daughter, Alma— thank you for enduring my long absences, for your endless encouragement, and for being my pillars of strength. Your love, support and understanding have made this journey tolerable, and I am forever grateful.

To my father, Abu Khaled, who sadly left this world a few months before seeing me reach this milestone— thank you for being the anchor that kept me grounded throughout my life. Your firm belief in me and wish for me to complete this journey and return home continue to guide my path. I am deeply sorry that I could not fulfill your wish while you were still here, but I hope I have made you proud. I dedicate this work to your soul.

## Abstract

Satire has become an increasingly popular form of political expression, through which people critique sociopolitical realities, challenge authority, and engage in public debate. Its role and communicative impact, however, are shaped by the sociopolitical context in which it operates, making it a particularly interesting area for exploration in settings with limited freedom of expression.

This study explores the popular Jordanian satirical online video show *Man Saf Baladi*, with the aim of providing a deeper understanding of satire as a mode of political communication in the context of Jordan. Driven by the complexity of satire and the multiple dimensions involved in its production and consumption as a form of political discourse, the study employs an integrative research design that examines *Man Saf Baladi* from various analytical and participant perspectives to focus on its content, discourse, satirist's perspective and audience reception as key components that interact within the sociopolitical culture of Jordan to provide a comprehensive understanding of its role and potential impact.

To achieve this, the study employed a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach, incorporating a qualitative analysis of a group of 20 videos from the show, an interview with its satirist, a collection of viewers' responses to the videos on Facebook, and a quantitative analysis of an anonymous audience survey. Various analytical methods were used to investigate the show and its key components. These included a thematic analysis of the show's content, a discourse analysis of the key discursive strategies employed in the show, a thematic analysis of the satirist's interview data, a thematic analysis of viewers' comments on Facebook, and a descriptive and correlational statistical analysis of the questionnaire responses, which measured viewers' online engagement with the show and their perceptions of its effects on their attitudes, interests, and political participation.

Findings of the study reveal that *Man Saf Baladi* functions as a vibrant platform for political discourse and public reflection. The show presents satirical content that engages with the country's public affairs and critiques political power through a combination of humour and serious political commentary. It addresses crucial issues such as corruption, governance, and the

economic struggles of citizens, targeting a range of political entities—from individual politicians to institutional structures—while providing incisive critiques of Jordan’s political landscape. The show employs a range of key discursive strategies in its satirical discourse, including episode titles, metaphors, anecdotes, and emotional shifts, which effectively achieve its critical aims, engage viewers, and influence their attitudes and opinions. The satirist adopts a multifaceted identity as a journalist, educator, and activist, while underscoring a strong belief in using satire to inform and mobilise the public toward political reform. Audience reception, examined through analyses of Facebook comments and an audience survey, reveals that viewers connect deeply with the show and perceive it as a credible source of political critique that fosters political awareness and engagement.

Altogether, this study challenges prevailing assumptions that Jordanian online satire is limited to symbolic resistance and psychological relief, contributing to a new understanding of its sociopolitical potential within the Jordanian context. It demonstrates that political satire, exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*, serves as a dynamic forum for political communication, with the potential to educate, shape attitudes, inspire political participation, and ultimately drive momentum for real sociopolitical change in Jordan.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This study explores the popular Jordanian satirical online video show *Man Saf Baladi*<sup>1</sup>, with the aim of providing a greater understanding of satire as a mode of political communication in the Jordanian context. It employs a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach that integrates a qualitative analysis of a group of videos from the show, an interview with its satirist, a collection of viewers' responses to its videos on Facebook, and a quantitative analysis of an audience questionnaire. This chapter begins with a brief overview of satire as a mode of political critique, followed by a discussion of its global expressions and its historical emergence in Jordan. It then introduces *Man Saf Baladi* within Jordan's online media landscape and situates it within the country's political system. The chapter proceeds to outline existing studies on Jordanian satire and identify the key gap in this line of research. Finally, it presents the study's main aim and objectives, research questions, and methodological approach, and concludes with the thesis structure.

## 1.2 Satire

Satire is a universal mode of critique that operates differently depending on the culture and sociopolitical context in which it is produced and consumed (Ho et al., 2021; Mifdal, 2015; Tsakona & Popa, 2011). It manifests in a variety of forms and tends to proliferate in times of unrest. The ubiquity of satire in recent decades has attracted growing academic interest. However, most research focuses on satire in Western democratic societies (Hill, 2013; Jones, 2017; Park-Ozee, 2019) and relatively less is known about the phenomenon in non-democratic societies, such as those in the Arab world (El Khachab, 2017; Al-Momani et al., 2017). Scholarly inquiry into the nature and role of political satire has led to competing theoretical positions and divergent empirical findings. Broadly, two views on political satire can be identified. A

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<sup>1</sup> Man Saf Baladi translates as 'Who gobbled my country?'. Further explanation of the title is provided in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.1.

pessimistic view sees satire as a kind of cynical critique that, through its negative portrayal of politics and politicians, discourages audiences' interest in serious politics, increases their mistrust of political actors and institutions, and thus alienates them from political life (e.g., Baranowski, 2020; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Shao & Liu, 2019). On the other hand, an optimistic view sees satire as an effective mode of political communication that informs and educates audiences, shapes their views, and increases their interest and engagement in political life (e.g., Baum, 2003; Burgers & Brugman, 2022; Cao & Brewer, 2008; Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019; Jovanovic, 2019; Lee & Jang, 2017; Mustapha et al., 2019).

### **1.3 Global Expressions of Political Satire**

Political satire has been employed in a wide range of countries across the globe, serving a diversity of functions (Baym & Jones, 2012; Kumar & Combe, 2015). For instance, it has been used in Serbia (Kabala, 2014), Iran (Rahimi, 2015), Turkey (Dinc, 2012), and Hungary (Imre, 2012) to challenge political power and critique politicians and political issues through a variety of forms and media channels. In Canada, the Indigenous satirical website, *Walking Eagle News* has used satire to critique the political landscape and expose political institutions and leaders, holding them accountable for decades of inequality toward Indigenous people (Cecco, 2021). The website highlights the absurdity and injustice of the country's policies, national discourse, and public attitudes as perceived by Indigenous people, inciting debate and capturing their widespread frustrations (Cecco, 2021). In Denmark, televised satire has been employed as an "egalitarian" political practice to challenge dominant powers, including politicians and the media, and to criticise "the inequalities and injustices" perpetuated by "the establishment" in society (Bruun, 2012, p. 161).

In Nigeria, political activists have employed social media to modernise the country's traditional puppet theatre, which was historically employed for entertainment and education. They created a satirical YouTube puppet show as a form of political resistance, exposing the "ugliness of corruption" and "abusive acts" of corrupt politicians and the political elite in Nigeria (Ephraim et al., 2016, p. 8). In Vietnam, a popular magazine has used social media to rejuvenate the

country's rich tradition of satire, deploying satirical criticism within the one-party authoritarian state (Ho et al., 2021). Illustrated cartoons published on the magazine's Facebook page reflect its focus on highlighting political deficiencies and portraying corruption in Vietnam as a systemic issue. The researchers argue that satire in the Vietnamese context has the power to inform and stimulate critical thought, emphasising that constant exposure to the magazine's satire "provides an opportunity for collective reflection and social solidarity in Vietnamese people" (Ho et al., 2021, p. 724).

In the Arab region, social media activists have employed satire as a tool of cultural resistance following the emergence of the ISIS terrorist organisation. Through parody videos, comedic sketches, and musical satire on platforms such as YouTube, they ridiculed ISIS propaganda, defied its perverted beliefs and reframed the group's self-proclaimed heroism as absurdity (Al-Rawi, 2016). These user-generated productions have fostered collective defiance against extremist ideology and helped undermine the group's religious and political authority, functioning as "effective public diplomacy efforts" against ISIS and its radical ideology (Al-Rawi, 2016, p. 65).

In the same vein, Saudi digital media creators have harnessed the power of online satire to spark conversations about deeply rooted social and cultural issues. Viral YouTube productions such as *No Woman No Drive*, *Screw Infidels* and *A Victim of Reputation* employed different forms of harsh and benign satire to engage audiences on contentious topics like women's driving ban, religious extremism, and social phobia (Aldwaighry, 2018). Blending social criticism with humour, these videos have reached millions of viewers, demonstrating how digital satire can challenge conservative norms in one of the region's most restrictive media environments.

Elsewhere in the Arab region, Lebanese bloggers have used online satire as a means of creating alternative discursive spaces that challenge entrenched social, political, and sectarian hierarchies. Riegert and Ramsay (2012) demonstrate how popular blogs combine humour, irony, and visual satire to question Lebanon's sectarian power-sharing system and address sensitive issues like gender inequality. These blogs create counter-publics that bypass traditional media controls and encourage conversations about Lebanon's political and cultural landscape (Riegert & Ramsay, 2012).

In Palestine, the sketch-comedy show *Watan Ala Watar* has exemplified satire's ability to confront political stagnation, challenge social constraints, and provide an outlet for public dissent (Sienkiewicz, 2012). Even after being censored by state television, the show has persisted on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, using humour to lampoon Palestinian political leaders and expose the "hypocrisy and double standards employed to maintain the social status quo" (Sienkiewicz, 2012, p. 116).

In Bahrain, the 2011 uprising has given rise to a wave of satirical creativity on social media. Activists have used memes, parody Twitter accounts, and the YouTube videos to mock state propaganda and expose the contradictions in government narratives (Jones, 2017). These productions fostered solidarity among protestors, gave voice to marginalised communities, and extended the Bahraini struggle to global audiences, making satire an integral part of the country's revolutionary cultural production (Jones, 2017). Similarly, Moroccan online activists have used the internet and its affordances to create and disseminate satirical videos that challenge the political regime during and after the Arab Spring, giving rise to a new expression of a counter-public discourse and a dissenting political culture in Morocco (El Marzouki, 2015).

#### **1.4 The Emergence of Satire in Jordan**

In the Jordanian media space, political satire has proliferated over the past decade. Fuelled by a challenging political and economic environment, this mode of critique has become a common feature of sociopolitical commentary. The phenomenon, however, is relatively new to Jordan's media landscape. The earliest forms of satire in the country emerged during the Gulf War in the 1990s, primarily as political jokes and theatrical performances (Freedman, 2012). According to a study by Farghal and Shakir (1993) on political jokes, Jordanian satire at that time helped people vent their frustrations about the political status quo and fostered a sense of unity. It functioned as a coping mechanism during a challenging period caused by both public and state political standpoints (Farghal & Shakir, 1993).

Satire first appeared in the Jordanian media with the establishment of the satirical newspaper *Abd Rabbuh* in 1996 by Jordanian journalist Yousef Ghishan. The newspaper used comic images and news satire as a form of counterpower and challenge to the state's official discourse and government policies. It focused on grotesque and spoof news and used satire to criticise political authority, including the government, parliament, and senior officials (Barahmeh, 2020).

However, the newspaper was short-lived, as it was soon stifled by a government amendment to the press law, which led to its closure in June 1997 (Jones, 2017). A significant shift occurred in 2005 when a royal initiative to promote freedom of expression led to a relaxation of state control over the media. This development triggered a surge in political satire and a renewed practice of targeting governments through satirical commentary in the print media (Barahmeh, 2020). Since then, almost all traditional newspapers have designated columns for satirical writers.

The counter-political atmosphere that swept the Arab world in the year 2011 (the Arab Spring) further renewed Jordanians' interest in using "satire as a tool to counter state repression and as a subversive tool for popular resistance to the official discourse and its articulation" (Barahmeh, 2020, p. 1). The Arab Spring had a significant impact on the Jordanian sociopolitical context, leading to street protests decrying injustices, corruption, and economic hardship, and demanding political and economic reform. Street protests became a new norm and key feature of political dissent in Jordan, only to be interrupted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic at the beginning of 2020. This new political context was accompanied by a surge in the quantity and quality of humour and political satire in Jordan, which has grown exponentially on social media (Elsayed, 2016; Barahmeh, 2020).

In 2011, Jordanian satirist Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi wrote his famous satirical play *Al'an Fahimtukom* (Now I have Understood You). The play was inspired by the political climate at the time (the Arab Spring) and took its name from the famous phrase uttered by then-Tunisian President Zine El-Abidin Ben Ali in his final presidential speech, in which he attempted to convince the outraged Tunisian public that he had finally heard their voices, understood their discontent, and was ready to initiate serious reform. The play depicted the daily family life of a Jordanian citizen named Abu Saqr, who works as a driver for a government minister and rules his household with strict authority. Scenes of the play repeatedly addressed a range of Jordan's

political dilemmas, including the government's questionable privatisation policies, the sale of state land and assets, the selection process for cabinet ministers, and the government's reaction to opposition protests and demonstrations at the time (Brand & Hammad, 2012). The play ran on stage in Amman and garnered a huge audience. Its impact reached the Royal Palace, and it was attended by the King of Jordan (Brand & Hammad, 2012).

The omnipresence of political satire in Jordan is recognised by pioneering satirists. In January 2014, for example, four prominent satirists took part in a panel discussion to reflect on the development and ubiquity of Jordanian political satire (Khoshman, 2014). They discussed the factors that might have contributed to the proliferation of satire in Jordan and challenged the long-standing popular belief that Jordanians are too serious. The panellists emphasised a connection between the sociopolitical atmosphere (i.e., the Arab Spring, government absurdity, and the deterioration of parliament's serious role) and Jordanians' turn to political satire and humorous sociopolitical commentary. While satirist Musa Hijazin remarked that the government is turning every Jordanian into a satirist, Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi satirically noted that Members of Parliament have started writing their own satirical pieces, alluding to their poor political performance (Khoshman, 2014).

### **1.5 Jordanian Online Satire and the *Man Saf Baladi* show**

Advancements in internet technology and the rise of digital media have transformed Jordan's media landscape, leading to the emergence of numerous private news outlets and online platforms. Amid this digital expansion, the website *Sawaleif.com* emerged, carving out a space for satirical discourse in Jordan's online media landscape. Founded in 2008 by prominent satirical writer Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi, *Sawaleif* provides a platform for political and social critique through satirical articles, videos, and user-generated content. The name of the website, *Sawaleif*, is a colloquial Jordanian word that can be translated into "parables" or "anecdotes" as told by laypeople, implying that the website offers a simplified political discourse tailored for the general public. It is also a unique media outlet in Jordan due to its blend of traditional journalistic content – such as news reports, opinion articles, and analytical pieces – with Jordan's most

notable satirical content, including videos, cartoons, animations, and written articles targeting politics and politicians. The website has cultivated a strong digital presence. Although there are no official statistics on its readership, its Facebook page, for instance, had approximately 910,000 followers at the time of data collection for this study.

Among the most prominent satirical productions associated with *Sawaleif* are the satirical videos written, produced, and presented by its chief editor, Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi. Since 2012, Alzoubi has created several video series under different titles, using satire to comment on the politics of the country. Among these, *Man Saf Baladi* (Who Gobbled My Country?) has been the most popular.<sup>2</sup> First launched in 2014, the show extends *Sawaleif* and its chief editor's satirical approach into a video format that employs a mix of humour and political critique to engage audiences with political issues. Presented in everyday Jordanian Arabic, *Man Saf Baladi* has garnered thousands of viewers and sparked widespread discussions on social media platforms, with some of its video posts reaching over 250,000 views on Facebook.

## 1.6 Satire and Jordan's Political System

Given that satire often emerges as a response to political and social constraints (El Marzouki, 2015; Freedman, 2009, 2012; Ho et al., 2021; Kishtainy, 2009; Tsakona & Popa, 2011), understanding the Jordanian political system is essential to contextualising the role of satirical discourse in the country. As a geopolitical entity, Jordan was officially founded in 1921 under the name 'Emirate of Transjordan'. Until World War I, it was a territory under the reign of the Ottoman Empire. The Emirate emerged following the war which resulted in the subdivision and distribution of Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern and North African territories between Britain and France (Barahmeh, 2020). The Emirate was proclaimed a protectorate of Britain on April 11, 1921, with Prince Abdulla, the son of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, as its ruler (Alon, 2007). The Emirate gained independence from Britain in 1946 and was recognised by the United Nations as an independent sovereign kingdom (BBC, 2018). Since then, it has been officially known as the

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<sup>2</sup> All episodes of *Man Saf Baladi* analysed in this study are available on the *Sawaleif* website. For a full list of episodes and direct links, see Appendix O.

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and ruled by the Hashemite dynasty founded by King Abdullah (Prince Abdullah at the time of state foundation). Late King Talal bin Abdullah ruled from 1951 to 1952, the late King Hussein bin Talat from 1952 to 1999, and King Abdullah bin Al Hussein from 1999 to the present (The Royal Hashemite Court, n.d.-a, Hashemite Monarchs section).

Concerning Jordan's political government system, the Jordanian constitution stipulates that the state's system is a parliamentary system with a hereditary monarchy. According to the constitution, the separation of the three powers (the legislative, executive, and judiciary) is the cornerstone of the Jordanian political system. The obligations and responsibilities of each power, which must be undertaken autonomously without encroaching on other powers, are identified by the constitution. As per constitutional provisions, these powers interact in a collaborative, balanced, and complementary manner (The Royal Hashemite Court, n.d.-b, System of Government section).

In theory, contemporary Jordan can be said to have a democratic—or at least semi-democratic political system—with a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary form of government. With the state's political opening and tendency toward democratisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the form of lifting martial laws, holding parliamentary elections, and the legalisation of political parties, Jordan could arguably be considered one of the most democratic countries in the Middle East (Wiktorowicz, 1999). However, democratisation and political reform in the country remain contested issues. They are “marred by continued authoritarian tendencies”, manifesting in the persistence of the state's “repressive practices”, tight control over “grassroots voluntary organisations”, and media control, which reveals the gap between democratic ideals and actual political practices (Wiktorowicz, 1999, p. 606-607). The de facto political system and the essence of everyday political life render the country far from a fully-fledged democracy (Kuttab, 2021a). The monarch remains the state's ultimate authority and wields power over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches (Irvine et al. 2022). Although freedom of expression is provided for by the constitution, its limitations are pervasive in real political life. Law scholars such as Toubat et al. (2017, p. 1998) argue that Jordanians' freedom of expression is “a topical issue” in practice “due to the arrest and imprisonment of some people and journalists over the publication of articles, blogs, information or comments”. They advocate for comprehensive

amendments to the existing laws that limit freedom of expression to ensure they align with the constitutional principles that guarantee freedom of expression, which is a fundamental pillar of any democratic system (Toubat et al., 2017).

Amid these limitations on free expression and the authorities' increasing crackdown on political and social media activists in recent years, many observers have noted a growing trend toward authoritarianism in Jordan. Political journalist Basil Alrafaih describes Jordan as "sliding deeper into authoritarianism" (Alrafaih, 2021). International reports and global democracy indices similarly reflect this categorisation. In its 2021 edition of the World Democracy Index, for example, the Economist Intelligence Unit classifies Jordan as an authoritarian country (Democracy Index, 2021). Likewise, the Freedom House organisation ranks Jordan as 'Not Free', assigning it a score of 34 out of 100 on its international freedom scale (Freedom House, 2022). The country's profile on the organisation's website denotes the autocracy of the political system in Jordan, and its overview section states that:

Jordan is a monarchy in which the king plays a dominant role in politics and governance. The parliament's lower house is elected, but the electoral system puts the opposition at a disadvantage, and the chamber wields little power in practice. The media and civil society groups are hampered by restrictive laws and government pressure. The judicial system lacks independence and often fails to ensure due process (Freedom House, 2022).

In considering this background, a political satire such as *Man Saf Baladi* can be seen as challenging the political status quo and as offering an alternative perspective on Jordanian politics. Through its satirical critique, the show engages with prevailing power structures, navigates the limitations on free expression, and reflects broader societal frustrations, positioning itself as a counter-narrative to mainstream political discourse.

## **1.7 Studies of Satire in the Jordanian Context**

As indicated, despite the prominence of satire as a form of sociopolitical critique in Jordanian media spaces, academic research on Jordanian political satire remains relatively scarce, with only a few studies examining its sociopolitical functions—most notably Farghal and Shakir's (1993)

study on political jokes circulated by Jordanians during the Gulf War. Indeed, the majority of studies have approached Jordanian satire predominantly from a linguistic perspective, focusing particularly on rhetorical and stylistic features in satirical articles published in Jordanian newspapers. Bader (2014), for example, explores the use of linguistic puns in satirical Jordanian news articles by various writers, while Algweiri (2016) examines diglossic code-switching in Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi's satirical news articles. Similarly, Abu Ayyash (2016) and Albtoush (2020) investigate the use of cohesive devices and metaphors, respectively, in Alzoubi's satirical news writing.

Other research has focused on visual and digital satire, including Al-Momani et al. (2017), who provide a semiotic analysis of political cartoons drawn by renowned Jordanian cartoonist Imad Hajjaj during parliamentary election campaigns before and after the Arab Spring. The researchers argue that satirical cartoons communicate strong messages, necessitating an analysis of the interplay between cartoon signs and their ideological and social implications. They demonstrate that satirical cartoons reflect shifts in the Jordanian sociopolitical atmosphere and changing public perceptions of politicians and politics after the Arab Spring. The researchers also observe a stark difference in the satirical messages conveyed before and after 2011. Whereas pre-2011 cartoons portrayed the young Jordanians as politically passive and the wider public as oppressed, ignorant, greedy, and eager to sell their votes, post-2011 cartoons depicted young Jordanians as politically active and the public as resisting political money and taking an active political stance. In this way, the satirical cartoons disseminated new ideologies imbued with "a sense of awareness, salvation, achievement, victory, freedom, dignity and democracy", aspirations that Arabs have long sought to achieve "in the face of successive colonial powers and local dictatorships" (Al-Momani et al., 2017, p. 92).

Hussein and Aljamili (2020) explore the role of satirical memes in Jordanian social media spaces during the Coronavirus pandemic. Adopting a socio-semiotic approach, the researchers analyse a group of satirical memes circulated by Jordanians on Facebook and Instagram during the outbreak of the virus, both in Jordan and globally. They argue that the pandemic and government measures to combat it drove people toward social media as an alternative to face-to-face communication, and that satire, in the form of humorous memes, helped alleviate the social and psychological

distress associated with the pandemic. They illustrate how, during different stages of the virus's spread in the country, satirical memes functioned as a coping mechanism and helped soften the gloomy mood imposed by the pandemic. Hussein and Aljamali analyse the semiotic patterns employed in 20 humorous memes and demonstrate that they mitigated “feelings of anxiety, fear and tension by mocking the pandemic and linking it to current affairs in Jordan” (p. 9). They conclude that social media satire fosters positive emotions and restores a sense of connectivity lost due to the new social norms imposed by the pandemic (i.e., physical distancing).

Among the limited academic work on Jordanian political satire, Yousef Barahmeh's doctoral research and subsequent journal publications (Barahmeh, 2020, 2022, 2023) represent the most extensive research on the subject. Barahmeh examines Jordanian political satire from a Bakhtinian carnivalesque perspective, using Mikhail Bakhtin's carnival theory and Freud's psychological relief theory of humour as a framework for interpretation. His work analyses a variety of artifacts, including satirical articles, cartoons, satirical videos, political jokes, comedy sketches, and internet memes produced after the Arab Spring. Barahmeh argues that the marketplace as Bakhtinian carnival—characterised by grotesque imagery, polyphony, dialogism, and challenge to hierarchy—is no longer a physical place. Instead, it is located in social media spaces, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and brought to life through political humour and satire. Barahmeh (2020) identifies five prominent features of carnivalesque political satire in Jordanian social media spaces: “praising the government (intentionally satirical), parodying the government, mocking the government, scatalogising the government, and, finally dethroning the government” (pp. 311-312). He concludes that political satire in Jordanian social media “can be considered as catharsis and as a safety valve to release tension at an individual and/or group level” (p. 320).

Although the above studies provide valuable insights into Jordanian political satire, they examine the phenomenon solely from a textual perspective, focusing primarily on either linguistic and rhetorical elements in satirical texts, or on the interpretation of satirical artifacts without considering the perspectives of their producers and audiences.

## 1.8 This study

The main aim of this study is to provide a greater understanding of satire as a relatively new mode of political communication in the Jordanian context. Given that satire is inherently tied to the sociopolitical context in which it is produced and consumed (Ho et al., 2021; Mifdal, 2015; Tsakona & Popa, 2011), in the political environment of Jordan—where direct political critique may be risky—understanding satire’s function and perceptions of its effectiveness is crucial.

To achieve this aim, the study explores *Man Saf Baladi*, Jordan’s most popular satirical online video show, through an integrated approach that examines both the satirical artifact itself and the perspectives of those involved in its production and reception. It incorporates the views, beliefs, and perceptions of both the satirist and the audience, while also considering the broader sociopolitical context in which the satire operates. This approach enables a comprehensive examination of how satire’s role is interpreted, its meaning constructed, and its impact assessed within the Jordanian sociopolitical landscape. In doing so, the study seeks to address a secondary objective: to bridge a gap in Jordanian academic literature, which has largely examined satirical artifacts in isolation. This narrow focus has led to what can be characterised as a one-dimensional, text-centric interpretation of satire—one that neglects the dynamics of its production and reception.

Beyond bridging this gap, the study also seeks to provide a multi-perspectival account of Jordanian online satire, offering useful insights for scholars, practitioners, and the wider public about its nature and potential impact within the sociopolitical context of Jordan. Furthermore, by shedding light on *Man Saf Baladi* as a satirical case from a non-democratic country, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of literature on media satire, which has been largely dominated by studies of the phenomenon in democratic societies (Hill, 2013; Jones, 2017; Park-Ozee, 2019), particularly within Anglo-American scholarship (Odmark & Harvard, 2021).

The study is guided by the following overarching question:

How does *Man Saf Baladi* employ satire to engage with political culture in Jordan, and what insights do the perceptions of its satirist and audience offer for a broader understanding of its role and impact on public discourse?

This overarching inquiry is further explored through four sub-questions:

1. What satirical features does the content of *Man Saf Baladi* display in satirising political issues and political actors in Jordan?
2. What key discursive strategies are employed in the show, and how does it utilise them to communicate its messages and enhance the potential impact of its satirical discourse?
3. How does the *Man Saf Baladi* satirist perceive satire, his role as a political satirist in the Jordanian public communication arena, and the impact of his satirical work on the audience?
4. In what ways do viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* respond to the show and perceive its influence on their attitudes, interests, and participation in political life in Jordan?

To answer these questions, this study employs a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach (De Lisle, 2011; Hendren et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) that integrates a qualitative analysis of a group of videos from the show, an interview with its satirist, a collection of viewers' responses to its videos on Facebook, and a quantitative analysis of audience questionnaire data. The next section outlines the structure of this thesis and provides a brief overview of each chapter.

## **1.9 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured into nine chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on political satire. It discusses the complexities of satire as a subject of study, highlighting its resistance to a concise, unifying definition; its association with various related concepts; and its evolution across different historical periods into a contemporary mode of political critique used in both traditional and social media spaces. It also addresses satire in linguistic research, outlining key models developed to understand the mechanisms of satirical

discourse. The chapter further reviews studies that examine satire in media and political communication, highlighting its role and potential effects on audiences and public discourse. Finally, it considers how satire has been conceptualised in the Middle East, emphasising its sociopolitical role as a form of political resistance in restrictive environments.

Chapter 3 presents the research methods employed in the study. Given the complexity of the subject matter and the need for a comprehensive understanding of satire in *Man Saf Baladi*, the research design adopts a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach (De Lisle, 2011; Hendren et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) that examines the satirical show from different analytical and participant perspectives. To achieve this, the chapter presents a conceptual model developed for the study, which orients the analytical focus toward examining four key components: *Content*, *Discourse*, *the Satirist's Perspective*, and *Audience Reception*—all within the specific sociopolitical *Culture* in which the show operates. The chapter explains how this conceptual model guides the analysis, including the selection of data, the data collection procedures, and the specific methods and analytical procedures employed for each dataset.

The analysis and findings of the study are presented in Chapters 4 through 8, with each chapter corresponding to a key component outlined in the research model. Chapter 4 addresses the *Content* component, exploring the satirical features displayed in the *Man Saf Baladi* videos and the critical functions they serve. It highlights how the show engages with Jordanian public affairs, criticises power, and employs humour as a tool for critique. Chapter 5 focuses on the *Discourse* component of the show, uncovering a set of key discursive strategies, including titling episodes, providing anecdotes, shifting emotion, and using metaphor. These strategies are purposefully employed to serve multiple functions and enhance the potential impact of its satirical discourse. Chapter 6 presents the *Satirist's Perspective*, examining the satirist's understanding of satire, his role as a political satirist in the Jordanian public arena, and the perceived impact of his satirical work—all of which contribute to a broader understanding of *Man Saf Baladi*.

Chapters 7 and 8 collectively address the *Audience Reception* component, offering a dual-layered analysis of how viewers engage with the show and perceive its influence. Chapter 7 analyses

audience interaction with the show through a qualitative examination of online comments posted on the show's Facebook page, while Chapter 8 presents findings from a quantitative audience survey measuring viewers' perceptions of the show and its impact on their attitudes, interests, and participation in Jordanian political life.

Finally, Chapter 9 provides a comprehensive discussion of the study's findings. It draws connections between the different components explored and synthesises the insights from the various analyses into a set of key conclusions. It discusses the broader implications of these findings for a holistic understanding of the nature and impact of political satire in Jordan, as exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*. The chapter also reflects on the methodology used and presents a number of implications for theory and future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature on political satire and outlines the key areas of inquiry that inform its study. It begins by discussing the complexities involved in satire—highlighting its resistance to a concise, unifying definition, its association with various related concepts, and its evolution across various disciplines and historical eras before emerging as a modern form of media critique. This is followed by an exploration of the linguistic dimension of satire, focusing on the major analytical models developed by linguists to understand the mechanisms of satirical discourse. The chapter then shifts to satire in media and political communication, highlighting the various roles and areas of impact that have been associated with satire as a mode of political communication. The chapter ends by outlining how satire in the Middle East has been conceptualised as a form of sociopolitical resistance with a potential for long-term impact.

### **2.2 Definition of Satire**

#### **2.2.1 Definitional Challenges**

Satire is as old as recorded history. From ancient Greek arenas to modern-day social media, it has manifested itself in various forms and through multiple channels. Throughout history, “satire has transformed from a uniquely Greco-Roman theatrical and poetic form into an ambiguous catch-all applied to political and sociocultural commentary, humour, parody, sarcasm and irony” (Park-Ozee, 2019, p. 585). It has long been used to critique and raise awareness (Crittenden et al., 2011), with the aim of entertaining and amusing as well as informing and reforming (Brown, 1993). Today, satire is a highly influential method of political communication that has proved its effectiveness in inspiring and influencing audiences through humorous political critique (Burgers & Brugman, 2022; Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019; Gray et al., 2009).

As a subject of study, satire is a prolific and evolving area in contemporary research. Based on a Google Scholar search, Park-Ozee (2019) estimates that more than 3,000 studies—including

books and articles—containing the word ‘satire’ in the title or body of the text were published within the past ten years, with 14 such works appearing in the first month of 2018. However, despite its abundance, satire remains a problematic area due to the complexities of the term (Bertuccelli Papi, 2018), its historical evolution, and the lack of a concise definition that unifies the diverse scholarly approaches that engage with it (Simpson, 2003). Satire is also a subject of interest across various disciplines, including literature, classics, history, linguistics, humour studies, and media and political communication (Park-Ozee, 2019).

Although satire is popularly perceived as a humorous form of criticism, reaching a scholarly, concise, and all-encompassing definition of the term is not an easy task. While Simpson (2003, p. 4) describes the term as a “curious and rather elusive one,” Zekavat (2014) argues that despite the ubiquity of satire since ancient times, there has been no agreement on its definition among critics and satirists, and thus no common understanding of it. Moreover, Condren (2012) entirely dismisses the idea of a possible definition of satire and denies that its formal characteristics and informing purposes allow for a unifying definition. Instead, he calls for a categorisation of satire in terms of family resemblance, which he assumes is more helpful for understanding satire than formal definitions. His alternative is a categorisation “by virtue of a contingent range of characteristics, some of which overlap sufficiently between members of the group for resemblance to be created” (Condren, 2012, p. 386). Although the author mentions some formal features of satire, including moral criticism, amusement, ridicule, irony, and humour, he does not elucidate how this model of categorisation can practically account for the complexity of satire and its various forms.

Declercq (2018) contends that the growing scholarly consensus is that providing a definition that identifies necessary conditions of satire is impossible. Although she admits that satire can manifest in various forms and in different cultures and ages, she believes that scholars tend to dismiss any definition intuitively in favour of a cluster account that characterises satire through a family-resemblance cluster of nonessential features. She particularly challenges Condren’s (2012) suggestion of characterising satire by virtue of a contingent range of characteristics. Declercq (2018) argues that a cluster account that dismisses humour as an essential characteristic struggles to distinguish satire from other non-humorous critical art. She further argues that a

cluster account that dismisses the moral dimension as essential to satire cannot acknowledge the distinction between satire and pseudo-satire. By pseudo-satire, she means frivolous forms of comedy that have been labelled 'satire' in international media contexts. Although these forms of political comedy entertain, they do not critique on the basis of a moral dimension. Declercq, therefore, puts forward her proposed concept of satire as "a genre which necessarily sets out to critique and entertain" which "also provides necessary and sufficient conditions for a definition of satire" (Declercq, 2018, p. 329). Accordingly, satire can be understood as an aesthetic practice with a moral and critical function.

### **2.2.2 Different Definitions of Satire**

A variety of definitions for satire exist in the literature, which adds to its complexity as a topic of study. In the online Encyclopaedia Britannica, Elliot (2004, para. 1) defines it as an "artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic, in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, parody, caricature, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to inspire social reform". For Harris (1990, p. 1), it is a "manner which blends a critical attitude with humour and wit to the end that human institutions or humanity may be improved". Gring-Pemble and Watson (2003, p. 136) define it as a "primary technique for deflating egos and providing social criticism". For Skalicky (2018, p. 1), "satire is a type of discourse commonly employed to mock or criticise a satirical target, typically resulting in humour". Brock (2018, p. 282) defines satire as an "expression of an ironic or cynical stance to dominant political and societal formations". McClennen (2011, p. 1) defines it as "comedic and pedagogic form uniquely suited to provoking critical reflection". For Caron (2021a, p. 1), "satire is an artistic enterprise powered by ridicule" that "intends to promote the possibility of social or political reform", whereas Lichtenstein and Nitsch (2023, p. 277) define it as "a communication style that is typically associated with aggression, judgement, mockery, play, laughter, and references to societal norms".

In addition to dictionary definitions, those offered by scholars only show how varied, inconsistent, and slippery definitions of satire can be. Among others, Abdullatif (2014) observes the definitional problem that satire poses to scholars. The lack of consensus on satire among scholars, according to him, can be attributed to two main reasons. First, each scholar seems to

look at satire from the angle they concern themselves with. Those who are interested in its purpose define it as criticism with the hope of reform, or deliberate humour with the purpose of attack; those who concern themselves with its boundaries and relation to humour highlight whether it criticises or provokes humour or does both at the same time. Yet those who focus on its impact, view it as a technique to ridicule, highlight shortcomings, and critique its subject. The second reason stems from “satire’s ability to mimic other forms” (Abdullatif, 2014, p. 22).

As can be seen with the range of definitions over time, satire appears to have undergone some kind of reformation (Ermida, 2012; Park-Ozee, 2019; Simpson, 2003). What originated with ancient philosophers and poets transcended eras and became employed by playwrights, comedians, artists, journalists, and social commentators. In contemporary times, satire can be found in many forms including “literary works (poetry or prose), newspaper or magazine articles, theatrical works, visual arts (painting, sculpture, film, TV, etc.), musical texts or songs, or oral storytelling presentations” (Abdullatif, 2014, p. 23). To these, one can add, modern-day social media and online blogs, memes, podcasts, animated cartoons, GIFs (Graphics Interchange Formats), tweets, Instagram reels, and Facebook pages.

In the same vein, Ermida (2012) points out that satirical works vary in form and medium, ranging from literature and painting to cinema and the press. She mentions, as examples, *The Vulture* (a poem from 1853), the reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* with a moustache (by artist Marcel Duchamp in 1919), *Mars Attacks!* (a film produced in 1996), the British satirical magazine *Private Eye*, and the American satirical newspaper *The Onion*. What is common among such works is humorous imitation, intertextual play and comic illusion. Simultaneously, “they poke fun at the ways and follies of society by criticising political figures, social characters, cultural references, situations and events of everyday life” (Ermida, 2012, p. 186). Satire, therefore, cannot be restricted to any form, channel or medium. Nor can it be restricted to any time, culture, or society—a matter which contributes to the complexity of the phenomenon.

For the purpose of this study, the definition of satire offered by Skalicky (2018) is adopted. Skalicky (2018, p. 1) describes satire as a “type of discourse commonly employed to mock or criticise a satirical target, typically resulting in humour”. This definition neither binds satire to a specific medium, form, or field, nor does it associate it with a particular function, such as societal

or political reform, which many other definitions seem to emphasise. This neutrality makes Skalicky's definition a suitable starting point for examining the *Man Saf Baladi* show, as it allows for the exploration of its satirical discourse without imposing a predefined view, thus enabling a more open and robust analysis of the subject matter.

### **2.2.3 Satire and the “Big Family” Analogy**

One of the problems in the literature of satire is its relatedness to a set of concepts that share some resemblance such as parody, mockery, lampoon, caricature, humour, spoof, irony, and sarcasm. Bertuccelli Papi (2018, p. 465) uses the analogy of a “big family” to argue for the difficulty of setting satire apart from these intuitively related terms because this confusion is rooted in the conceptualisation of satire as a literary genre and the reliance of scholars on dictionary definitions when tackling satire. O'Connor (2017) notes that dictionary definitions of satire are heavily influenced by the *Oxford English Dictionary* which defines satire as “the use of humour, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticise people's stupidity or vices” (p. 196). Some dictionaries describe satire as the use of sarcasm, while others list irony and sarcasm as its synonyms. This is where confusion can occur as such definitions merely describe satire through the “techniques it employs” (O'Connor, 2017, p. 196).

Kreuz and Roberts (1993) differentiate between satire, parody, and irony, arguing that satire and parody are literary genres while irony is a rhetorical device that is often used by these genres. They further classify irony into four variants: Socratic irony (pretence of ignorance to reveal a flaw in thinking), dramatic irony (a situation where the audience knows something that characters in a dramatic work do not), irony of fate (opposite situations/events), and verbal irony (intentional statements that express non-belief). Furthermore, sarcasm, according to Kreuz and Roberts, is a “subtype of verbal irony” in which the attitude expressed is typically negative and directed toward an individual or a group” (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993, p. 99). Similarly, Kabala (2014, p. 2) describes sarcasm as “premeditated verbal aggression” and a “ridiculing device”. Attardo (2000) reiterates this conceptualisation of sarcasm as an “overtly aggressive type of irony” that has a “clear target” (p. 795), with irony being an inferential and “purely pragmatic phenomena” (Attardo, 2001, p. 169). Both sarcasm and irony are two prominent forms of

humour on which satire depends, and in Bosilkov's terms, are "the two dominant constitutive elements of satire" (Bosilkov, 2017, p. 253).

Conflation between satire and parody is particularly common among scholars (Sinclair, 2020), and one can find the same type of satirical work referred to as both satire and parody simultaneously. This overlap is evident in discussions of TV programmes such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, which are frequently described as news satire, satirical news, or news parody. As an example, Baym and Jones (2012) refer to these programmes and their adaptations across the globe as both parody and satire in the same article. Similarly, Kumar and Combe (2015) use the two terms interchangeably when discussing various forms of political and social comedic critique. They emphasise the "subversive power of parody and satire" (p. 211) without attempting to distinguish between them or clarify their differences. In contrast, Fatima (2016) distinguishes between satire and parody, maintaining that "where a satire is aimed at exposing the faults of society, institutions and individuals, parody mocks the style associated with a person, discipline or genre" (p. 41). In other words, parody is a form of mimicry or imitation of style which can function within a broader context. Therefore, D'Errico and Poggi (2016) deem parody as a technique of satire. Similarly, Ermida (2012) conceptualises parody as a "vehicle", a "means", or a "way" to "bring satire into life" (p. 190).

Singh (2012) draws distinctions between satire, humour, and irony, arguing that they are different elements used for different purposes in different ways. Humour is "the quality of being funny" and "the ability to perceive and express a sense of the clever or amusing thing" (Singh, 2012, p. 65). Its principal element is the expression or recognition of peculiarities or incongruities in a situation, and its concern is emotional in the sense that it tends to generate a cognitive experience that incites amusement. Irony, which is the "disagreement or incongruity between what is said and what is understood, or what is expected and what actually occurs" (Singh, 2012, p. 67), is a vehicle for humour that is often used by authors to emphasise a pivotal idea and make their audience reflect on it. In its general sense, irony is a technique or a rhetorical device that employs a "deliberate use of language that states the opposite of truth" (Singh, 2012, p. 67). Satire, according to Singh, is a genre "in which vices, follies, abuses and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, and society itself, into

improvement” (Singh, 2012, p. 68). Therefore, although satire is meant to be funny, it “does not aim merely at producing a humorous outcome” as it is imbued with “a moral value which is not central to all humorous forms” (Tesnohlikova, 2021, p. 3). Satire has a vital social purpose, which is to constructively criticise society, individuals, governments, authorities, while exposing their absurdities. In Singh’s words, satire is used to “expose and criticise foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humour, irony, exaggeration and ridicule”, with an intention to “improve humanity” (Singh, 2012, p. 68).

Debate over the terminology, techniques, and classification of satire can be overwhelming and can hinder the development of contemporary satire scholarship. Perhaps this is why such debate is often glossed over by scholars who are concerned with the functionality of contemporary political satire and the role it plays in sociopolitical contexts. To advance the field and avoid the pitfalls of terminology—whether as a genre, discourse, or mode of communication—satire can be perceived as a broad phenomenon that encompasses humour, irony, parody, sarcasm, and other often conflated terms as tools and techniques to achieve its ultimate purpose. In this sense, satire is an “umbrella” concept (Zekavat, 2017, p. 29) or, maintaining Bertuccelli Papi’s (2018, p. 465) “big family” analogy, it can be depicted as a parent with irony, sarcasm, parody, and other mechanisms as its offspring.

### **2.3 Historical Background**

Although it is believed that satire has existed throughout all epochs of history, tracing its absolute origin and history seems impossible (Park-Ozee, 2019). Lichtheim (2006), however, has identified early examples of satire in ancient Egyptian literature, including *The Satire of the Trades* — a piece of writing in the form of instruction— that satirises professions other than the scribal profession by using an exaggerated negative tone. Alternatively, Hall (2015) traces the origins of satire back to ancient Greece and the plays of Aristophanes which contained personally targeted criticism. He attacked human vices and failings, “going as far as representing real existing persons on the stage” (Gum 1969, cited in Ermida, 2012, p. 188). Some of Aristophanes’ comedies, like *The City Dionysia* and the *Lenaia* have survived and have been

translated into many languages. The plays are well known as sociopolitical commentaries of their time. They were famous for poking fun at “particular well-known members of the audience, as well as critiquing Athenian society, government, and foreign policy, especially concerning wars” (LeBoeuf, 2007, p. 6). Menippean satire, named after the Greek philosopher Menippus, was another type of satire developed by the ancient Greeks. This type of satire took the form of prose and attacked intellectual and mental failings rather than individuals and politicians (Condren, 2012).

In ancient Rome, satire took the form of comedic poetry composed for the purpose of censuring human vices (Keane, 2007). Horace and Juvenal were among the pioneers of Roman satire and established two different satiric traditions. Horatian satire is characterised by a mild, light-hearted, and soft-natured critique of social ills. It is described by Gowers (2005, p. 51) as “sweetening the pill of moral correction with humour instead of souring it with malice and envy”. Juvenalian satire, on the other hand, is characterised by harsh, vicious, and merciless criticism, with a primary focus on attacking its target. Jensen (2007) describes the Juvenalian tradition as being “acerbic”, “contentious”, and “vituperative”—a form of satire launched by “one whose rage at the world has reached the point of exploding; who can see nothing around him but excess, corruption, and endless venality; and who must give public voice to his anger” (pp. 105-107).

Entering the Middle Ages, medieval satire continued to thrive. Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, for example, is among the texts produced at the time that contain satirical elements (Abdullatif, 2014), and like other satirical texts during that period, it targets the hypocrisy shown by the Catholic Church as well as the government of England. Chaucer’s work was written during a turbulent period in English history: the aftermath of the Black Death, the working class revolting against the aristocracy, and questioning the church’s authority. As evidenced in the *Canterbury Tales*, humour and implicit criticism made satire a safe way to voice opinions and challenge authorities (LeBoeuf, 2007). Thomas More’s *Utopia* written in 1516 is another work that used quiet and implicit criticism. More uses a fictitious character, Raphael Hythloday who introduces and “describes in admiring detail the society of an anti-Europe called “Nowhere”, indirectly indicting the political and economic institutions of England and France (Duval, 2007,

p. 71). The happiness and satisfaction of the members of the imaginary Utopian society is an implicit critique of European life at that time, “in which the government appears to be obsessed with wealth and power rather than the public good” (LeBoeuf, 2007, p. 7).

The 18th century witnessed the birth of the work of Jonathan Swift, who introduced the practice of satire to journalism (Ermida, 2012; Abdullatif, 2014). As a Tory journalist who critiqued religion, Swift, as Ermida (2012) maintains, became “an archetype of modern journalistic satire” (p. 189). He also used satire to attack conflicts between Ireland and England. His two most famous works *A Modest Proposal* (written in 1729) and *Gulliver’s Travels* (written in 1726) are among the texts that helped shape modern satire. *Gulliver’s Travels* used satire to critique issues that characterised 18<sup>th</sup>-century England. The novel attacks pettiness, stubbornness, ethnocentrism, government, religion, and violence. Swift masterfully exposes these issues using both placement and exaggeration in unusual contexts to highlight deficiencies that characterised English behaviour (LeBoeuf, 2007). Swift’s essay *A Modest Proposal* responds to sentiments displayed by English landlords, who falsely defined the Irish as filthy, subhuman, and poor, and who were concerned about their high birth rates despite their own role in the economic and social oppression that contributed to Irish poverty. As a biting satirical response to this plight, Swift proposes that Irish parents should sell their children in their first year to be eaten by the rich (LeBoeuf, 2007). Swift’s satire was integral to the burgeoning modern democratic impulses and the formation of the early public sphere in the eighteenth century, as it engaged the public in critical political discourse (Caron, 2021b).

In the Victorian era, satire developed as a journalistic form with the emergence of satirical magazines like *Punch* in 1841 and *Fun* in 1861 (Abdullatif, 2014). Such satirical papers had a very important role in England. They operated as a social and political counterbalance, “challenging the dominant classes and siding with the oppressed” (Ermida, 2012, p. 189). At about the same time, satire was flourishing in America, culminating in the work of Mark Twain (Morris, 2007). Twain wrote his famous hoax articles *Petrified Man* and *A Blood Massacre near Carson* in 1862 and 1863, which were made-up satirical stories published in newspapers. Twain’s hoaxes blend “fact and fancy, humour and atrocity, all the while playing with frames of reference” (Florence, 1995, p. 38). These early forms of media satire, according to Ermida

(2012) did not depart from actual events; instead, they created imaginary situations in order to “feed the readers’ thirst for shocking sensations and satirise their manias in the meantime” (p. 187).

20<sup>th</sup>-century satire was associated with works of renowned writers like Aldous Huxley, Sinclair Lewis, and George Orwell (Abdullatif, 2014). For instance, Aldous Huxley’s novel *Brave New World* (published in 1932) is a futuristic dystopia associated with mass production, sleep-learning, and biological engineering, which were new ideas at the time. Huxley satirically exaggerates and critiques vices in American society including drug use and promiscuous sex (LeBoeuf, 2007). However, modern satire existed in media other than books. In the 1950s United States, it took the form of stand-up comedy performances, most prominently by Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce (Abdullatif, 2014). Later in England, satire found its way onto television in the form of satirical series like *The Frost Report* in 1967, and into newspapers in the form of comic strips like the *American Doonesbury* in 1970 which displayed satire not only with humorous text but also visually (LeBoeuf, 2007). Nowadays, satire exists at the crossroads of comedy, art, and journalistic practice, “with the specific combination of these factors resulting from the needs and priorities of individual satirists” (Lichtenstein et al., 2021, p. 1768). It takes a variety of forms and thrives on the development and diversity of channels of communication, including radio, television, traditional press, the Internet, and new social media. Satire can thus be a speech, an article, a novel, a cartoon, a video show, an animation, or any other medium that brings to light issues like corruption, inequality, and mistreatment and “turn[s] a critical eye on the foibles of society, raising a frown as much as a laugh” (Ermida, 2012, p. 189).

## **2.4 Satire in Linguistic Research**

Although not intended as a comprehensive account of the historical development of satire, Section 2.3 above indicates that satire has long been regarded as a literary genre and is studied from the perspective of literary critics (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2008; Simpson, 2003). This conception of satire, according to Skalicky and Crossley (2014, p. 67), depends on the classification of “individual texts based on subjective arguments and not any clear criteria conducive to formal

linguistic analyses”. A critical literary approach to satire, in other words, tends to use “affective judgments as a way of structuring interpretations of particular satirical works” (Simpson, 2003, p. 63), “without providing any systematic account of the linguistic properties of satire” (Abdullatif, 2014, p. 23). Furthermore, literary critics offer no theoretical framework for understanding satire in relation to its reception within a humour community (Simpson, 2003).

Safavi (2005, as cited in Jaber, 2019) describes satire as a kind of language use that is based on the rejection of norms by adding rules that characterise or dictate morality or good behaviour. Despite the importance of language in the construction of satire, there is a paucity of linguistic research and theorisation on satire (Skalicky, 2018). The dearth of linguistic inquiry into satire might be due to the general assumption that the analysis of satire has become the exclusive domain of literary criticism (Abdullatif, 2014).

Of the few linguistics scholars working on satire, Simpson (2003) offers one of the most comprehensive models, providing a cogent conceptualisation of satire along with a set of contextual mechanisms that contribute to its production and reception. The major assumption of Simpson’s model is that satire is a form of humour that uses ironic means to reach its goals and that satire functions at a higher level than genre or register. Working on example texts from the satirical magazine *Private Eye*, Simpson provides his view of satire as a discursive practice that involves three stages and three discursive subject positions. The subject positions are the constituent elements of satirical discourse, which involve the satirist (author/producer of the satirical text), the satiree (recipient/ audience of the satirical text) and the satirised (the target attacked or critiqued by the satirical text). Whereas “the satirist and the satiree are ratified within the discursive event”, the third participant, the satirised, is “not normally an invited participant in the discourse exchange, even though the target is what provides the initial impetus for satire” (Simpson, 2003, p. 9). The interactive relationship between the three subject positions in Simpson’s model is context-dependent. These positions can be redefined in a particular satirical event depending on the success of satire. In other words, while successful satire brings the satirist and the satiree closer together, a failed satire restructures the relationships in the triadic discourse by distancing the satirist from the satiree, on the one hand, and “by drawing together the satiree and the satirised target”, on the other (Simpson, 2003, p. 9).

Regarding the linguistic properties of the text, Simpson's model postulates a prime stage and a dialectical stage for the construction of satire. Whereas the prime stage evokes a previous discourse event or entity, which may be another text, the dialectical stage produces a text-internal "collision of ideas" or an "antithesis" that "falls outside the straightforward reasoning" (Simpson, 2003, p. 9). In other words, the dialectical stage signals incongruity between the form of the text and the message of the text (Skalicky & Crossley, 2014). The third stage in Simpson's model is satirical uptake, which is the recognition or resolution of the incongruity between the prime stage and the dialectical stage. In linguistic pragmatics, uptake involves the understanding of the illocutionary force and the perlocutionary effect of the satirical text. In this sense, uptake in satirical discourse requires cultural and background knowledge and "relies heavily on inferencing by the satiree" (Simpson, 2003, p. 70).

Central to the construction of satire in Simpson's (2003) model is the satirical method, which he describes as "the linguistic means used by a satirist to create both prime and dialectic elements of structure in a piece of satire" (p. 9). Satirical methods, in other words, are the compositional strategies that contribute to the incongruity of the satirical text. According to Simpson, two general strategies are used in satirical discourse: metonymy and metaphor. Metonymic strategies operate within the same conceptual domain of the satirical target and include saturation, attenuation, and negation. These operate in the text to inflate (saturate) or deflate (attenuate) perceptions of the target of satire, or to highlight a situation that did not occur (negate), inviting an alternative consideration of the negative. Finally, metaphorical strategies include comparisons to other entities external to the content domain of the satirical target.

Another important work that looks at satire from a linguistic perspective is Ermida's (2012) study on news satire. Situating news satire in a general context in which parody, criticism, and incongruity are major contributors to its understanding, and acknowledging the lack of a comprehensive, integrative model that accounts for these elements together with the linguistic mechanisms at work in the specific case of news satire, Ermida proposes a threefold linguistic framework for identifying and analysing news satire. This explanatory model consists of three major components, all of which must be present in a text for it to qualify as news satire. These are the intertextual component, the critical component, and the comic component. The

intertextual component, as the name suggests, delineates the text's intertextuality. Based on this component, the satirical text must resonate with other news story texts. In other words, intertextuality involves the transformation of another text, as is the case with parody; "it entails borrowing or altering a prior text" (Ermida, 2012, p. 194). The intertextual component involves two subdivisions: a structural component and a stylistic component. The structural component necessitates that the structure of the satirical text parodies the organisational layout of a news story; "namely, it must be structured in an inverted pyramid way instead of a punchline one" (p. 194). The stylistic component, however, entails parodying the type of language used in a regular news story. This includes the formal register, syntactic construction, and vocabulary.

According to the second component, (i.e., the critical one), the satirical text must have a judgmental nature. It should disapprove, censure, or disparage certain aspects of society or certain social actors. The third component is the comic component. According to this component, the satirical text must be linguistically structured around three elements which are responsible for infusing it with a humorous flavour. These are the lexical, pragmatic, and rhetorical components.

- Lexical component: The text must be lexically organised in a way that allows the words employed to evoke or activate contrasting or overlapping scripts.
- Pragmatic component: The text should be pragmatically constructed so that the reader's general cultural knowledge and frames of reference play a crucial role in interpretation. In this sense, the satirical text must be context-dependent, requiring encyclopaedic knowledge and carrying presuppositions and allusions.
- Rhetorical component: The text should employ rhetorical devices that instantiate and intensify script oppositions. While antithesis is a common device, "hyperbole is also a major aid in setting the oppositions REAL vs. UNREAL or POSSIBLE vs. IMPOSSIBLE, whereas irony and personification facilitate the oppositions TRUE vs. FALSE and HUMAN vs. NON-HUMAN, respectively" (Ermida, 2012, p. 194).

Ermida (2012) applies her model to a corpus of eight satirical news articles published in the Portuguese satirical newspaper *The Public Enemy*. Her textual analysis demonstrates how these

texts consistently incorporate the three components of satire outlined in her framework (i.e., the intertextual, critical, and comic components). For example, all of the analysed articles exhibited the intertextual component, as they followed the inverted pyramid structure commonly used in journalistic writing, in which information is presented in descending order of importance. This structural mimicry reinforces the satirical nature of the text by parodying conventional news reporting. The critical component was also evident in all the pieces, as they engaged in social and political critique. Examples of the topics satirised include the European Union's political pressure on Portugal, Portuguese politicians, and bias in the Portuguese media. The comic component was also present in the analysed articles and was achieved through the interactive play of lexical, pragmatic, and rhetorical elements. Ermida (2012) demonstrates how, at the lexical level, words create incongruity by triggering opposing scripts; how, at the pragmatic level, the reader's encyclopaedic knowledge is crucial for decoding textual allusions and presuppositions; and how, at the rhetorical level, rhetorical devices such as antithesis, hyperbole, and personification serve to reinforce script oppositions in the texts. By and large, Ermida's analytical model proves useful in practice, confirming that news satire is a multi-layered discursive genre which has the capacity to echo events, social facts, people and their shortcomings in a critical, yet "humorous portrayal of contemporary reality" (Ermida, 2012, p. 207). In this way, satire not only amuses readers but also stimulates critical thinking, encouraging them to evaluate social affairs and engage in the public sphere.

Drawing on Cognitive Linguistics, Maslo (2016) sheds light on satire as a humorous discourse, emphasising counterfactuals as a key rhetorical mechanism in political satire. He applies cognitive linguistic tools—namely framing and blending—to analyse examples from the famous programme *The Daily Show*. According to Maslo, satire triggers two mental input spaces: thesis (a factual idea) and antithesis (its counterfactual opposite). Their incongruity or contradiction resolves in synthesis – an equivalent to the emergent structure in blending theory. In the context of satire, synthesis represents the audience's cognitive resolution of the incongruity between the factual (thesis) and the counterfactual (antithesis). This synthesis, often humorous or thought-provoking, allows the audience to critically engage with the satirical message, seeing beyond the surface contradiction to uncover deeper meaning or critique. In other words, a thesis introduces facts that can be considered factual within a certain event, while the satirist's creative, humorous

contribution takes the form of antithesis, which is counterfactual. The resulting synthesis, therefore, is not just a logical reconciliation of conflicting elements but a cognitive and interpretive process through which satire conveys its critique.

Maslo argues that understanding satire requires more than blending thesis and antithesis; frames also play a crucial role. While blends form the “micro-context” necessary for getting to the point of the satirical humour, frames represent the “macro-context” and provide the background for the entire satirical discourse event (Maslo, 2016, p. 118). Frames refer to cognitive structures built up in our brains through experience and activated by speech, so that a given word triggers its relevant frame. For example, *offside* triggers a football frame, *knockout* triggers a boxing frame, and *drift* triggers a car-racing frame. In a satirical event, a frame rhetorically shapes perception by linking information to familiar symbols in the audience’s knowledge, guiding them in processing the information. However, frames are culture-dependent, meaning they are commonly shared among speakers of the same language but may not be universally understood. This explains why people who share a language but belong to different cultures may not always grasp the meaning of a particular satirical discourse or event.

Maslo’s (2016) conceptualisation of satire can be summarised in three points. First, truth and seriousness serve as the starting points of political satire. Second, truth and seriousness are filtered through humour and counterfactuality, ultimately resulting in a satirical message. Third, the filters (e.g., humour and counterfactuality) represent the satirist’s creative contributions and are not intended to distort the truth in any way. As Maslo (2016) explains, “their primary function is to raise public awareness through an entertaining form” (p. 120).

Skalicky (2018) employs a more focused, lexicon-oriented linguistic analysis of the study of humorous satire. He argues that while current understandings of satire accentuate the role of pragmatic and background knowledge in recognising satire, specific linguistic cues also trigger a satirical reading. Skalicky also maintains that, using corpus linguistics, and Lexical Priming (Hoey, 2005), in particular, scholars have demonstrated that other forms of creative language use, such as puns, irony, and verbal jokes, purposefully deviate from expected patterns of language. Building on this, he draws on Lexical Priming theory, which suggests that language patterns and associations are mentally catalogued by a language user and shaped through

frequent exposure. He then investigates whether satirical news headlines from the American satirical newspaper *The Onion* deviate from expected lexical primings (i.e., conventional patterns of language use). Analysing a set of satirical headlines with reference to a generalised corpus of American English usage, Skalicky observes a consistent tendency in most headlines to deviate from established patterns of English language use. This violation of expected priming in the headlines functions as an additional signal for the reader “in reaching a satirical and humorous interpretation” of the satirical article (Skalicky, 2018, p. 17). He explains this deviation in terms of the “relatively limited linguistic space” (p. 19) available for the headline, into which a satirical message is packed. Divergence from expected primings, therefore, is a creative strategy that authors of satirical headlines employ to orient the reader towards a satirical message and ensure a satirical interpretation. This strategy aligns well with the essence of satire, which itself can be understood as a creative departure from conventional forms of critique.

## **2.5 Satire in Media and Political Communication**

### **2.5.1 The Importance of Satire in Media and Politics**

In 2017 a young Serbian Communication student ran for the Serbian presidential elections as a satirical fictional character representing a corrupt politician (Robinson, 2017). He roamed streets in a horse-drawn wagon promising money and jobs to everyone who would vote for him. Interestingly, this satirical candidate came second in a pre-election opinion poll and won 20% of the votes in the actual elections (Robinson, 2017). In 2019, a majority of Ukrainian citizens voted for Volodymyr Zelensky, a television comedian who played the role of a president in a satirical TV show, electing him as their actual president (Fox, 2019). These two cases indicate satire’s growing presence in the modern political landscape and highlight its importance as a subject of scholarly inquiry.

Although satire predates contemporary media, Moy et al. (2005) argue that modern political satire competes with traditional media and formal political campaign media events, such as debates and conventions in disseminating vital political information which can drive cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural political outcomes. Owing to this potential, modern-day satire has

received ample attention from media and political communication scholars. Research in this area has investigated various manifestations of satire and the sociopolitical roles it plays including “a source for citizenship” (Doona, 2021, p. 21), a form of new “alternative journalism” and an oppositional discourse to mainstream media (Howley, 2019, p. 123). This interest can be attributed to satire’s potential as a powerful method for promoting social justice by calling out hypocrisy, decrying corruption, and exposing intentional obscurity and the deliberate ignorance of “truthiness” in political discourse (Caron, 2021a). Lee and Jang (2017) highlight satire’s significant impact on modern communication and the serious political arena, noting that its influence has been recognised through the appearances of state presidents on satirical shows (e.g., Barak Obama on *The Daily Show*) and the participation of political satirists at various official state events (e.g., White House correspondents’ dinners), and satirists being hosted on high-profile political debate programmes (e.g., Jon Stewart in CNN’s *Crossfire*).

Indeed, the appearance of Jon Stewart on CNN’s *Crossfire* in 2004 was a watershed moment that gave prominence to the study of satire in media and modern political discourse. In the show, Stewart unexpectedly shocked the hosts and the viewers by refusing to adopt his usual satirical persona, and instead aggressively attacked the hosts, CNN and mainstream media in general, criticising them for “failing to engage genuine civilised debate, and not serving news television’s responsibility to public discourse” (Boler, 2006, p. 1). Boler analysed online discussions about the *Crossfire* episode and illustrated that Jon Stewart’s critique of the functions of the US media represents a shared concern among the media consumers and a renewed demand for truthfulness and accountability. This led Boler to contend that “Jon Stewart represents the contemporary form of political satire that speaks truth to power” (Boler, 2006, p. 2). The popularity of Stewart’s satire hinges on a widely shared negative perception of mainstream media among people who see Stewart and his satire as their salvation. For them, Stewart is a figure who has the tool (i.e., *The Daily Show*) to represent average citizens and broadcast their opinions. *The Daily Show*’s satire, according to Boler’s observations, is perceived as more truthful and more effective than real news. Political satire thus has the function of “saying what is otherwise unsaid within a given political climate” (Boler, 2006, p. 6).

### 2.5.2 The Roles of Political Satire

Various roles have been assigned to satire in media and political communication. Jeffrey Jones' seminal book *Entertaining Politics* (Jones, 2005) and its later edition (Jones, 2010) have been instrumental in establishing research in this area. Jones highlights the role of televised political satire programmes in the changing face of modern media and journalism, labelling these programmes as “new political television” (Jones, 2010, p. 5). Jones argues that due to the declining status of traditional news media as arbiters of political news and commentary, new satirical programmes have become an alternative space for political information, discussion, and critique. Along with the content-driven and user-centred practices on the internet, these satirical programmes have become vital for the public's reassessment of the legitimacy and authority of the media and its practices in public affairs. Satirical programmes, according to Jones, contribute to shaping a new political culture based on outsiders' voices rather than those of traditional media pundits and political elites whose perspectives on politics are often highly predictable. The new outsider voices bring fresh perspectives to the political atmosphere and provide a humorous version of political reality, as opposed to the one offered by news media elites and insiders of news institutions. Based on his audience research, Jones contends that the impact of political satire programmes extends beyond the screen, engaging audiences in active political participation. These satirical programmes function as an “instigator” of political talk, and as a “connector” of citizens' concerns about their public and private lives and are seen by viewers as “representative” of their views and concerns, which are often ignored by mainstream media and political elites (Jones, 2005, p. 185).

In her book-length study of satire in the US, Amber Day (2011) provides a similar view of satire as counter-public progressive practice. Examining the functions of satirical news shows and documentaries, she argues that satire manipulates reality with the satiric in a tangible way, granting it considerable power. According to Day, satire critiques and questions dominant perceptions and state policies, articulating perspectives that are often outside the mainstream. She argues that satire is a form of dissenting popular culture that provides a focal point for those who share similar sentiments and opinions. It allows them to “identify through the consumption of and the interaction with particular culture texts” (Day, 2011, p. 10). This, in turn, leads to “counter publics coalescing around these forms”, with people viewing the role of satirist as a

representative “who will push their particular worldview into the wider public sphere” (p. 11). Satire, according to this perspective, can be understood as a politically consolidatory force, bringing dissenting individuals together through the deployment of a counter-discourse that reflects their worldviews and political opinions.

Baum (2003) highlights the role of political satire as a gateway to politics and political engagement. According to Baum, political satire, in the form of programmes that integrate politics with humour, provides an accessible entry point into political knowledge, motivating politically less-attentive viewers to seek out additional political information. This foundational knowledge can then facilitate comprehension of more complex political details when encountered in traditional news sources, such as newspapers and TV news-centric programmes. Political satire, therefore, prompts people to engage with non-satirical political content and collaboratively increase their overall political knowledge and engagement with serious politics.

Howley (2019) highlights the role of contemporary political satire as alternative media and an oppositional discourse to mainstream media. Examining satire in the weekly broadcast *Le Show*, he maintains that the programme reflects “the decisive role satirical news plays in interesting alternative news values, practices and content in the mainstream political communication” (p. 123). Analysing the content of a randomly selected episode that typifies the tone, content, and structure of the radio programme, Howley reveals how *Le Show*’s presenter, Harry Shearer, employs a discursive integration of news and entertainment, skilfully combining current affairs with cunning satire. As observed by Howley, the programme’s presenter employs satire to entertain and inform audiences with news underreported in mainstream media, providing analysis and political commentary that challenges news media values and practices. The presenter was also found to appropriate news stories and repurpose them using pranking rhetoric for political commentary and cultural critique. Howley concludes that satire shares many features of alternative media and reveals the “democratic deficit” of the US corporate media (Howley, 2019, p. 138).

Hariman (2008, p. 248) describes modern satire as “discursive field of political humour” that includes many forms, such as comic strips, satirical magazines, editorial cartoons, animated sitcoms, comedic songs, stand-up comic monologues, fake TV news and commentary, and fake

newspapers. These satirical forms of political humour, Hariman holds, are constituents of public culture and are crucial for an engaged and sustainable democracy. Satire, in Hariman's perspective, is reminiscent of Medieval folk humour, which defied social order and the high culture imposed by the authority of the church. Hariman refers to Bakhtin carnival theory (which is based on Medieval humour), maintaining that satire creates "carnavalesque spectatorship" and transforms "the world of speech into an agonistic field of proliferating voices" (p. 253). Satirical media content, in this sense, brings authority to a lower level, allowing common people to criticise it, thereby providing a dynamic field for social engagement.

In an experimental study, Lee and Jang (2017) take a different approach to the study of satire and shed light on its ability to trigger emotions that mediate political talk. The researchers examine how political satire provokes citizens' engagement in interpersonal political talk, proposing that emotions triggered by exposure to political satire stimulate interpersonal talk among individuals. Using surveys and exposing participants to satirical videos, the researchers statistically demonstrate a correlation between exposure to satire and political discussion. The results of their study clearly suggest that political satire programmes are not less important than traditional (serious) political news or commentary programmes, and that satire provokes interpersonal political talk, which is essential for fostering democratic debate. Lee and Jang's results challenge opinions that undervalue political satire and diminish its role in public discourse, arguing that it is more than a mere generator of cynicism towards its targets, which might otherwise lead audiences to political inactivity and detachment from public affairs. Whether or not it is capable of politically educating people, political satire seems to stimulate meaningful discussions and prompt them to engage in public discourse.

Feldman and Borum Chattoo (2019) demonstrate that satire can also be a route to social change. They explore shifts in US public attitudes toward Syrian refugees after being exposed to a satirical news segment from the show *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, in comparison with a news segment from the CNN. The satirical video used satire to critique the politicisation of the Syrian refugees' crisis in the US and present a humanitarian portrayal of refugees, countering myths that depict refugees as terrorists. The CNN video, on the other side, was a conventional news segment providing statistics and information about the Syrian refugee situation. The

findings of this research demonstrate a positive relationship between satire and attitude shift, on one hand, and between satire's perceived entertainment and its persuasive effect, on the other. Specifically, watching the satirical news segment, either alone or in combination with the traditional news segment, was more effective than watching news alone in encouraging people to care about the Syrian refugee crisis. In addition, the perceived entertainment of the satirical segment enhanced attitude change, playing an important role as a "route to persuasion" (p. 294).

Zekavat (2021) illustrates the role of satire in behavioural change during crises, focusing particularly on the role of *The Late Show* during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using qualitative content analysis, the author explores episodes of the show during the first wave of the pandemic in the USA and explicates how satire was used to provide information, establish injunctive norms, and influence public attitudes and subjective norms. Zekavat observes that, at the early stage of the pandemic, the show sought to modify individual behaviours by highlighting scientific recommendations and exposing the inefficacy of governmental behavioural controls. As the pandemic became politicised with the emergence of other sociopolitical issues, including the Black Lives Matter movement, uprisings against racism and the US presidential campaigns, the show's satire shifted its focus to critiquing policies and political figures, urging policymakers to adopt effective behavioural controls. Despite this shift, the show continued to promote individual responsibility by consistently providing scientific information and encouraging viewers to follow expert advice. Although Zekavat does not aim to explore the direct "impact of watching the show on its audience", nor its indirect "reverberations on social media and the news" (Zekavat, 2021, p. 288), his findings suggest that political satire can effectively persuade and influence public attitudes and behaviours during health crises.

Coleman et al. (2009) note that politicians, despite being the main subjects of satire, are often overlooked in scholarly inquiry into political satire. In an attempt to fill this void, they analysed the motives, experiences, and reflections of a group of British and Dutch politicians who appeared in the British satirical TV show, *Have I Got News for You*, and its Dutch adaptation, *Dit was het Nieuws*. Based on their analysis of interviews with a group of English and Dutch Members of Parliament, the researchers found that the politicians legitimise their participation in

the satirical shows by drawing primarily from three repertoires: strategic, indulgent and anti-elitist. The strategic repertoire underscores the politicians' desire to market themselves, enhance their visibility, and increase their recognition. Whether the result of the participation is positive or negative, some politicians believe "visibility in itself is necessary" (Coleman et al., 2009, p. 661). Participants who draw on the indulgent repertoire, however, consider their participation in political satire programmes as a matter of fun and engage mainly for their own enjoyment. These individuals tend to be well-known politicians with considerable political track records. Coleman et al. argue that politics and the media associated with it are usually presented as institutions dominated by elites, who possess their own in-group dynamics, language, and style. Hence the third repertoire, which is the anti-elitist, underlines politicians' desire to promote themselves to the public as ordinary individuals, acknowledging their own flaws and imperfections.

Despite a general perception of satire as positive, it can also be viewed negatively. Hart and Hartelius's critique stands out as one of the strongest against political satire (Hart & Hartelius, 2007). The authors provide a critical perspective on the nature of political satire, particularly targeting Jon Stewart and his famous satirical programme, *The Daily Show*. They argue that Stewart's political satire is fundamentally anti-political, describing him as a "jester" (p.267) who "makes cynicism attractive; indeed, he makes it profitable" (p. 263). According to Hart and Hartelius, Stewart's work, which uses sharp critique and witty commentary to ridicule social and political norms, is a modern incarnation of classical cynicism. It promotes a form of cynicism that undermines democratic values and leads to political disengagement. Hart and Hartelius contend that satire does not stimulate productive political discourse but rather creates inertia, turning the public into passive observers rather than active participants in politics. Stewart's satire, therefore, "saps [the] audience's sense of political possibility" and encourages a dismissive attitude towards conventional politics (Hart & Hartelius, 2007, p. 263).

Most of the studies mentioned in the preceding paragraphs share two key characteristics: they are US-based, and they primarily focus on TV satire of which *The Daily Show* is emblematic. Indeed, US televised satire has not only inspired a new wave of satirical news across the world (Koivukoski & Odmark, 2020) but has also sparked significant academic interest in the phenomenon, particularly in studies examining its effects on candidate evaluations, political

knowledge, and political participation (Coleman et al., 2009). O'Connor (2017) summarises major research carried out by political communication and media scholars in the modern US political context, categorising the effects of satire into three broad areas: educating audiences (knowledge acquisition), shaping opinion (including candidate evaluation and fostering cynicism toward government and politicians), and serving as a stimulus for traditional political participation.

### **2.5.3 The Importance of Context in Satirical Research**

Although satire is a global phenomenon, its particularities are closely linked to social and political discourse. Even within the same society, satire can adapt in response to political change. Mifdal (2016) shows how, at the beginning of the Arab Spring, Moroccan social media users took advantage of the shifting political landscape, using subversive satire to challenge the regime's legitimacy. However, as the political context stabilised, their satire waned, and their targets shifted from real power holders (the monarchy) to government and partisan politicians. Accordingly, satire cannot be interpreted or understood without considering the political context in which it operates. Tsakona and Popa (2011) aptly highlight the importance of examining political satire and humour within the sociopolitical contexts in which they are created, disseminated, and consumed, as these contexts play a crucial role in forming its functions. While satire can inform, educate, and foster democratic debate in well-established democracies, it can also, in autocratic contexts, be manipulated to marginalise, silence, or divert citizens' attention from significant issues, ultimately steering them away from political reality.

Tang and Bhattacharya (2011) report a case study examining Chinese internet users' satirical reaction to an incident in China in December 2007, when the state-owned China Central Television Station (CCTV) aired a report urging policy makers to take action and purify the internet from obscene and violent content. The report featured a 13-year-old child claiming that "very yellow" and very violent content had suddenly appeared while she was searching the internet. Internet activists quickly took to online platforms, believing that the story was fabricated by the CCTV reporter, as the Chinese euphemism "yellow" (commonly used by adults to refer to pornography) made the child's claim highly suspect—especially given that obscene and violent content does not simply appear suddenly. The researchers observed online forum

discussions following the incident and documented a surge of satirical internet content, including caricatures, jokes, and stories, that mocked the event. Situating the incident within its wider Chinese context, the researchers examined internet users' satirical reactions through the lens of power and resistance, arguing that satire in China can serve as a site of resistance. By creating and disseminating satirical content online, Chinese netizens were challenging the Chinese authorities and exposing CCTV's deceptive propaganda aimed at controlling cyberspace. However, despite the widespread popularity of satire on the Chinese internet, the researchers emphasise that this popularity does not translate into tangible political power. Instead, satire in the Chinese context functions as a form of "symbolic" resistance, providing the public with a means of challenging the ruling elite (Tang & Bhattacharya, 2011).

Unlike the Chinese context, the Serbian situation seems more optimistic. Drawing on contemporary political satire research that emphasises the role of satire in public life, Jovanovic (2019) explores the impact of satire in the Serbian TV show *24 Minuta* and the satirical website *Njuz.net*. Through an audience survey, the researcher finds that these political satire outlets foster active citizenship and political participation and reveals notable observations regarding their prominent functions in the Serbian context. Both the show and the website are perceived by their audience as authentic "sources of factual information", as "honest" spaces in the "farcical environment of Serbia's politics", and as "sources of emotional support" (Jovanovic, 2019, p. 39). In addition, the show and the website serve as unique spaces for free criticism in a country where government criticism and objective media coverage are significantly restricted. In other words, they provide a platform to criticise the government in a political landscape where opposition politics and dissenting voices are often silenced due to censorship (Jovanovic, 2019, p. 40). By creating an open space for dissenting voices, the show and website allow critics to challenge the government and, in doing so, encourage the electorate to vote against its ruling party.

In her longitudinal observation of online political satire in Belarus and Ukraine, Miazhevich (2015) questions satire's ability to challenge power structures in the semi-authoritarian post-Soviet region. The researcher observes fluctuations in the production and dissemination of political satire in the cyberspace of the two states, attributing these shifts to state strategies in

managing new media activism and regime control mechanisms. These include crude policing and the marginalisation of online voices in Belarus, as well as the more sophisticated commercialisation and de-politicisation of grassroots political satire in Ukraine. Such tactics of control influence citizen-produced satire, ultimately diluting its impact and limiting its ability to “trigger offline events” and create “meaningful acts of resistance” (Miazhevich, 2015, p. 435). Eastern Europe has a long tradition of political satire, particularly political jokes that mock politicians and state authority figures, functioning as a form of protest against coercion and political monopolisation. However, such satire, as Tsakona and Popa (2011) argue, primarily serves as “passive resistance and an outlet for political resentment in contexts where alternative views on politics could not be openly voiced” (p. 13).

## **2.6. Measuring the Effects of Satire**

The measurement of the effects of satire has received considerable attention from researchers over the past two decades. Most of this investigation has been conducted by media and communication scholars, who have employed quantitative research methods, experimental designs, and statistical measures to assess the effects of exposure to popular satirical programmes (Becker & Waisanen, 2013). Researchers have investigated the impact of satire on key indicators including learning and knowledge, opinions and attitudes, and cynicism and political engagement (O’Connor, 2017; Leicht, 2023). Although this line of research has produced varied and sometimes conflicting results, it has played a significant role in positioning satire within the broader media landscape. Moreover, it has contributed valuable insights into how satire influences people’s behaviours and, more broadly, political culture (Becker & Waisanen, 2013; Peifer & Lee, 2019).

Baumgartner and Morris (2006) investigated the effects of *The Daily Show* on young American college students, employing an experimental design. In their controlled experiment, the researchers exposed one group of participants to satirical video clips from *The Daily Show* covering two major presidential candidates and their campaigns. A second group was exposed to video clips with a similar focus, but from CBS Evening News’ election coverage. A third group

served as a control group and was not exposed to any video stimulus. All three groups then completed a post-test survey, which measured participants' evaluations of the candidates, faith in the electoral system, and trust in news media. The findings revealed a statistical correlation between exposure to the satirical programme and negative evaluations of political candidates, reduced faith in the electoral system, and increased cynicism toward the media. In other words, those who watched *The Daily Show* were more likely to evaluate politicians negatively and exhibit lower trust in both the media and the electoral system. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that the show may dampen political participation by fostering a sense of cynicism and political alienation among its audience.

Using a telephone survey, Cao and Brewer (2008) studied the impact of satire on political participation among a nationally representative sample of American adults. Their study involved 1,506 respondents, selected through probability sampling. The researchers measured the impact of exposure to satirical shows such as *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* on respondents' political participation. Exposure to satire was assessed through self-reported responses to a question asking participants how often they learned something about presidential campaigns from satirical shows. Political participation was measured across four indicators: attending campaign events, contacting elected officials, joining organisations in support of a cause, and contributing money to a candidate running for public office. Statistical findings revealed a positive relationship between exposure to satire and certain forms of political participation—specifically attending campaign events and joining political organisations. However, no significant relationship was observed between exposure to satire and contacting elected officials or donating money to them. Overall, the findings challenge the notion that satire discourages political participation.

Rill and Cardiel (2013) explored the impact of user-generated satire on political attitudes. Using an experimental design, the researchers tested the effects of YouTube videos satirising presidential candidates on participant's political attitudes. The study involved 321 workers from one of Amazon's companies, who completed a pre-test survey measuring their levels of political cynicism, political information efficacy, candidate favourability, and candidate credibility. Participants were then exposed to satirical video stimuli featuring Barack Obama and Mitt

Romney. After viewing, the participants completed a post-test questionnaire, which included repeat measures of political cynicism, political information efficacy, and candidate favourability and credibility. The researchers used a combination of Likert scale measures of agreement, numerical scales (rating candidates' favourability from 0-100), and semantic differential scales (assessing perceptions about candidates' credibility, such as competence and trustworthiness). Examples of items measuring political cynicism included statements such as "politicians are corrupt" and "politicians are dishonest", whereas political information efficacy was assessed using statements like "I feel I have a good understanding of the important political issues facing our country" (Rill & Cardiel, 2013, p. 1747). Findings of the study indicate that exposure to satirical videos had no significant impact on the respondents' level of cynicism and political information efficacy. However, perceptions of candidate favourability and credibility were influenced by the videos, though not significantly for both candidates. While Romney's scores remained relatively stable, participants who viewed videos satirising Obama rated him more favourably and as more credible.

Becker et al. (2010) explore the impact of satire in shaping audience political behaviour by focusing on audience perceptions about satirical content. The researchers examined audience evaluations of *The Daily Show* in comparison to their evaluations of traditional hard news programming. The researchers draw on the theoretical principle of 'third-person effect', which suggests that "individuals will perceive that particular forms of mass communication have a greater persuasive effect on others rather than on themselves" (Becker et al., 2010, p. 146). The experiment involved a group of undergraduate students who completed a pre-test questionnaire, viewed video stimuli of satirical news and hard news featuring similar content, and responded to a post-test survey. In the survey, the participants answered questions designed to assess the differences in perceived effects of satire versus hard news content on both themselves and their peers (other college students). Perceived effects were measured through concepts such as trust in the media, knowledge about public affairs, and trust in politicians. Findings indicate that the satirical show was perceived to have greater third-person effect than hard news. An interesting result reveals that participants who identified as Democrats were less likely to believe that the show influenced others. The researchers attribute this to the likelihood that Democrats already agreed with the content of the programme and Jon Stewart's viewpoints, leading them to

perceive the show as less persuasive to others. This, in turn, suggests that the programme is “perceived as a partisan program” (Becker et al., 2010, p. 154).

Similarly, Baranowski (2020) examines the effects of exposure to *The Daily Show* versus *The New York Times* newspaper on students’ political knowledge and political attitudes. The experiment involved two identical groups of students enrolled in two introductory political science classes taught by the researcher. One class was tasked with reading articles from *The New York Times* covering American political stories, while the other was required to watch news segments from *The Daily Show*. Both groups completed a pre-test and post-test survey, measuring the effects of the show and the newspaper on general political knowledge, political interest and engagement, views of the government, and opinions on specific institutions and individuals. Surprisingly, the study reveals that students who watched *The Daily Show* did not exhibit any significant evidence of being more interested or engaged in politics. Regarding political knowledge, post-test results show that *The Daily Show* viewers answered more questions correctly than those who read the *New York Times*, reinforcing the show’s informative and educative capacity. However, the results also show a significant increase in cynicism toward the government among *The Daily Show* viewers, in contrast to *The New York Times* readers, who demonstrated increased trust in the government. Additionally, *The Daily Show* viewers expressed significantly lower trust in specific political institutions and individuals, such as the President, elected officials, Congress, the Supreme Court, and political media outlets. Based on this experiment and his course evaluation, Baranowski argues that evidence supporting the idea that satirical shows like *The Daily Show* would lead to more political engagement is merely “anecdotal” and such shows are not “a good alternative to *The New York Times*” (p. 310). His findings build on the body of research that suggests satire and satirical shows lead to cynicism and cannot be a substitution for traditional news media (e.g., Baumgartner and Morris, 2006; Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Miazhevich, 201).

Shao and Liu (2019) examine the effects of satire on citizens in an authoritarian context. Using an online experiment, the researchers employed a sample of 573 young Chinese Internet users, who were randomly assigned to three groups. One group read two satirical texts about corruption and pollution, while another group read formal critical texts from newspapers on the same topics.

A third control group read no text. All respondents then answered survey questions measuring the effects of satire on political trust, political efficacy (one's perceived ability to influence politics), and willingness to participate in political life. The major findings reveal that readers of satirical texts exhibited lower levels of trust in the government than those who read the formal critical texts. Additionally, their political efficacy and willingness to participate in political life were lower than those in the other groups. Based on these findings, the researchers conclude that satire in China is a "road to cynicism" (Shao & Liu, 2019, p. 1), as it reduces citizens' trust, diminishes their confidence to influence policies, and discourages them from political participation. Shao and Liu conclude that in authoritarian contexts, satire functions as a less hopeful mode of political communication, ultimately maintaining the status quo and "help[ing] the regime maintain its survival and stability" (p. 520). This contrasts sharply with its effects in democratic societies, where satire is often seen as a tool for critique, resistance, and political engagement.

Mustapha et al. (2019) explore the influence of political satire within the context of a developing African nation. Against the backdrop of rising political satire in Nigeria's traditional and social media, the study addresses concerns over whether this surge fosters political apathy or cultivates political interest among the Nigerian youth. Surveying 366 undergraduate students from two Nigerian universities, the researchers assess young citizens' perceptions regarding the impact of political satire on their political knowledge and orientation. Using descriptive statistical analysis, the study reveals that young Nigerians largely credit political satire for informing them about politics and shaping their attitudes toward public affairs. The findings also show that the educational value of satire, well-established in advanced democracies, is equally relevant in the Nigerian context. In particular, the study highlights that, in the context of a developing country, satire disseminated through media outlets that exhibit more democratic traits (i.e., social media) exerts greater influence than satire in state-controlled, elite-dominated mainstream media. The researchers conclude that satire holds "pedagogical values" for Nigerian youth and has the ability to "effectively prime them to develop positive orientations and dispositions" towards politics and public life (Mustapha et al., 2019, p. 104).

ElGabry (2014) investigates political satire in Egypt, focusing on the *Al-Bernameg* satirical show, hosted by famous Egyptian satirist Bassem Youssef. The satirical show, which aired during the politically charged period of 2012–2013, combined humour with sharp political commentary, making it a significant part of the post-revolution Egyptian media landscape. Based on a survey of 310 participants, ElGabry's study examines how viewers of the show perceive its impact on their political opinions and engagement. The survey also explores the reasons why people watched the show, revealing that while many tuned in primarily for entertainment, others were drawn to its critical take on political events. Findings indicate that while *Al-Bernameg* significantly shaped audience opinions and perceptions of Egypt's political situation, it did not lead to increased political participation. Viewers considered the show both an entertainment programme and a source of news and political insight; however, its satirical format lacked the capacity to influence "their political activity or engagement" (ElGabry, 2014, p. 80).

Ferre-Pavia et al. (2016) offer a new perspective on the impact of political satire by exploring the different perspectives of citizens and communication directors of political parties in Spain regarding satire's ability to bring about change and disseminate information about political issues. The research examines whether regular viewers of the Spanish TV programme *Polonia* and political communication experts (i.e., communication directors of political parties) share similar perceptions about the effects of political satire. To address this question, the researchers employed three methodological approaches: a random survey, focus groups and targeted interviews with communication advisors of political parties. The research revealed that both viewers and communication experts find political satire in the show effective and influential in terms of its informative capacity. Both groups agree that the show generates knowledge about political life. However, their perceptions diverge regarding satire's ability to increase viewers' interest in politics, change their opinions, and influence voting decisions. Whereas surveyed participants denied such effects, political communication experts held the opposite view, believing that satire significantly impacts people's political interest, opinions, and electoral choices. This discrepancy between the perceptions of the viewing public and the political elite (experts) stands out in Ferre-Pavia et al.'s (2016) research and demonstrates that political satire is context-dependent and "deeply anchored in contextual and critical understanding of politics" (p. 313).

Though not an exhaustive list of scholarly work that has investigated the impact of satire, the above studies demonstrate that it has been a significant area of research. Whether examining the influence of satire on audiences' political attitudes, behaviours, or perceptions of satire's efficacy, these studies present varying results, highlighting that the understanding of satire and its effects is context-dependent. The present study builds on this body of research by examining political satire within the Jordanian context.

## **2.7 Satire in the Arab World**

Satire has long been used for social and political critique in the Arab world. Early forms of satire were poetic, drawing on the flexibility of the Arabic language, which enabled poets to make “extensive use of a variety of devices of verbal wit” (Freedman, 2009, p. 141). Prose satire can be traced back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the work of Al- Jahiz, who critiqued social issues through a satirical approach (Abdullatif, 2014; Kishtainy, 2009). Modern satire in the Arab world has been closely associated with Egypt, where journalist Ya'qub Sannu laid the foundation for political satire in the second half of the 19th century by founding the region's first satirical newspaper (Kishtainy, 2009). Around the same time, satirical journalism was also flourishing in Iraq (Jaber, 2019). During the 1920s, satire thrived in theatre, reached its peak with the establishment of satirical magazines, and continued to evolve and spread to other Arab countries over the years.

Relying on colloquial rather than standard Arabic, the satirical press facilitated greater exchange and verbal dissemination among the public, playing an important role in shaping the public culture (Ibrahim & Eltantawy, 2017). According to Kishtainy (2009), 19th century Arabic and Middle Eastern satire centred on social critique and political defiance, exposing and targeting societal issues such as polygamy, the oppression of women, corruption, feudalism, nepotism, and inequality. Over time, satirising political issues became increasingly popular as a reaction to foreign rule and local authoritarianism. While examples of satire in Arab history have criticised the incompetence and corruption of rulers, the region remains largely undemocratic, with Middle Eastern governments maintaining what Freedman (2009, p. 141) describes as a “medieval

despotic style” of governance. These regimes frequently resort to censorship, bans on media outlets, and, in some cases, violent reprisals against satirists (Freedman, 2012).

Despite its long history in the Middle East and the Arab world, satire has received little academic attention in this region (El Khachab, 2017; Al-Momani et al., 2017). Most research on political satire has predominantly focused on Western democratic societies (Hill, 2013; Jones, 2017; Park-Ozee, 2019), leaving the study of satire in the Middle East largely unexplored. In contrast to its role in the West, Kishtainy (2009) characterises Middle Eastern satire as a form of “civilian Jihad” (p. 62). This term describes a “form of political struggle whose weapons include boycotts, strikes, protests, sit-downs, humour, and other acts of civil disobedience and nonviolent defiance” (Stephan, 2009, p. 2). Furthermore, according to Kishtainy, satirical humour in the Arab world serves as a means of political opposition and nonviolent resistance in authoritative contexts. It is “a lower-risk, nonviolent channel for discussing injustice, defying foreign occupation, and challenging defunct precepts and misrule” (Kishtainy, 2009, p. 63). Focusing primarily on political jokes, Kishtainy provides examples of how satire has been used in the Middle East to give people a sense of unity and shared purpose, while encouraging a spirit of resistance. His view of satire as a non-violent form of civil resistance contrasts with other perceptions that regard satire as a form of passive resistance and cast doubt on its capacity to bring about social and political change. He argues that satire, like other acts of nonviolent resistance, can exert an impact on social and political life, though this impact takes shape “gradually and surreptitiously” (Kishtainy, 2009, p. 54). This conceptualisation of Middle Eastern satire corroborates Griffin’s (1994) view that satire possesses an intellectual rather than a direct practical subversive power, as “there is reason to believe that ideas have power, and that in the long run they can move mountains and topple tyrannies” (p. 158). Thus, satire in the Middle East can be understood as a persistent form of political resistance with long-term effects.

Although studies on satire in the Arab world have expanded significantly in recent years, they remain largely fragmented and context specific. Research has shown how satire has been employed in Middle Eastern Arab countries as a form of cultural resistance to combat extremist ideologies on social media (Al-Rawi, 2016), and how Saudi YouTube creators have engaged with contentious socio-religious issues through popular digital videos (Aldwaighry, 2018).

Television and social media satire in Palestine has been used to challenge political authority and expose absurdity and hypocrisy of political leaders (Sienkiewicz, 2012), whereas bloggers in Lebanon have used irony and visual satire to circumvent sectarian media structures (Riegert & Ramsay, 2012). During the Arab Spring, social media activists in Bahrain employed parodic videos and memes to mock state narratives and amplify marginalised voices (Jones, 2017). In Morocco, Mifdal (2016) shows how social media users took advantage of the shifting political landscape in the early stages of the Arab Spring and used subversive satire to challenge the regime's legitimacy. These studies are valuable in highlighting satire's subversive capacity and its deployment as a mode of resistance. However, they often focus on production and message content, without investigating how audiences interact with satire and perceive its sociopolitical influences.

Although studies of satire in the region are insightful about its functions in various Arab contexts, there is still a noticeable lack of focused, in-depth research on Jordanian satire, and particularly on satirical productions that operate in the country's digital sphere. The limited work that exists tends to focus on linguistic or stylistic features of satire (Bader, 2014; Abu Ayyash, 2016; Albtoush 2020), examine particular satirical texts, such as jokes (Farghal & Shakir, 1993) or cartoons (Al-Momani et al., 2017), or focus on the humorous dimension of satire and its psychological role (Barahmeh, 2020). What remains missing is a broader exploration of satire's communicative role, the dynamics of its productions and reception online and the sociopolitical impact it may have on public discourse. This study seeks to address this gap by examining political satire not only as a text but as a multidimensional communicative event embedded in the specific cultural conditions of Jordan.

Against the backdrop of existing theoretical perspectives and emerging empirical studies on satire in the Arab world, Jordan presents a compelling new context for examining how satire operates within a politically restrictive environment. As discussed, satire in the region has been seen as a form of civil, lower-risk resistance with the potential for long-term sociopolitical impact. Within this framework, *Man Saf Baladi* navigates Jordan's political landscape through online satire, making it a significant case for investigation. Whether the show provides a medium for resistance and real engagement in the country's politics, exerts immediate influence on

audience attitudes and behaviours, or contributes to a long-term shift in the country's public discourse remains uncertain and warrants exploration. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach, research design and methods of data collection and analysis employed in the study to address these concerns.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach employed to explore satire in the Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi* video show. The study specifically aims to address the overarching question:

How does *Man Saf Baladi* employ satire to engage with political culture in Jordan, and what insights do the perceptions of its satirist and audience offer for a broader understanding about its role and impact on public discourse?

To answer this question, the study adopts a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach (De Lisle, 2011; Hendren et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) that examines *Man Saf Baladi* from different analytical and participant perspectives. The chapter begins by providing a rationale for this methodological choice. It then introduces the research design and conceptual model adopted for exploring the dimensions of satire integrated into the study. The chapter proceeds to outline the research worldview that underpins the study and provide a detailed discussion of its methodology. It concludes with discussions on the ethical considerations addressed, and the translation process employed in the research.

### 3.2 Towards a Methodological Approach for Exploring *Man Saf Baladi*

Political satire is a complex and multifaceted form of communication, which manifests various—and sometimes contradictory—functions (Baranowski, 2020; Baum, 2003; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Boukes & Hamelers, 2020; Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019; Jovanovic, 2019; Lee & Jang, 2017; Shao & Liu, 2019). Holbert et al. (2013), for example, argue that political satire integrates various techniques and stances due to its dual nature as a form of criticism and an expression of humour, while Gray et al. (2009) describe political satire as a humorous critique that makes serious judgments on those in power. Similarly, Zekavat (2014) argues that political satire is a critical discourse in which attack, humour, play, and judgement are integral elements, whereas Caron (2021a) emphasises the role of this integrative form of critical discourse in

challenging the political status quo and encouraging societal progress. This complex blend of entertaining humour and social criticism presents a unique challenge for those attempting to understand the nature of the phenomenon. The challenge primarily stems from the paradoxical elements that satire incorporates; that is, its amalgamation of aggression and social criticism on the one hand, and comedy and play on the other (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2020). The complexity is further amplified when political satire operates in the digital media space, where the satirical artifact takes on new forms across various platforms and employs a blend of verbal and multimodal elements. In this digital environment, political satire is not only subject to the conditions of the political context in which it operates, but also to direct audience reactions, engagement, and ratings. The nature of social and other online media allows audiences to respond directly to the satirical production through comments, shares, likes, and other forms of digital interaction, creating a dynamic relationship between the satirical content and its target audience. This dynamic relationship between the satirical production and its audience can influence the ways satire is received, interpreted, and potentially adapted by the satirist.

As introduced in Chapter 1, the focus of this study is the *Man Saf Baladi* satirical video show, which is situated within the politically restrictive context of Jordan. The satirical show operates on digital and social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. It communicates its messages and attempts to engage its audiences and influence their perspectives through a mix of humour and political commentary, while constantly negotiating the boundaries of permissible critique under the scrutiny of state authority. Existing research that has attempted to provide an understanding of Jordanian online satire has drawn on data from the *Man Saf Baladi* show, in addition to other satirical forms, such as political cartoons, comic animations, memes, and jokes. This body of research has focused primarily on the humorous aspect of *Man Saf Baladi* and other examples of satire in Jordan (Barahmeh, 2020, 2022, 2023). While such work has provided insights into the psychological role of satirical humour in the Jordanian social media space, its sole emphasis on the humorous dimension of satirical discourse falls short of capturing the complexity of satire and its sociopolitical capabilities.

Advocating for a communicative approach, Lynch (2002) emphasises the need to move beyond purely psychological approaches to the study of humorous texts. Similarly, Meyer (2000)

embraces a communication-centred approach that emphasises the pivotal role of the audience in humorous communication, arguing that it is “the audience or receiver of the message” who “determines how it is interpreted and what actual function the humour use serves” (p. 310). In the same vein, Simpson (2003) argues that satire is a discursive practice, the production and reception of which involve a dynamic interaction between the producer of the satire, the audience, and the target of the satirical critique. This interaction not only shapes satire and its intended meanings but also influences its broader sociopolitical relevance. Audience interpretations can, for example, either reinforce or challenge the satire, and also potentially shape perceptions of the satirist.

Therefore, a deeper understanding of political satire in the context of Jordan requires acknowledging the complexity of the subject matter and the multiplicity of dimensions that interact to provide and enrich knowledge about its nature and potential sociopolitical impact. To fully understand the satirical nature and potential impact of *Man Saf Baladi*, it is necessary to look beyond the surface-level humour and engage with the show’s broader sociopolitical functions. Satire in *Man Saf Baladi* is not merely about dispersing humorous jokes on social media; it embodies what Baym (2005) describes as a “more profound phenomenon of discursive integration” (p. 262), where the video show navigates a complex interaction of verbal and multimodal texts, earnest political commentary, and, above all, direct online audience engagement. Hence, an in-depth investigation of the show requires a comprehensive approach that considers not only its humorous element, but also the multilayered sociopolitical meanings embedded in its content, as well as its dynamic relationship with its audience.

Furthermore, the producer/satirist who crafts and presents the content of *Man Saf Baladi* plays a crucial role in shaping its satirical nature. The satirist’s ability to navigate a restrictive political environment and still convey subtle critiques of political authority reflects a skilful and clever use of satire. The choices he makes in crafting his satirical output can influence how his satire is interpreted by both his audience and state authorities. Working within a restrictive political environment, his motivations and perceptions add a significant layer to the investigation of the phenomenon and to the understanding of its nature and scope of impact within the sociopolitical context of Jordan. Finally, any attempt to understand and make claims about the potential impact

of *Man Saf Baladi* would be unreliable without exploring the viewers who consume its satirical discourse. Their opinions, perceptions, and evaluations of *Man Saf Baladi* add substantial value to the investigation of the show and the understanding of the phenomenon. These opinions may indicate whether the satire effectively challenges political norms and has an impact on public discourse or simply entertains audiences without provoking any deeper reflection. Understanding these perspectives helps determine whether the satire resonates as a meaningful sociopolitical critique or remains confined to surface-level humour.

There is a growing demand in the academic field of political satire for new research directions and integrative methodologies that draw together areas of inquiry that focus on the features of political satire and its effects on people (Becker et al., 2010; Peifer & Lee, 2019; Lichtenstein & Nitsch, 2023; Leicht, 2023). Taking the introductory discussion into account, the design of this study addresses this demand by integrating traditionally separate lines of research into satire—such as qualitative content analysis of the features of satire and quantitative assessments of its effects (Becker & Waisanen, 2013; Peifer & Lee, 2019)—into a unified, comprehensive framework. Through a combination of content analysis, an interview with the satirist, an audience survey, and an analysis of social media comments, this study synthesises these different research directions to offer a holistic understanding of *Man Saf Baladi* by answering the four research sub-questions, which are restated below for clarity and to frame the methodological approach:

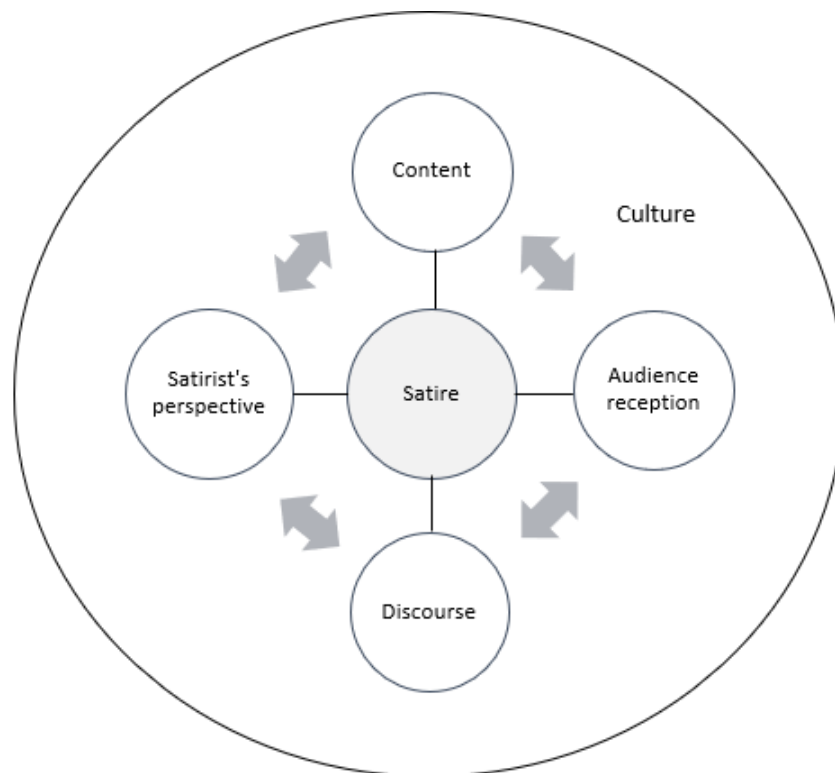
1. What satirical features does the content of *Man Saf Baladi* display in satirising political issues and political actors in Jordan?
2. What key discursive strategies are employed in the show, and how does it utilise them to communicate its messages and enhance the potential impact of its satirical discourse?
3. How does the *Man Saf Baladi* satirist perceive satire, his role as a political satirist in the Jordanian public communication arena, and the impact of his satirical work on the audience?
4. In what ways do viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* respond to the show and perceive its influence on their attitudes, interests, and participation in political life in Jordan?

### 3.3 Research Design

Given the complexity of satire, as discussed above and in Chapter 2, it was necessary to devise a research design that accommodates the various dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation—namely, the video show itself (including its content and discourse features), the satirist who produces it, and the audience who receives it. In order to fully understand the satirical nature and potential impact of the *Man Saf Baladi* show, it was determined that four key components were crucial. These include the content of the show, particularly its satirical features and core functions; the show’s use of discourse, with a focus on its key discursive strategies; the satirist’s perspective, largely concerning how he sees his role and his satirical work; and finally, audience reception of the show, relating to how viewers interpret and interact with it—all situated within the specific location and sociopolitical culture of Jordan. Figure 3.1 represents a visual model of these components.

**Figure 3. 1**

*A Visual Model of the Research Design Employed in the Study*



At the centre of this model is the circle representing *Satire*, which serves as the focal point of the study. The term *Satire* in this central circle not only refers to satire as a concept, but also to satirical artifacts more broadly, including satirical shows, mediated stand-up comedy performances, and other forms of digitally distributed satire. This central circle is surrounded by four additional circles, with each representing a key component that contributes to the understanding of satire. These components are *Content*, *Discourse*, *Satirist's Perspective*, and *Audience Reception*. Each of these circles is connected to the central circle of satire by lines, which indicate the interconnected nature of these elements with satire and signify their capacity to contribute meaning to the overall understanding of its nature and potential impact.

The *Content* circle represents the substance of the satire and encompasses elements such as topics and themes being critiqued, as well as the features and functions that the satirical critique reflects. *Discourse* represents the linguistic means through which satire is constructed and communicated. This includes the specific linguistic and other meaning-making techniques that shape satirical messages at the micro level, while also addressing discourse at the macro level—where satire engages with broader ideological structures, power dynamics, and sociopolitical discourses that shape and influence public consciousness (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 2001; van Dijk, 1997). The *Satirist's Perspective* represents the satirist's own reflection on their role and the ways in which they understand their work, and the goals behind the satire. Finally, *Audience Reception* captures how viewers interpret, engage with, and respond to satire, acknowledging that different audiences may have different reactions depending on their cultural knowledge and perspective.

The arrows in the model further emphasise the interconnectedness of these components. They indicate, for example, how the satirist's decisions about the content, function, and the discursive strategies used to communicate satire are influenced by the anticipated audience reception of these elements. All these components are situated within the broad circle of *Culture*, which represents the cultural norms, political climate, societal values, and contextual factors that shape the creation and reception of satire within a particular sociopolitical setting. In this study, Jordan is the cultural and political context in which these dynamics are examined.

Investigating the satirical subject of the study using this model can provide a comprehensive framework for analysing satire by focusing on the four key components: Content, Discourse, Satirist Perspective, and Audience Reception—all centred around the specific cultural context in which they operate. Methodologically, this model encourages a structured examination of the multifaceted nature of satire by integrating diverse analytical methods tailored to each component.

To analyse Content, thematic analysis (Terry & Hayfield, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2022) can be employed to identify the key foci of the satirical text and determine the extent to which these elements represent the core characteristics of satire. For example, the use of humour as a critique of serious politics within a particular cultural landscape, the specific social and political issues the satire addresses, and the types and levels of targets it critiques can reveal the dynamics and functioning of the satire within its particular context and offer insights into its sociopolitical potential.

In analysing Discourse, linguistic analysis and discourse analysis (e.g., Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Tannen et al., 2015) can be used to investigate the verbal and visual discursive strategies and framing mechanisms employed by the satire. These methods can demonstrate how the text's language shapes meaning, polarises opinions, or legitimises/delegitimises political figures and ideologies. They can also offer insights into the text's persuasive capabilities and its potential to impact the perspectives of its audience.

When examining the Satirist's Perspective, interviews can be used to understand the motivations, intentions, and personal ideologies driving the satire (Odmark & Harvard, 2021; Lichtenstein et al., 2021). These methods help contextualise the satire within the satirist's own cultural and political background, exploring how their social position or personal experiences influence the form and focus of their work. Through the analysis of the satirist's grand narrative and nuanced statements, the researcher can uncover recurring themes that reveal their perspective on power and societal critique, as well as the place of their satirical work within its particular cultural landscape.

Finally, for Audience Reception, surveys and social media analysis (Pardede et al. 2014; Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2017) can be used to gather insights into how the text's audience interprets and responds to the satire. These methods allow the researcher to assess the emotional and intellectual impact of the satire, potentially revealing how interpretation varies according to cultural background, political affiliation, and social position. The analysis of audience feedback, in particular social media comments, can provide a measurable indication of the satire's impact within a specific cultural context and how this aligns with the aims and perspectives of the satirist.

As indicated, the design reflects a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach (De Lisle, 2011; Hendren et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach prioritises qualitative inquiry as the primary foundation of the study, with quantitative methods integrated to complement and enhance the research process (Johnson et al., 2007). QUAL-dominant mixed methods approaches are particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, where the depth and interpretative nature of qualitative methods are essential for capturing the complexities of the research topic (Creswell et al., 2006; De Lisle, 2011; Mason, 2006). This is because such approaches, as Mason (2006) argues, draw more on the principles of qualitative research and offer “enormous potential for generating new ways for understanding the complexities and contexts of social experience” while enabling researchers to expand their capabilities for “social explanation and generalisation” (p. 10). These approaches, in other words, can enhance the explanatory power of research, broaden the scope of inquiry, and facilitate a deeper engagement with complex subjects.

This aligns with De Lisle's (2011) argument that incorporating multiple qualitative methods within a mixed-methods framework allows researchers to capture different perspectives, thereby enriching the analysis and fostering a more nuanced understanding of intricate social phenomena. Similarly, Hesse-Biber (2010) points out that qualitative-dominant mixed methods designs enhance the credibility of research and increase the generalisability of its findings, reinforcing the strength of this approach for social studies that seek depth and broader understanding of a subject matter. Building on these advantages, Gilad (2019) underscores the

necessity of drawing more extensively on qualitative methods than quantitative measures in mixed methods social research to capture the nuances of complex phenomena and avoid “providing reductionist answers to complex questions” (p. 13).

Collectively, these views suggest the advantages of adopting a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach for investigating a nuanced sociopolitical phenomenon such as satire. This approach enables the researcher to integrate methods, incorporate different perspectives involved in the production and reception of the communicative event, utilise different datasets, and apply various analytical techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis (Crichton & Hocking, 2024; Hocking & Crichton, 2024) of the nature of satire and to assess the potential impact of the satirical show under investigation<sup>3</sup>.

Throughout the subsequent sections, this chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research methods employed, beginning with an outline of the research worldview that underpins the study. The chapter then elaborates on the methodology, describing the various datasets, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis employed. It proceeds to address the ethical considerations taken into account to ensure the integrity and ethical compliance of the research process. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the translation process and the measures implemented to ensure accuracy and consistency in translating the data from Jordanian Arabic into English.

### **3.4 Research Worldview**

The methodological approach and model outlined in the previous sections align closely with the principles of pragmatism as a research worldview. Pragmatism is centred around practicality and

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<sup>3</sup> Due to its integration of multiple viewpoints and dimensions that together provide a comprehensive understanding of satire, the approach might also be described as multi-perspectival. Each of the key components in the research model—Content, Discourse, the Satirist’s Perspective, and Audience Reception—offers a unique, yet interconnected, perspective on how satire operates. In this sense the model mirrors the multi-perspectival approach (MPA) of Crichton (2004), Candlin and Crichton (2011, 2013), Hocking (2018), Crichton and Hocking (2024), and Hocking and Crichton (2024) in that it emphasises the integration of multiple viewpoints within a broader cultural context. It particularly aligns with an MPA, focusing on investigating complex phenomena through diverse, interrelated perspectives, which allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

actionable knowledge (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). It focuses on “practical understandings” of concrete, real-world issues rather than on debates over philosophical assumptions about the nature of truth and knowledge (Patton, 2005, p. 153). Pragmatism prioritises practical outcomes and is particularly suited to addressing complex social phenomena, where the focus is on understanding real implications rather than adhering to rigid methodological constraints (Morgan, 2014b). The model adopted in this study, with its emphasis on the practical integration of content, discourse, the satirist’s perspective, and audience reception, is inherently pragmatic. This design prioritises the practical outcome of understanding satire in the sociopolitical context of Jordan and requires methods selected based on their relevance and ability to address the study’s research foci, rather than being constrained by exclusively quantitative or qualitative perspectives.

Pragmatic research paradigms have been widely used in studies exploring social phenomena and research related to social media, particularly where complex and multifaceted issues are involved. For example, Blair (2018) adopts a pragmatic worldview in his explorations of the barriers to the use of social media in support of non-formal learning by secondary education students in the UK. Focusing on practical solutions, the researcher utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods to identify barriers and provide actionable strategies for improvement. Similarly, Almankory (2019) applied a pragmatic approach in his study of Twitter’s role in the Saudi Arabian education system, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to assess how educators and students use the platform. The focus on outcomes allowed the research to highlight the potential of Twitter in education and offer real-world solutions to enhance its effective use in educational settings.

Lockyer (2006) exemplifies a pragmatist approach in her research on the ethics of humour in the satirical magazine, *Private Eye*, focusing on readers’ letters pages published in the magazine and media reportage of libel cases against the magazine. To understand this multifaceted phenomenon, the researcher employs multiple datasets including letters pages, readers’ letters, newspaper articles and authors’ interviews, in addition to multiple modes of analysis, including quantitative content analysis, qualitative composition analysis, linguistic discourse analysis, and linguistic textual analysis. This multi-method approach demonstrates the flexibility and

applicability of pragmatism in humour research and showcases how diverse methods can work together to provide a comprehensive understanding of humour's social and ethical dimensions. Additionally, Petkov (2022) utilises a pragmatic research paradigm in her study on how satire affects millennial political participation in Canada. Although her work does not explicitly label itself as pragmatic, it reflects a pragmatist approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the effects of consuming satire on the participants' attitudes and their political participation. These pragmatic paradigms allow researchers to prioritise research objectives and provide applicable answers to research questions, rather than adhering strictly to either qualitative or quantitative methods. This is because pragmatism does not dictate an ideologically exclusive choice between interpretivism and positivism (Creswell, 2003, 2014; Morgan, 2014a). A pragmatic perspective serves as the theoretical foundation for mixed methods research and focuses on "what works" to address research problems as the centre of the study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 73).

To summarise, a pragmatic paradigm is particularly suited to this study because understanding the satirical nature and potential impact of the Jordanian online *Man Saf Baladi* show is a complex and multifaceted process. The show operates online and is subject to viewers' responses and comments on social media spaces such as Facebook. It engages diverse participants, each bringing unique perspectives that open multiple avenues for data collection and analysis. Reaching an understanding of *Man Saf Baladi*, therefore, requires a flexible and outcome-oriented approach—one that integrates multiple perspectives and different types of qualitative and quantitative data to derive meaning and provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. A pragmatic paradigm enables a practical and adaptable approach to addressing the multifaceted nature of satire, giving the researcher the flexibility to choose methods, techniques, and procedures that best serve the study's objectives. Building on this pragmatic worldview, the study's methodology has been structured to integrate multiple perspectives and different data sources, ensuring a comprehensive approach to understanding satire in the Jordanian context.

### 3.5 Methods

Given the multifaceted nature of satire and the various components involved in its production and reception, this study employed different methods to explore *Man Saf Baladi*. A variety of datasets, data collection procedures, and analytical methods were used, and the following subsections will discuss them in detail.

#### 3.5.1 Data, Procedures, and Analysis

Following the model for analysing satire presented in the previous sections, Table 3.1 identifies the datasets and analytical methods relevant to each key component in the model. They are discussed in detail in Sections 3.5.1.1 through 3.5.1.4.

**Table 3.1**

*The Datasets and Methods of Analysis Relevant to the Key Components of the Research Model*

Key Component	Dataset	Method of Analysis
Content	A selection of 20 videos from the <i>Man Saf Baladi</i> satirical show.	Thematic Analysis
Discourse		Discourse Analysis
Satirist's Perspective	An Interview with satirist AHZ, the producer/presenter of the show.	Thematic Analysis
Audience Reception	A collection of viewers' online responses to the videos of the show which appear on <i>Man Saf Baladi</i> public Facebook page.	Thematic Analysis
	An anonymous online survey of the show's audience.	Quantitative Statistical Analysis

##### 3.5.1.1 Content

A selection of 20 videos from *Man Saf Baladi* was collected as data to address the Content component of the show. These 20 videos were selected because it was believed that, collectively, they would provide a comprehensive representation of the show's satirical content, capturing the broad range of political and social issues it addresses. To analyse the content, thematic analysis was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022). This method was chosen for its ability to

systematically identify and classify recurring themes within qualitative data, such as those present in video content (e.g., Bates, 2021; Ryan-Vig et al., 2019; Zhang, 2022). The thematic analysis of the 20 *Man Saf Baladi* videos was conducted to help answer the research sub-question: “What satirical features does the content of *Man Saf Baladi* display in satirising political issues and political actors in Jordan?” The following discussion further details the data and data collection process, as well as the methods used and the analytical procedure.

### ***Data and data collection***

The video data included in the study was selected from the latest completed season of the *Man Saf Baladi* show at the time of collecting the data. The season consisted of 20 episodes, each with an average length of 10 minutes, and appeared online on the *Sawaleif* website (as well as other social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube) between August 2018 and March 2019. Prior to the commencement of the research process, a copyright permission form (see Appendix A) was sent to AHZ, the producer and presenter of the show, who signed the form and granted non-exclusive permission to include the videos of the episodes as materials in the research.

### ***Methods and analytical procedure***

The 20 episodes of *Man Saf Baladi* video show were accessed and viewed through the *Sawaleif* website. They were then transcribed, translated into English (see Section 3.7 for a detailed discussion of the translation process), and subjected to thematic analysis. The thematic analysis followed the guidelines proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2022) and was carried out through a six-phase process: familiarising oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. This systematic framework allows for a flexible yet detailed exploration of the commonalities within the content of the *Man Saf Baladi* videos. The framework emphasises “accessibility and flexibility” in conducting thematic analysis which allows the researcher to approach data in different ways, including using “deductive” and “inductive” approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 58). It also emphasises the importance of moving beyond the “surface meanings of the data” to interpret its broader meanings and implications (Braun & Clarke, 2006,

p. 84). This focus was particularly suited for analysing the *Man Saf Baladi* video show, which is replete with underlying meanings.

To facilitate the analytical process, NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used. The software proved valuable for systematically storing, coding, and analysing the data. It enabled the efficient management of large volumes of data while providing easy access to raw data, visual representations, and relevant examples during the reporting and writing phases (Dhakal, 2022; Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Wong, 2008).

The analysis followed a deductive analytical procedure (Yin, 2016), in which a set of initial parent codes was defined before conducting an in-depth examination of the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2022) characterise this deductive approach as a top-down process, where predefined concepts, ideas, or topics guide the coding and interpretation of data. In this study, the coding was informed by existing literature on political satire, which identifies satirical programmes primarily by their focus on public affairs, targeting of power, and use of humour (e.g., Baym, 2005; Cao & Brewer, 2008; Edson et al., 2018). This literature provided a framework for identifying key themes within *Man Saf Baladi* and ensured that the analysis remained anchored in established theoretical perspectives.

Three initial parent codes, *Using Humour*, *Targeting Power* and *Engaging in Public Affairs*, were used. The transcripts of the 20 episodes of *Man Saf Baladi* were read several times, and text segments which corresponded to the predefined features were coded into these three parent codes. Text segments within each parent code were then re-read thoroughly and subdivided into relevant child codes to capture the nuances of the data. The ‘Using Humour’ parent code, for example, was subdivided into Verbal, Physical, and Multimodal child codes. The ‘Engaging in Public Affairs’ parent code was subdivided into Political, Economic, and Social Topics child codes. The ‘Targeting Power’ parent code was subdivided into targeting: Individuals, Positions of Authority, Policies, Institutions, and the Political System as child codes. These were inspired by Paletz (1990), who postulates that political authority resides in five levels: individuals, positions, policies, institutions, and the entire political system. Table 3.2 outlines the parent and child codes generated in the thematic analysis of *Man Saf Baladi* content.

**Table 3.2**

*Parent and Child Codes Generated in the Thematic Analysis of Man Saf Baladi Content*

<b>Parent Codes</b>	<b>Child Codes</b>
Using Humour	Verbal Humour
	Physical Humour
	Multimodal Humour
Engaging in Public Affairs	Political Topics
	Economic Topics
	Social Topics
Targeting Power	Individuals
	Positions of Authority
	Policies
	Institutions
	The Political System

During the coding process, the analysis involved revisiting the online links to the episodes and rewatching the videos multiple times, particularly when multimodal semiotic elements—such as music, images, and body language—were significant to the analysis (El-Farahaty, 2019; Ephraim et al., 2016; Nyaungwa, 2021). This iterative process ensured a thorough examination of the video data and facilitated a comprehensive understanding of how *Man Saf Baladi* employs humour, critiques political power, and engages with the country’s public affairs—key features of political satire.

### **3.5.1.2 Discourse**

As shown in Table 3.1, the 20 videos used for the analysis of Content were also examined to carry out an analysis of the Discourse component of the *Man Saf Baladi* satirical show. The primary aim of this component of the analysis was to address the research sub-question, “What key discursive strategies are employed in the show, and how does it utilise them to communicate its messages and enhance the potential impact of its satirical discourse?”. To achieve this, the analysis focused on identifying and analysing the discursive strategies (Kettell, 2010; Mautner, 2008; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983) present in *Man Saf Baladi*. The analysis was informed by the

notion that “discursive strategies” are intentional practices and tactics used in discourse to achieve specific social, political, or psychological goals (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). Following Botelle and Willott (2020), Rodriguez et al. (2023), and Hocking (2015), the analysis of the discursive strategies in *Man Saf Baladi* was also conducted using the coding tool NVivo. The use of NVivo enabled the systematic identification of recurring patterns in the use of discourse strategies across the dataset. The following discussion outlines the data and data collection process, as well as the analytical method and procedure.

### ***Data and data collection***

As indicated, the same dataset of 20 *Man Saf Baladi* videos described in Section 3.5.1.1 was utilised for the discourse analysis. These videos provided the basis for identifying and analysing the discursive strategies used to construct and convey the satirical messages of the show.

### ***Methods and analytical procedure***

The analysis of the discursive strategies in *Man Saf Baladi* videos followed the same thematic analytical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022) as outlined in the previous section. However, unlike the deductive approach employed for exploring the satirical features of the show’s content, the analysis at this stage adopted an inductive, “bottom-up” approach, which is “driven by what is in the data” and allows patterns and themes to emerge organically from the dataset without reliance on predefined concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 58). This inductive process was particularly suited to uncovering the key discursive strategies employed in the show, as it provided flexibility to explore unexpected patterns in the data without fitting them into any “pre-existing coding frame” or “analytic preconceptions” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83).

The analysis, therefore, used NVivo open coding<sup>4</sup> (Barat, 2012; Glaser, 2016; Saldana, 2013), which facilitated the emergence of codes that represented the categories inductively from the “original data” (Yin, 2016). Transcripts of the episodes were uploaded into NVivo software and read thoroughly several times with the aim of identifying texts and segments of texts that

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<sup>4</sup> Further discussion of the NVivo analysis will be presented in more detail in Chapter 5, accompanied by visual representation in the form of screenshots taken from the software during the analysis process.

reflected key discursive strategies. Recurring themes that bore significance to the research question were identified across the episodes, and the process of this open coding resulted in the emergence of four main categories. These were *Titling Episodes*, *Providing Anecdotes*, *Shifting Emotion*, and *Using Metaphor*. Each of these discursive strategies was further analysed to understand their objectives and how they contribute to the satiric discourse of the show<sup>5</sup>.

### **3.5.1.3 Satirist's Perspective**

The Satirist's perspective was examined through an interview and analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022). This component of the analysis aimed to answer the sub-question: "How does the *Man Saf Baladi* satirist perceive satire, his role as a political satirist in the Jordanian public communication arena, and the impact of his work on the audience?" The interview provided valuable insights into the study's subject matter by capturing the personal narrative of the key figure behind *Man Saf Baladi*. Unlike the analysis of the show's content, it offered a direct engagement with the satirist, allowing for a deeper understanding of the working conditions, motivations, and strategic use of the show as a medium for political communication in the Jordanian context. The following discussion provides details about the participant, the data and data collection process, as well as the methods used and the analytical procedure.

#### ***Participant***

The participant in the interview was Ahmad Hasan Alzoubi (henceforth AHZ), the satirist who produces and presents the *Man Saf Baladi* show. In addition to his role in the show, AHZ is the chief editor of the *Sawaleif* news website, where his email address is publicly accessible. He was approached via email to gauge his interest in taking part in the study, and he expressed his willingness to participate in the interview.

#### ***Data and data collection***

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<sup>5</sup>Due to the varying nature of these strategies, different analytical approaches were employed. The analysis of titles was based on their semantic and grammatical forms, while the analysis of anecdotes was based on their tone, discursive features, and roles. The analysis of emotions considered the emotional emphasis of each individual episode, as well as the emotional shifts that occurred. Metaphors were analysed in terms of their source domains.

AHZ was sent a formal invitation letter accompanied by a participant information sheet (see Appendices B & C), inviting him to participate in the study. Following his agreement, he completed and returned the consent form via email. Arrangements were then made to schedule the interview at a convenient time and select a preferred video conferencing platform. The interview took place in mid-November 2021 via Zoom video conferencing and lasted approximately one hour. Conducted in Arabic, the native language of both the satirist and the researcher, the interview was recorded, transcribed, and then translated into English (see Section 3.7 for a detailed discussion of the translation process). The transcribed English text constituted the dataset for the analysis.

### ***Methods and analytical procedure***

Interviews are one of the most commonly employed methods in social research due to their effectiveness in capturing people's opinions, views, and experiences (Weisberg et al., 1996; Creswell, 2003, 2014). They provide researchers with an important research tool as they enable them to obtain data about what people know, do, think, or feel (Robson, 2002). Semi-structured interviews, in particular, provide a balance between structured guidance and flexibility because they enable researchers to address specific research questions while allowing participants to express themselves freely in their own terms about the set of issues the interviewer brings to the interaction (Robson, 2002). They give the interviewer the opportunity to pick up on certain points and develop them further in order to encourage the participants' elaboration on certain themes or issues that arise during the interview (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Furthermore, they facilitate the collection of information on self-concepts, behaviours, imagined meanings of people's activities, and their views surrounding their societal roles (Lamont & Swidler, 2014). For these reasons, semi-structured interviews have proven to be effective tools for exploring satirists' understanding of satire and their perceptions of their role and satirical work (e.g., Koivukoski & Odmark, 2020; Lichtenstein et al., 2021; Odmark & Harvard, 2021).

A semi-structured interview format was therefore chosen to explore the satirist's perspective in this study. This approach allowed the satirist to reflect freely on the major themes addressed in the interview while also enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions in order to prompt the satirist to elaborate and expand on key points. The overarching purpose of the interview was to

uncover AHZ's perceptions about satire and the role he plays as a satirist in the Jordanian public communication arena and gain insights into his rationale for using this kind of critique and his evaluation of its impact on viewers. To achieve this purpose, the interview included guiding questions that prompted the satirist to reflect on these themes (see Appendices D & E). These questions addressed a range of topics, including the specific socio-political issues that the show targets for criticism, the satirist's motivations for using satire, his choice of the online video show as a medium for conveying his messages, and his evaluation of the show's impact on its audience. The interview also explored whether viewers' feedback, particularly online comments on the show's social media platforms, influences the satirist's work. Additionally, it examined the satirist's views on the potential negativity often associated with political satire. Altogether, the questions aimed to uncover the satirist's perspective on the educational, entertaining, and influential aspects of the show, with the ultimate goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the political and social roles satire plays in the context of Jordan and its effects on viewers' opinions, attitudes, and engagement in public life.

The transcribed interview text was subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022) using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. The analysis involved NVivo open coding (Barat, 2012; Glaser, 2016; Saldana, 2013) and followed an inductive analytical approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022; Yin, 2016), in which the interview text was systematically reviewed multiple times to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key concepts emerging from the dataset. This initial coding phase led to the identification of 19 codes. The text within these codes underwent a further process of examination, during which axial coding was applied to organise the codes into broader categories based on their shared characteristics and interrelationships. This aggregation process resulted in the identification of four major themes that encapsulated the core insights of the satirist's responses. These themes provided a structured framework for interpreting the satirist's views and understanding his perceptions. The identified themes encapsulated the role the satirist plays in Jordanian society, the nature of political satire as a form

of public communication, the impact of the *Man Saf Baladi* show on its audience and broader public discourse, and the challenges the satirist faces in delivering political satire<sup>6</sup>.

#### **3.5.1.4 Audience Reception**

In order to analyse Audience Reception, two datasets were collected and analysed. These consisted of public comments posted on the show's Facebook page and responses to an online survey distributed among the show's audience. The aim of the analysis was to answer the research sub-question "In what ways do viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* respond to the show and perceive its influence on their attitudes, interests, and participation in political life in Jordan?". The following discussion provides details about the participants, the data and data collection process, as well as the methods used and analytical procedures.

##### ***Participants***

The participants in this study comprised two distinct groups of *Man Saf Baladi* viewers. The first group consisted of individuals who interacted with the show by posting comments on its public Facebook page. These individuals actively engaged with the show by providing written reactions, reflections, and feedback in response to the *Man Saf Baladi* videos posted on the page. Although their identities were visible on the Facebook page, all identifying information was anonymised to ensure confidentiality. The second group comprised 2,066 respondents who voluntarily completed an anonymous online survey. Participation was restricted to those over 18 years of age and filtered to include only regular viewers of the show.

##### ***Data and data collection***

The first dataset, comprising viewers' online responses to the 20 videos analysed in this study, was drawn from public comments posted on the show's Facebook page, which is owned by the satirist and also titled *Man Saf Baladi*. These comments were accessed to build the corpus for analysis, and were considered essential for understanding how viewers engage with satire and for exploring the discourses that emerge around the show in the digital media sphere. Online comments represent an important form of communication, offering reactive, concise, and

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<sup>6</sup> Further discussion of the emerging themes will be presented in Chapter 6 accompanied by visual representation in the form of a screenshot taken from NVivo Software showing the 19 child codes and their corresponding 4 parent codes.

asynchronous responses that reflect the collective voice of the audience. Such comments can inform, influence, shape, or entertain others and provide insights into social behaviours and collective attitudes (Reagle, 2015). As Locher (2010) posits, online communication is “as real as” offline “real life” (p. 1) communication. Given their interactive and discursive nature, online comments were considered a valuable source of data for examining audience responses to satire, as they both shape and are shaped by discourses that are naturalistic, rich, and emergent. Analysing these discourses provides critical insights into how satire operates in the digital media sphere, where audience interpretations and reactions help contextualise its role and potential impact.

Prior to data collection, a formal request was prepared and sent to the satirist, seeking permission to use the online comments on the show’s episodes in the research (see Appendix F). Consent was granted for the inclusion of comments posted in response to the 20 episodes analysed in the study. Following approval, the comments were manually extracted from the Facebook page using a traditional copy-paste method into a Microsoft Word document. They were then anonymised by removing any commenters’ names that may have remained after extraction and translated from Arabic into English (see Section 3.7 for a detailed discussion of the translation process). This process resulted in a dataset of 1,850 comments, totalling approximately 50,500 words<sup>7</sup>.

The second dataset for the Audience Reception component of the study was collected through a quantitative survey of *Man Saf Baladi*’s audience to explore their perceptions of the show’s impact on their attitudes, interests, and political participation. Surveys are among the most commonly used research methods in the social sciences due to their effectiveness in capturing opinions, trends, and social positions on a given topic (Patriarche et al., 2014). They are particularly well-suited for collecting data from social media audiences (Nielsen & Schroder, 2014). Furthermore, surveys are widely employed in research examining the impact and effects

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth pointing out that the dataset of 1,850 Facebook comments and the 2,066 survey responses represent two distinct groups of *Man Saf Baladi* viewers. While the survey participants voluntarily participated in the study by completing the survey, commenters engaged organically with the show by posting comments on its Facebook page. Although some commenters may have also participated in the survey, the two datasets were collected and analysed separately, and no measure was taken to draw direct links between individuals in both datasets.

of political satire on audiences (e.g., Cao & Brewer, 2008; Ferre-Pavia et al., 2016; Jovanovic, 2019; Lee, 2014; Mustapha et al., 2019).

The survey was an online anonymous close-ended questionnaire, conducted in Arabic to ensure respondents could participate in their most proficient language (see Appendix H)<sup>8</sup>. Prior to deployment, a pilot test of the Arabic version was conducted with three Jordanian individuals who have academic backgrounds in English, Linguistics, and the Arabic language, all of whom were familiar with the show. The objective of the pilot test was to ensure that the survey questions were clear, easily comprehensible, and free from ambiguity. Feedback confirmed that the questions were unambiguous and easily understood.

The questionnaire was created and deployed online using the Qualtrics web-based platform which provides an online survey tool. To recruit participants, the survey advert (see Appendices I & J) and the Qualtrics survey link were posted on the *Sawaleif* news website and pinned to its Facebook page<sup>9</sup>. They were also posted by the satirist on his Facebook page. The survey was published online and remained active for 4 weeks (from 20 November to 19 December 2021) and garnered the participation of 2066 subjects who completed the questionnaire. The procedure resulted in a non-random sample which depended on the subjects “willingness to participate” in the study (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2).

Regarding its content, the questionnaire began with an information page (see Appendices K & L) that outlined the purpose of the research and required respondents to confirm that they were over 18 years old. Since the survey targeted viewers of the *Man Saf Baladi* satirical video show, the first question in the questionnaire served as a filter question in the form of a Yes/No response, asking participants whether they watched the show. Participation of those who selected “No” was automatically terminated by Qualtrics, allowing only those who answered “Yes” to complete the questionnaire. This filtering question excluded 270 attempts to complete the survey. The aim of this filtering process was to ensure a purposive sample of regular *Man Saf Baladi* viewers thereby preventing the inclusion of participants whose responses might be based solely on their

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<sup>8</sup> An English version of the survey can be found in Appendix G

<sup>9</sup> The Arabic version of the advert was posted on the website, which is owned and edited by AHZ, the satirist who produces and presents *Man Saf Baladi*.

awareness of the show's existence rather than their engagement with its content. As Jovanovic (2019) points out, "in order to understand why a certain audience would follow a certain show or website, asking them directly is seen as necessary" (p. 34). Regular viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* are presumed to be familiar with the show's content, style, and themes enabling them to make more informed judgments about its impact.

The construction of the survey questions drew on literature about the effects of satire and asked close-ended questions to examine respondents' reasons for watching satire and their perceptions of its impact. The questions were designed using a combination of nominal and Likert Scale measurements of frequency and agreement depending on the nature of question. The questionnaire was structured into three sections. In addition to the initial filtering question, the first section included seven questions that aimed to explore the respondents' level of exposure to the *Man Saf Baladi* satirical video show. Specifically, respondents were asked how often they watch the show using a 4-point Likert-type frequency scale. They were also asked about their reasons for watching the show, with nominal measures adapted from Masta (2010) and ElGabry (2014). These included being entertained, keeping informed about political issues, liking the show's satirist, agreeing with the satirist's opinions, or other reasons where respondents were asked to specify<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, respondents were asked, using 5-point frequency scales, whether they post, share, or reshare episodes of the show on their social media accounts, if they comment on the satirical content or discussions prompted by the show online, and if they seek further information about the political issues addressed in the show. They were also asked if they consider these forms of online engagement as acts of political participation.

The second section in the questionnaire assessed respondents' level of agreement regarding their perceptions of the impact of *Man Saf Baladi*. These perceptions were measured using thirteen statements, each rated on a 5-point agreement scale. The formulation of the statements was guided by existing literature on the effects of satire and focused on seven dimensions of impact: political views and interests, attitudes toward political entities, political cynicism, political participation, political knowledge, emotional relief, and virtual community. Statements

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<sup>10</sup> The reasons specified by respondents were analysed thematically using NVivo Qualitative Data Management Software.

addressed various aspects of the show's influence, including its impact on the viewer's political views and opinions, attitudes toward politicians and statesmen and political knowledge. Other statements examined whether the show encouraged political discussions, increased interest in politics, spread negativity and pessimism, or detached viewers from serious political engagement.

The third section contained three demographic questions, all close-ended, collecting information about the respondents' gender, age group and level of education.

### ***Methods and analytical procedure***

The Facebook comments were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022), facilitated by NVivo qualitative data analysis software. NVivo open coding (Barat, 2012; Glaser, 2016; Saldana, 2013) was employed, in which viewers' comments were systematically reviewed, with recurring patterns and concepts identified and inductively coded as they emerged from the data. This phase led to the identification of 15 initial codes. Subsequently, axial coding was conducted, in which the initial codes were aggregated into broader categories (parent codes) based on their shared characteristics and interconnections. This aggregation resulted in the emergence of four major themes that captured the diverse ways viewers engage with the *Man Saf Baladi* show online. These themes primarily focused on perceptions of AHZ, reaction to the show's content, reflections on the political landscape of their country, and reflections on the nature of satire and AHZ's role as a satirist<sup>11</sup>. Table 3.3 outlines the codes generated in the thematic analysis of the comments.

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<sup>11</sup> Further discussion of the emerging themes will be presented in more detail in Chapter 7 accompanied by visual representation in the form of a screenshot taken from NVivo Software during the analysis process.

**Table 3.3***Parent and Child Codes Generated in the Thematic Analysis of Facebook Comments*

<b>Parent Codes</b>	<b>Child Codes</b>
Perceptions of AHZ	AHZ as a Truth-Teller
	AHZ as a Representative of the Common Public
	AHZ as a Devoted Patriot
	AHZ as a Saviour and Potential Leader
	AHZ as a Cherished Figure
Reaction to the Content of <i>Man Saf Baladi</i>	Agreement with AHZ's Opinions
	Commendation for AHZ's Work
Reflection on the Political Landscape of the Country	Attitudes Toward Politicians
	Construction of Jordan as a Despoiled Country
	Impossibility of Change
	Optimism and Hope for Change
	Call for Action
Reflection on the Nature of Satire and AHZ's Satirist Role	Satire as Venting
	Critique of AHZ
	Satire as Exposing Deficiencies, Clarifying Political Issues and Raising Public Awareness

The survey data were analysed via the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), employing two sequential analytical procedures: descriptive and correlational. The descriptive analysis was conducted first and involved calculations of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to identify and understand patterns in respondents' reasons for watching the show, levels of exposure, and perceptions of the show's impact. Subsequently, correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between respondents' level of exposure to the show and their level of online engagement, as well as their perceptions of its role and impact. The results were presented using tables, charts and graphs, offering a comprehensive understanding of the survey data and valuable insights into the impact of political satire in the context of Jordan.

### 3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study involved the collection and analysis of multiple datasets, each gathered from a variety of sources with distinct ethical considerations. The satirical artefact examined in the study is a publicly available video show featured on the *Sawaleif* news website, which is owned and edited by AHZ, the satirist who produces and presents *Man Saf Baladi*. The show is also accessible on a public Facebook page that carries the name of the show, managed by the satirist, and is further shared on platforms such as YouTube. Formal ethical approval and exclusive permission to analyse the show's content and the comments on its Facebook page were obtained before the commencement of the research project, as indicated in Section 3.5.1.1. These approvals ensured compliance with ethical research standards and the responsible use of the selected episodes in the study.

Viewers' comments used in the study were publicly accessible on the show's Facebook page which is owned and managed by the satirist. Access to the page did not require a password or user registration. Best practices pertinent to research involving social media data are still evolving. Although these platforms provide new opportunities for researchers, they also present ethical challenges for both researchers and institutional ethics boards (Moreno et al., 2013), particularly regarding whether such sites should be considered public or private and whether informed consent is required for data collection. Some ethics authorities advocate for a case-by-case approach, given the diverse nature of online research topics. Willis (2019), however, suggests that informed consent may be waived when using Facebook data if the content is textual and technically public. Given the large volume of comments involved in this study, obtaining individual consent from each commenter was impractical. However, as indicated in Section 3.5.1.4, consent was sought and granted by the satirist in his capacity as the owner of the Facebook page. To extract the comments, a decision was made not to use social media data mining or analytics tools, as these often collect extensive information that could compromise individuals' privacy and anonymity. Instead, the comments were manually extracted using a traditional copy-paste method and digitised into a Microsoft Word document, as detailed in Section 3.5.1.4. No names or any other identifying information of the commenters were collected. The comments were then translated from Arabic into English, and only the translated

versions were used. The absence of verbatim Arabic comments in the study added a further level of anonymity.

The research adhered to the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) regulations. As detailed in Section 3.5.1.3, the interviewee (i.e., AHZ) was provided with comprehensive information about the study, and his written consent was obtained before the interview was conducted. The online survey was conducted anonymously and included a detailed information sheet with an informed consent statement, as indicated in Section 3.5.1.4. The Qualtrics survey design ensured that participation was only possible if consent was given. No private or sensitive information was collected. All documentation generated during the data collection and analysis processes was securely stored in password-protected files and folders on the researcher's desktop and will be destroyed in accordance with AUTEC regulations.

The research received formal approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) in July 2021 and was assigned AUTEC Reference 21/106 (see Appendix M). This approval encompassed the methods and procedures employed for data collection and analysis for all sources ensuring adherence to ethical standards throughout the study. Another key consideration in this study was the process of translation, which played an important role in maintaining the consistency and accuracy of meaning across datasets. This process is detailed in the following section.

### **3.7 Translation**

Translation was a pivotal process in this study, given that the content of *Man Saf Baladi*, viewers' comments on the show's Facebook page, and the satirist's interview were in Jordanian colloquial Arabic. Translating data is seen as an objective tool through which data in one language can be transformed into another without alteration (Xian, 2008). As Abalkhail (2017) emphasises, translation is a crucial process for maintaining the consistency and integrity of meaning, especially in research involving qualitative data. The process requires both linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness as achieving consistency in translation involves careful handling of terms, idiomatic expressions, and cultural and context-specific references

(Bashiruddin, 2013). This is particularly significant when translating a satirical show such as *Man Saf Baladi*, where humour and critique are often embedded in subtle linguistic elements. Therefore, it was necessary to ensure that nuances of Jordanian Arabic—as spoken and written in the original datasets derived from the videos of the show, the satirist’s interview and viewers’ online comments—were effectively and accurately rendered in English, while preserving the cultural and contextual subtleties of the original texts.

To achieve this, a professional translator who is a native speaker of Jordanian Arabic was selected for the task. To find the most suitable candidate, an announcement was posted in a Facebook group for Jordanian translators. Interested candidates were asked to submit their CVs and translate a short sample of a *Man Saf Baladi* transcript. Selection was made based on the applicant’s experience, competence and the quality of the translated sample. The translator selected was an experienced Jordanian professional based in the UAE, holding a bachelor’s degree with honours in translation and having completed advanced professional training for approved translators at the American University of Sharjah, UAE. To further ensure the accuracy of the translation, random samples of the translated texts were reviewed and verified by another Jordanian translator who holds a PhD in Linguistics from the University of Canterbury and works as a professional translator at the State of Kuwait Embassy in Wellington (see Appendix N for verification of translation letter). Both the translator and the translation reviewer signed confidentiality agreements before commencing work on the data.

The next chapter will delve into the content of *Man Saf Baladi* and examine the satirical features of the show. It explores how the show engages with Jordanian public affairs, critiques power structures, and employs humour as a tool for political critique.

## **Chapter 4: Satirical Features in the Content of *Man Saf Baladi***

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents findings of the thematic analysis of the content of *Man Saf Baladi* videos. The analysis aimed at identifying the satirical features of the show and the critical functions these features reflect, highlighting how *Man Saf Baladi* engages in Jordanian public affairs, criticises power, and employs humour as a tool for critique. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the show and the common universal features of political satire programmes, situating the show within this global discourse of political satire. It then moves on to demonstrate how *Man Saf Baladi* displays these common features through addressing various topics of interest to the Jordanian public, targeting different levels of authority in the Jordanian political environment, and uses various forms of humour as a tool for critique.

### **4.2 *Man Saf Baladi* as Political Satire**

*Man Saf Baladi* is a well-known show in Jordan. Its creator, scriptwriter, and presenter AHZ touts it as a political satire show in the opening segment of almost every episode. The show purports to present a satirical discourse on Jordanian politics as a tool for political influence. In its operationalisation, the *Man Saf Baladi* show was found to exhibit features shared by political satire shows worldwide. These shows are typically identified by their communicative purpose, target preferences and their typical use of humour (Edson et al., 2018). They engage with current political events, “poking fun at politicians and satirising political events” in a country (Kumar, 2012, p. 80). They emphasise “humorous coverage of current issues” and critique of “political figures” (Cao & Brewer, 2008, p. 90). The aim of such shows is to criticise political and social targets while informing the audience of the reasons behind the critique. (Brugman et al., 2021). In their operationalisation, these shows integrate news, humour, and political talk to invigorate a media of “critical enquiry” (Baym, 2005, p. 259). A typical feature of political satire shows is their focus on public affairs and their parody of the regular televised news broadcast style, which involves “a talking head behind a desk with illustrative graphics and video”, as if the viewer is

watching a normal news programme (Edson et al., 2018, p. 141). Overall, these shows have three core functions: entertaining (through humour), informing and educating viewers (through engaging in public affairs), and criticising power (Baym, 2005). The analysis of 20 episodes from the Jordanian show *Man Saf Baladi* revealed that it presents a local adaptation of this globally widespread form of political satire. It features AHZ (its satirist, scriptwriter, and producer) in a basic studio setup. He sits behind a desk presenting himself in a style similar to news readers (see Figure 4.1); however, instead of presenting typical news, AHZ comments on political and economic issues of paramount importance to the Jordanian public in a satiric style that integrates humour with political commentary and blends the playful with the earnest.

**Figure 4.1**

*Screenshot From Man Saf Baladi Show, Featuring the Satirist in a Studio Setup*



As indicated in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.1.1), the thematic analysis of the content of *Man Saf Baladi* was guided by the literature on political satire, which primarily recognises such programmes for their focus on public affairs, targeting power, and use of humour (e.g., Edson et al., 2018; Baym, 2005; Cao & Brewer, 2008). Approaching the analysis with this preconceived notion necessitates a ‘deductive’ analytical procedure (Yin, 2016), wherein the researcher defines a set of codes before conducting an in-depth analysis of the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Therefore, transcripts of the 20 episodes included in the study were entered into the NVivo computerised data management software as project documents (see Figure 4.2),

and a set of three initial parent codes was developed. These three codes represented the major themes of analysis and corresponded to political satire’s main features: using humour, targeting power, and engaging in public affairs (see Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.2**

*Screenshot From NVivo Showing Episodes Transcripts as Data Files-NVivo project 1: Satirical Features*

Name	Codes	References
Episode 1. Panorama of Corruption	15	36
Episode 10. Cabinet Reshuffle	13	29
Episode 11. When the [Dead] Sea Gets More Dead	8	19
Episode 12. Who Holds Whom Accountable	13	30
Episode 13. Isn't Nobody Here but the Nashmi	12	34
Episode 14. You should Know	13	33
Episode 15. Who Are the Country's Dignitaries	14	34
Episode 16. Who Are We and Who Are You	11	21
Episode 17. Who's Next	12	36
Episode 18. An Evening with Razzaz	12	38
Episode 19. Turtles Renaissance	12	29
Episode 2. We Are up to It	13	32
Episode 20. Oh! My homeland!	16	38
Episode 3. What Have We Achieved	13	35
Episode 4. Migrate Qutaibah	11	25
Episode 5. Why Is This Happening to Us	14	39
Episode 6. Where is Justice	7	9
Episode 7. The Outcasts	9	14
Episode 8. Jordan is Ours	10	14
Episode 9. What's Hidden of the Tax	9	15

The documents, including the texts of the episodes under investigation, were read several times and text segments which corresponded with a particular parent code were assigned to that code. After that, the text segments within each parent code underwent a thorough re-reading and were categorised into relevant child subcodes. At times, the process involved visiting the links to the episodes online and rewatching sections of a *Man Saf Baladi* episode several times, especially when multimodal, semiotic elements were significant for the analysis (e.g., music, images, body language, etc.). As shown in Figure 4.3, the ‘Using Humour’ parent code was subdivided into Verbal, Physical and Multimodal child codes, and the ‘Engaging in Public Affairs’ parent code was subdivided into Political, Economic and Social Topics child codes. The ‘Targeting Power’

parent code was subdivided into Individuals, Positions of Authority, Policies, Institutions, and the political System child codes.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 4. 3**

*Screenshot from NVivo Showing the Codes Used in Analysing the Satirical Features of the Show*

Name	Files	References
Targeting Power	20	66
Individuals	11	16
Positions of Authority	5	7
Policies	12	14
Institutions	8	19
The System	6	9
Engaging In Public Affairs	20	32
Political Topics	13	17
Economic Topics	9	11
Social Topics	3	3
Using Humour	20	131
Verbal Humour	20	95
Physical Humour	13	20
Multimodal humor	7	17

The subsequent sections will report on the findings of analysis and demonstrate how the *Man Saf Baladi* show actively engages in public affairs and discusses issues of national interest, constantly targets power and the components of the political system, and creatively uses various forms of humour to serve its critical function. Such characteristics are often observed in political satire shows worldwide and, in the case of the Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi*, are staple features of the show that serve as the grounds for its popularity and potential impact.

<sup>12</sup> This analysis of targets was inspired by Paletz (1990), who postulates that political authority resides in five levels: individuals, positions, policies, institutions, and the entire political system.

### **4.2.1 Engaging in Public Affairs**

Satire generally addresses serious political and social issues (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2020). Political satire shows are characterised by their use of sarcasm and humour to critically discuss political matters (Richmond & Porpora, 2019). Research on the content of these shows in democratic contexts has established their tendency to focus on public affairs and topics of national interest, such as domestic policies, elections, political debates, and scandals involving political figures (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007). Some shows, however, extend beyond the local context to cover global politics. American satire shows, for example, substantially cover foreign affairs and global crises (Baum, 2003). Mainstream media and their failure to fulfil their role in serving the public interest are another common topic. In *The Daily Show*, for example, “a recurring topic is media’s interest in the trivial at the expense of the consequential” (Baym, 2005, p. 268). Similar tendencies are observed in localised formats of political satire in non-democratic countries. Contents and topics of such shows as the Hungarian *Heti Hetes* (Imre, 2012), the Iranian *Parazit* (Semati, 2012), the Serbian *24 Minuta* (Jovanovic, 2019), the Indian *Gustakhi Maaf* (Kumar, 2012), and the Egyptian *Al-Bernameg* (Ibrahim & Eltantawy, 2017) address political affairs and mock mainstream media in their respective countries.

Topics in *Man Saf Baladi* episodes range from the seemingly trivial (e.g., sighting a mouse in a public hospital) to the more politically charged (e.g., the state’s governance approach and public demonstrations). Though events such as sighting a mouse in a public hospital and purchasing a group of electric cars by a public organisation might seem politically inconsequential, their satirical treatment in the show serves as a springboard for addressing more important issues such as inefficiency of public institutions and political kleptocracy. An analysis of the topics presented in the *Man Saf Baladi* episodes under investigation found that they addressed three main aspects of Jordanian local affairs: political, economic, and social. Each of these will be discussed in the following sections.

#### **4.2.1.1 Political Topics**

Political topics address policies, procedures, and acts pertinent to state governance. Topics such as corruption, the government’s achievements, national crisis management, public protestations, labour strikes, the cabinet’s authority, and politicians’ attitudes towards their role and the public

were salient in the episodes. In addressing such topics, AHZ employs important news stories and paramount events that make social media headlines, and comments on them providing his own interpretation and critique. For example, during the season under investigation, Jordan witnessed three incidents of extreme rainstorms and flash floods that swept parts of the country, causing severe damage in Amman downtown and killing 33 people in the Dead Sea and Petra areas. Those events were the prompts for three episodes in which AHZ framed these natural disasters in terms of political mismanagement and public administration failure. The episode ‘When the sea dies more’ addresses the most tragic incident—the Dead Sea disaster in which 21 schoolchildren, who were on a school trip, were swept by a flash flood into the Dead Sea valley (Kershner, 2018). The government narrative on the event, which was adopted by the media, put the school under public scrutiny (Namrouqa, 2018). The Education Ministry, for example, was quick to deny responsibility for the incident (Alsharif, 2018), while statements from both the Media Minister and the Prime Minister blamed the school, accusing it of violating public safety regulations and organising the trip without proper approvals (Alkhalidi, 2018). In the episode, AHZ disrupts the narrative adopted by the government and the national media and shifts the focus away from their attempt to control public opinion about the crisis by presenting a comprehensive interpretation of the event as a repercussion of corruption and embezzlement of public funds which rendered the country incapacitated in time of national crisis. Using strong emotional language, AHZ also censures officials for not taking professional or (at least) ethical responsibility for the death of the schoolchildren. He blends the current event with past instances of infrastructure-related corruption, such as the Ministry of Works building rural roads and driveways for individual officials. By doing so, he amplifies the grievous public emotions engendered by the calamity, and hence shifts the entire responsibility onto politicians, arousing public rage against them and simultaneously absolving school from public blame. The following extract demonstrates a strong, critical tone using interrogatives and exclamations to directly attack the government:

#### **Extract 4.1**

You want us to admit it's a result of the school negligence? Fine, whatever you want. But what about the roads and bridges? Umar Bin Khattab<sup>13</sup> said if a mule stumbled in Iraq, he would be responsible for not paving the road for it. A mule! Not people! Not a nation! Not citizens who pay for everything at the international rate just to live in their homeland. (Episode 11)

In this extract, AHZ's rhetorical questions bring to the fore the poor infrastructure issue (i.e., roads and bridges), presenting it to the public as an alternative to what the government claims to be the cause (i.e., school negligence). Umar Bin Khattab's quote serves as an exemplification of good governance and responsibility in Islamic history. It underscores Islamic stipulation that the duty of the ruling body—as represented by Caliph Umar—is to be responsible for providing safety and to be accountable before God and the nation for ensuring the safety of people. Even providing safe conditions for animals as indicated in the mule's case is the duty of the government. Through this reference to Islamic text and discourse on government duty, AHZ highlights a sharp contrast between an ideal situation and the current situation where the Jordanian government denies responsibility for the death of the students. This act effectively shifts attention from the school's negligence, which—assuming its validity—is a minor issue, onto a more consequential one, which is the poor infrastructure in the country and the government's failure to provide safe conditions for citizens who pay exorbitant taxes. Emphasising the contrast between Umar's duty toward the mule and the Jordanian Government's denial of duty toward the people aggravates anger and encourages the public to question the government and hold it accountable for the tragic incident.

#### **4.2.1.2 Economic Topics**

Economic topics directly relate to the standards of public life and tackle issues of direct impact on the citizens' financial resilience. The Jordanian government's economic approach, including increasing national debt through World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans, selling national companies, the shambolic waste of public funds, taxation policies (income tax, property tax, sales tax, etc.), unemployment, exorbitant fuel and electricity prices, and the resulting severe economic difficulties are regularly touched upon in the episodes. Along with political topics, issues of an economic nature comprise the main topics covered in the show. During the season

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<sup>13</sup> The 2nd Muslim Caliph who ruled between (634-644 AD). He is considered to be the founder of political government and the state administration system in Islamic history.

under investigation, for example, the show focused on a new income tax law introduced by Omar Razzaz, the newly appointed Prime Minister (PM) at the time. His appointment followed the resignation of his predecessor, PM Hani Mulki, who was forced to step down after six days of mass protests. These protests were driven by widespread public anger over economic hardship, rising taxes, and increasing prices that had intensified under Mulki's administration (Holmes, 2018). Upon assuming office, PM Razzaz withdrew Mulki's despised tax bill. A few weeks later—upon the waning of public protests—he unveiled his amended law, promoting it as imperative legislation to achieve fiscal health of the nation, sustain the poor, and realise the principles of justice and social solidarity (Jordan News Agency, 2018). AZH extensively covers the new law (and its legislative stages from a proposed bill to an endorsed law) over four episodes. In the episode titled *Where is Justice*, he presents the law as an unjust means of targeting low-income people. In *The Outcasts* episode, he highlights how the poor—whom lawmakers claim to protect—reject the law. In the episode titled *The Hidden Part of the Tax*, he scrutinises its clauses and explains its ambiguous terms to the public in layman's language. Finally, in the episode *You Should Know*, he interprets the government's insistence on passing the law—despite public rejection and the risk of driving the country into chaos—as a succumbing to the International Monetary Fund's conditions. Altogether, AHZ's discourse in the episodes refutes the government's rhetoric on rationalising the law, dismantles its 'new-tax-law-to-achieve-justice' discourse, and instead presents it as a submissive act of subjugating the nation to the International Monetary Fund's proposals. He presents that tax law as an attempt to compensate for the government's failing economic policies and its inability to tackle financial corruption and tax evasion. In one of the episodes, AHZ states:

#### **Extract 4.2**

Aren't you seeking the interest of this homeland? I strained my voice and popped my tonsils<sup>14</sup> speaking out for the sake of this country [...] Aren't you saying all you will get from this tax is 300 million? Our brothers from the Gulf, have injected one billion in our treasury. Can you leave us alone?! Or is this law tailored there and you must apply it here? Can't you dare to say no to them? Well, this is what it looks like. It's as clear as day! (Episode 9)

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<sup>14</sup> Jordanian idiomatic expression, meaning tiring oneself speaking about something.

It can be seen in Extract 4.2 that AHZ uses rhetorical questions and second person ‘you’ to directly address government officials and question their economic policy and new tax law. His question indirectly drives across the idea that their acts are not in the best interest of the country as they claim. The informal statement about straining his voice and the use of figurative language (i.e., popped his tonsils) humorously communicate the point that his continuous criticism of the taxation policy is also driven by concern about the country. Together, the question and the statement present the audience with two opposing versions of concern about the country: his own, which drives him to speak up and criticise, versus the government’s, which drives them to enforce excessive taxation. He then uses facts and figures to prove his point that the government is serving its own interests rather than those of the nation, demonstrating to the public that the 300 million expected from the new tax is already secured in the treasury through financial aid from Arabian Gulf countries. His questions about the law imply that government officials are not being truthful about the true purpose and effects of the new tax law, and instead of genuinely standing up for the nation and acting in its best interest, they are following orders from outside sources. Altogether, this example presents a contrasting discourse on the tax law. Its presentation in less sophisticated language, combined with light-hearted humour and factual evidence, may be more appealing and convincing to the public than the government’s narrative.

#### **4.2.1.3 Social Topics**

Social topics relate to individuals’ behaviours and their social interactions within a community. Such topics are very common in satire as they spotlight the social faults of a community in the hope of prompting change. However, social topics appeared less frequently than other topics in the content of *Man Saf Baladi* videos. This may be due to a pre-set agenda for the show to use topics that highlight the flaws of governments and politicians while downplaying social flaws, hence maximising deficiencies in the political system and minimising deficiencies in the Jordanian community. This is further evident in how social issues, when addressed, are presented in a non-bona fide manner and embedded within broader topics, serving other purposes than addressing the social downsides of the Jordanian community. For example, in one of the episodes, AHZ pinpoints bus drivers’ negative practices of tardiness, reckless driving, and ineloquent communication. However, this is presented in a context where the topical focus is PM Omar Razzaz’ achievements and AZH’s critique that Razzaz was stalling and making

inconsequential field visits to deceive the public into making achievements in bid to buy time and shelve the serious political and economic portfolios that led to the downing of his precedent. As can be evidenced in this episode, the topical focus of the *Man Saf Baladi* show is often supported through the appropriation of media coverage and the use of soundbites. For example, the episode shows Razzaz in a field visit to a bus station, talking to passengers about the quality of service and vowing for developing public transport and initiating mobile applications. AHZ mocks Razzaz' transportation development discourse, turning it against itself through humorous presentation of the state of public transport in Jordan. He ironically comments:

#### **Extract 4.3**

Public buses are as good as you please [...] and bus drivers are very punctual [...] They don't depart and end their journeys whenever they wish [...] Buses are so comfy [...] Dr Razzaz is now confident that our public transportation is excellent [...] He doesn't know that our buses are the major cause of miscarriage [...] Man, don't you know that only the Almighty God knows when bus drivers depart and arrive? What mobile application are you talking about while half of the bus conductors talk is cuss words? (Episode 3)

Though Extract 4.3 highlights the negative practices of bus drivers and conductors, the address of this social issue is ancillary to the main political topic of the episode (i.e., government achievements), and supports AHZ's humorous critique of the new government that was expected to ensue serious political and economic reform. The show also flags spectating/rubbernecking as one of the social ills in the Jordanian society. In one of the episodes, AHZ highlights the act of some curious onlookers surrounding Civil Defence men in a flash flood rescue scene. The broader focus of the episode though is government mismanagement of natural crises, where criticism is directed at government and officials.

While social topics have a lower priority on the show's agenda, when addressed, they are contextualised in a way that appears to absolve the community from responsibility and directs the blame onto governments and politicians. This is clearly evident in the episode titled 'Why is this happening to us?', which is prompted by a video that went viral on the Jordanian social media. The video shows unruly behaviour of some public-school students on the first day of the school year. AHZ appropriates the event and humorously presents it as a different celebratory act

by a generation that was fed by the government (in reference to an old school nutrition program initiated by the government), raised on the tunes of violence-inciting national songs and the sight of representatives coming to blows in the Parliament House. AHZ sarcastically comments: “schools are for developing and educating- developing muscles to use in the parliament and educating on violating law”.

Like satirical shows within democratic contexts, *Man Saf Baladi* relies on intertextuality, strategically co-opting topics of public interest from various media sources, recycling them, and presenting them to the audience from the creator’s perspective. However, a striking difference is that the topics covered in *Man Saf Baladi* are strictly limited to the local political milieu and state-citizen economic relations, despite the position of Jordan as a major regional player with a strategic geopolitical location and a network of relationships in the Middle East (Barari & Satkowski, 2012). AHZ appears to set a limit for his show and avoid topics involving foreign states’ affairs and Jordan’s relations with other countries. Arguably, this limitation guarantees the show’s continuity, as ‘disturbing relations with a friend/sister country’ is a common charge against journalists and social media activists under the state’s overly harsh counterterrorism law. Satirical critique involving countries and strategic political partners is also less tolerated by authorities in Jordan (Human Rights Watch, 2020). This is evident in the arrest and prosecution of Jordanian prominent cartoonist Emad Hajjaj over his criticism of an Emirati- Israeli deal in a satirical cartoon (International Federation of Journalists, 2020).

#### **4.2.2 Targeting Power**

Targets provide the essential impetus for any satirical discourse (Simpson, 2003). Power and authority are the foci of political satire (Boler, 2006; Jones, 2010; Paletz, 1990), and they constitute the satirised targets attacked by its humorous critique. Political authority, according to Paletz (1990), resides in five levels, and hence satirical targets are classified into five corresponding types: individuals holding authority, policies those individuals identify with, the political position itself, the institution of the position, and the entire political system, “including its dominating ideas and assumptions” (p. 485).

Using the five levels of Paletz (1990), an analysis of the targets found in the content of *Man Saf Baladi* episodes was carried out. These targets are presented in Table 4.1 and will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

**Table 4.1**

*Targets in the Man Saf Baladi Show*

<b>Target Type</b>	<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Positions</b>	<b>Policies</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>System</b>
<b>Examples</b>	Former PM Abdullah Ensour	State officials (mas'uleen) in general	Taxation	Government	The entire political system including:
			Cabinet appointment and reshuffle	Parliament	Autocracy
	Former PM Hani Mulki	Education Minister		Ministry of Public Works	Power monopoly
	Incumbent PM Omar Razzaz	Prime Minister	Austerity measures and public expenditure	Tourism Ministry	Lack of government full authority
	Former Deputy PM Mamdouh Abadi	Representatives Ministers	Privatisation	Amman Municipality	Elitism
	Finance Minister Ezzeddine Kanakryeh,	Minister for Institutional Development	anticorruption Façade	State Media and National TV	Facade democracy and fake political reform
	Energy Minister Hala Zawati,			National Airline	Suppressed freedom of expression
	Health Minister Ghazi Zaben,			Public hospitals	Selective law enforcement
				Meteorology Department	
	Journalist Ahmad Salama			Aqaba Zone Authority	

#### 4.2.2.1 Individuals as Targets

Individual politicians were pervasively identified in the show, with Prime Ministers being the most common targets of AHZ's satirical critique, and the then in-office PM, Omar Razzaz, receiving most of the criticism. Individual targets were addressed through explicit mention of their names and designations or through using clips and soundbites showing them in newscasts. The analysis of political targets found that clips and soundbites were frequently used to accentuate chicanery, lack of principles, absurdity, hollow rhetoric, power abuse, egotism, condescension, and intransigence in decision-making as stable characteristics of the premiers. For example, PM Abdulla Ensour was targeted over his constant assertion of the nonexistence of any corruption during his term. AHZ scoffs at a videoclip of Ensour bragging about his government's integrity before the Parliament and vowing to resign should any corruption be discovered during his term.

**Figure 4. 4**

*Screenshot showing PM Ensour Vowing to Resign Before the Parliament*



Following Ensour's clip, pictures of illegal tobacco factories and confiscated machinery appear on the corner of the screen, with AHZ simultaneously commenting:

#### **Extract 4.4**

What about the tobacco factories? What about their tax evasion, and the big figureheads that collaborated with them, facilitated their work, and collected hundreds of millions? What about their seized machinery which entered the

country tax-free? What would you call this? Lemon mint? Or Tamarind juice?  
Why didn't you resign? (Episode 1)

In this extract, AHZ addresses PM Ensour using rhetorical questions. The sarcastic questions refer to a specific example of corruption in which illegal activities including unlicensed tobacco factories, tax evasion and counterfeiting tobacco brands were exposed and traced back to Ensour's time in office. To the audience, these sarcastic questions highlight the contrast between reality and Ensour's claims about the nonexistence of corruption. Asking Ensour why he did not resign, AHZ implies Ensour's complacency about corruption and his dishonesty and noncommitment to his promises. The power of this sarcastic squib lies in the selection of the clip in which Ensour takes a hand-over-heart vow before the House of Representatives (Figure 4.4)- the place which represents the Jordanian nation and before which any political deliberation, statement or promise should be ethically binding. The video highlights Ensour making his solemn promise while putting his hand on his heart—a bodily gesture that primes the concept of honesty (Parzuchowski, & Wojciszke, 2014). However, AHZ implicitly underscores the fact that Ensour neither admitted the existence of corruption, nor resigned, and hence demolishes his claim of honesty. Altogether, the satiric performance of projecting the videoclip, showing real images of illegal tobacco activity, and AHZ's sarcastic language, present a negative view of PM Ensour in which he is depicted to the audience as a dishonest and deceptive politician who challenges the public with claims of righteousness.

Other individual figures targeted in the show included certain ministers. AHZ targets them through humorous mockery and polemical attack, highlighting their absurdity and irrational rhetoric. For example, he mocks Energy Minister, Hala Zawati over her announcement at a conference in Brussels about Jordan's plan to export electricity to Europe. AHZ sarcastically comments:

#### **Extract 4.5**

For God's sake, does this make any sense? This is just like someone wanting to open a restaurant while his kids are dying of hunger and crying their lungs out all day long. Man! Feed your kids first and then sell! (Episode 17)

In this extract, AHZ's rhetorical question undermines the rationality of Zawati's statement about exporting electricity to Europe. He uses sarcastic analogy to communicate his critical message. The man wanting to open a restaurant in the analogy refers to Minister Zawati's plan to export electricity whereas the starving kids refer to the Jordanian citizens suffering from electricity high prices and recurrent power outage. The analogy, therefore, ridicules Zawati, and underscores the absurdity of her plan, rendering her rhetoric nonsensical and her entire idea groundless. Similarly, Health Minister, Ghazi Zaben's intention to attract patients from Europe was ridiculed by AHZ's sarcastic critique. AHZ addresses Zaben, wondering:

#### **Extract 4.6**

You want to attract patients from Europe, doctor? Where are you going to hospitalise them? [...] Let's assume an Englishman believed what you said and came here for pneumonia treatment. What are you going to prescribe for him? Guava leaves? A cup of Chamomile tea? Thyme? (Episode 17)

As can be seen in Extract 4.6, AHZ's sarcastic questions imply the unreasonableness of the minister's desire to attract medical tourism. Namely, they highlight the incapability of the public health sector to put the minister's ambitious proposition into practice due to the shortage of inpatient beds and medicine in public hospitals. The hypothetical assumption of an Englishman believing the minister's pronouncement and coming to Jordan for pneumonia treatment accentuates the irrationality of the proposition. This is done through AHZ's humorous questions of where to hospitalise him and whether the minister would treat his pneumonia with herbs instead of medicine. Overall, the satiric squib highlights the minister's absurdity and depicts him as politician with nonsensical rhetoric.

Prominent lapdog journalist, Ahmad Salama, was also lashed by AHZ's jocular mockery and sardonic critique over writing a polemic editorial in *Al-Rai* national newspaper describing citizens as 'earthworms'. This slur was in response to citizens asking why the King was away in the United States for so long amidst a major crisis in Jordan. AHZ uses a clip from a TV interview showing Salama narrating a story that in 1992, when Amman was suffering a severe shortage of drinking water, the late King Hussein addressed a cloud approaching from Cyprus

pleading it to come closer and pour its rain in Amman, and Amman had seven whiteouts that winter. AHZ ridicules Salama and humorously spoofs his narrative, commenting:

#### **Extract 4.7**

Do you remember when Amman had no drop of water in 1992? That year Amman was blessed with seven big snowfalls, and the grain of wheat turned as big as a watermelon. My neighbourhood was invaded by penguins. On my way to school, about twenty seals chased me and I was like shoo! Shoo! Yes seals. They came out of Amman's big snowfalls. (Episode 1)

In Extract 4.7, AHZ addresses the audience and uses hyperbolic statements to present exaggerated fabrications of irrational events as a consequence of Amman's 1992 snowfalls. These fabrications parody Salama's narrative and are able to undermine its truth value. For the Jordanian public, verifying Salama's claims is relatively easy, as they can recall that Amman did not experience a severe drinking water shortage and had only one heavy snowfall in 1992. However, the power of the squib lies in its ability to present a parallel humorous story that exposes the falsehood of the original one (i.e., Salama's) and simultaneously highlight its irrational moral that the sky blessed Amman with abundant snow in response to the late King's plea. Overall, AHZ's satiric performance depicts Salama as a hypocrite journalist who is willing to twist facts to court authority. Indeed, AHZ concludes his critique with harsh words and a serious tone, maintaining that "I'd like to tell the Cyprus-cloud guy that the real worms are the ones who willingly accept to be crucified on the trap with their utmost servitude". In this metaphor-laden statement, AHZ suggests that the true disgrace lies with journalists like Salama, who willingly submit themselves to authority and betray their journalistic duty. The "trap" symbolises the seductive pull of power, and being "crucified" on it implies surrendering integrity in exchange for favour or approval. This criticism, while directed at Salama, also extends to the national media he represents, particularly media figures who abandon their mediatic role and align themselves with authority at the expense of truth and public accountability.

#### **4.2.2.2 Positions of Authority as Targets**

Many of AHZ's skits targeted positions of authority without direct reference to their individual holders. This was discursively done through using the non-specific term 'mas'ul' (official), which was found to be a ubiquitous target in AHZ's satirical discourse. Throughout his critique,

AHZ constructs a very negative image of the Jordanian ‘mas’ul (plural: mas’uleen), presenting authority positions as incapacitated, corrupt, and detached from the country and its people’s interest. For instance, in one of the episodes he states:

**Extract 4.8**

If I had faith that the *officials* are working for its best interest, I would’ve spent my time toasting bread on the kerosene heater and peeling oranges while lying down wrapped in my wool cloak. (Episode 14)

In this extract, the satirist targets authority positions in general using the generic term ‘officials’ (Arabic: mas’uleen) and thus characterising all political positions as doing disservice to the country. Using a counterfactual conditional, he attributes an ironic outcome (i.e., toasting bread, peeling oranges, etc. implying peace of mind) to a serious notion (faith in political officials). His hypothetical construction of the message communicates the opposite of what is expressed; that is, he is concerned because officials are working against the country’s interest. Indeed, elsewhere in the episode, he amplifies the message using indicative mood, stating in a very serious tone, that his worry scares him because officials drained the country’s resources. By virtue of its Arabic meaning and normative use, the term ‘mas’ul’ (official) refers to any position holder who is vested with authority and is responsible for others. Hence the term can virtually include a wide array of political positions, ranging from low-ranking officials such as chiefs of public departments to the head of the state. Targeting the ambiguous ‘mas’ul’ (official), which does not designate a particular position, can be seen as a strategy through which the satirist criticises all component positions of the political system without jeopardising himself<sup>15</sup>.

However, specific positions with identifiable referents such as the PM, representatives, and ministers are also common targets in the show. In an example of this critique of authority where the focus targets the position rather than the person, AHZ uses a skit to mock the position of Institutional Development Minister upon its introduction as a replacement for a former Public Sector Development Minister position in the cabinet (yet held by the same person). In the skit, AHZ states the United States, which has a four trillion-dollar budget, doesn’t have a Minister for

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<sup>15</sup> In monarchies like Jordan, the monarch’s position is beyond reproach (Kuttab, 2021b) and criticising the monarch is subject to arrest and prosecution under the Lese Majeste law.

Institutional Development, a point at which he makes the mocking gesture of pulling hair bangs from his face (see Figure 4.5) and makes the sarcastic expression ‘yahumalali’ (close to English ‘my, oh, my’). The implication of these actions can be interpreted as a questioning of the ministerial position and the difference that a change of the position’s name from ‘public’ to ‘institutional’ would make.

**Figure 4.5**

*Screenshot Showing AHZ Mocking Gesture Targeting Institutional Development Minister Position*



The satirical skit— with AHZ’s mocking gesture (which is associated with women) and the slang ‘yahumalali’, often used to poke fun at a ‘disappointing situation’ (Rum, 2018)—undermines the ministerial position at the core by ridiculing the rationale for its existence. For the Jordanian viewer who knows that both old and new ministerial positions were held by a sophisticated female minister, it is quite unequivocal to deduce the idea that the ministerial position was solely created to keep a beautiful woman in the cabinet.

#### **4.2.2.3 Policies as Targets**

Policies feature on a large scale as targets of critique in the *Man Saf Baladi* show. Indeed, actions and decisions by political actors along with the political institutions responsible for running the state were found to provide a perpetual impetus for AHZ’s satirical critique as he aims to draw attention to the state corruption that exists rather than its anti-corruption claims. Economic

policies, the way governments are formed and changed, and anticorruption are the most salient targets. For instance, the Jordanian governments' anticorruption is mocked by AHZ and sarcastically represented as an entertainment activity. Given that the figureheads of four major corruption cases have fled the country over the past two decades, AHZ mocks the government's anticorruption efforts. He states ironically that the new trend in fighting corruption seems to be letting the corrupt take a tour of Europe, stop by Marmaris for some Adana kebab to gain some weight, and then catch them. Elsewhere AHZ states that "this is the way we do things for combating corruption. We like it this way; we like to set the corrupt free first and then hunt them down, as if we're hunting sparrows". AHZ's humorous mockery undermines the governments' anticorruption policies (as well as their anticorruption discourse) and consolidates the notion of the unserious anticorruption enterprise in the mind of the Jordanian viewer, who is already familiar with cases in which corruption figureheads are not brought to justice by governments despite being convicted by judicial bodies (see Dihmis, 2022).

#### **4.2.2.4 Institutions as Targets**

Many institutions are targeted in AHZ's satire, with the most significant being the Government (including its executive bodies) and the Parliament. Both are satirically depicted as institutions lacking de facto power despite their considerable purported constitutional de jure authority.

While the Government is depicted as an institution incapable of exercising its full constitutional jurisdiction, the Parliament is portrayed as a rubber-stamp institution with a decorative role in the Jordanian political system. In one of his squibs, AHZ describes the Parliament as the House of the 'Mutee'een' (plural of mutee'a, meaning acquiescent) and the 'Mutee'ians' (eponym of the name Mutee). While the lexical pun is an innuendo that associates the parliament with corruption (by associating its members to tobacco tycoon Awni Mutee), it also clearly implies its submissiveness to other mysterious powers. In another squib, AHZ describes the parliament as a call centre:

#### **Extract 4.9**

You mentioned 'political reform'. What kind of political reform are you talking about when your election law yields nothing but call centre operators? Hello, wake up! Hello, vote! Hello, be absent! (Episode 14)

In this extract, AHZ addresses PM Omar Razzaz, referring to a media appearance in which Razzaz stressed political reform as a priority for his government. AHZ uses a rhetorical question to cast doubt on political reform proposed by the government which maintains a gerrymandering election law that transpires a weak Parliament— ‘call centre operators’ in AHZ’s terms. The ‘call centre operators’ expression suggests a politically facile role limited to following orders communicated through phone calls. The nature of the phone calls, as illustrated by the ‘hello + order’ formula, implies the unidentified caller’s interference in the Parliament Members’ performance in the Parliament House. Whereas the ‘wake up’ order alludes to some members’ common practice of falling asleep during convened sessions, ‘vote’ and ‘be absent’ orders imply the caller’s interference in core political acts exercised in the Parliament – namely, passing bills and failing quorums respectively. Overall, the satiric message communicates the idea of a mysterious power in the system interfering in the Parliament’s role. This mysterious power seizes the Parliament’s authority, rendering the House as a subservient institution whose members are ineffective and devoid of political freewill.

#### **4.2.2.5 The Political System as a Target**

Given the various targets of attack and the show’s satirical focus, *Man Saf Baladi* can be seen as a critique of Jordan’s political system. Throughout the episodes, the show presents a Jordanian political system that, through its actors, processes, and structure, is incompetent, unjust, and uncaring about its people—a system that monopolises power, encourages elitism, biases law, and suppresses freedom of expression; a system that is above all corrupt. Through his satirical jokes and earnest comments AHZ sabotages official allusions about Jordan’s democracy and social justice. This is, however, done with AHZ’s awareness of the serious risk that satirical critique (and perhaps political critique in general) might pose to its creator in non-democratic environments. AHZ’s avoidance of direct satirical attack on certain institutions and individuals that make up the political system (i.e., the monarchy and the monarch) might be seen as a coping strategy through which he avoids prosecution under Lese Majeste—a law which, Ward (2022) argues, is enforced in Jordan to maintain the monarch’s wide-ranging power over the appointment and direction of the government. Despite their absence as explicit targets in the show, the monarchy and the monarch might still not escape AHZ’s focus, nor might they be

spared in his implicit allusions and attacks on ‘the nahj’ (the approach) and the recurring generic target ‘mas’ul’ (official). Only the satirist himself can confirm these implications.

### **4.2.3 Using Humour**

Humour is a universal phenomenon that “permeates every social context” (Lynch, 2002, p. 423). It touches on shared themes in all societies, such as politics, race, religion, and gender (Shifman, 2007). Humour is intertwined with the media (Ermida & Chovanec, 2012) and is a staple component of political satire (Richmond & Porpora, 2019; Caron, 2020). It renders political discourse enticing to audiences and enhances their engagement in politics (Tsakona & Popa, 2011). It also facilitates individuals’ mentalising, remembering and sharing of political information (Coronel et al., 2021). At its fundamental level, humour is a communicative activity that involves “messages interpreted as funny” (Lynch, 2002, p. 423) and serves to amuse and display cleverness or incongruity (Andrew, 2012). The power of humour as an influential discursive tool lies in its ability to have a persuasive role (Pacheco & Meyer, 2021). However, humour serves other rhetorical and social functions. Basically, its enactment in communication outlines social boundaries and can divide or unify people (Meyer, 2000). Humour, thus, can build rapport by identifying communicators with their audience, leading to enhance their credibility. Communicators also employ humour to instil their ideas into appealing discourse that helps clarify issues and stances (Meyer, 2000). In the same vein, humour is assigned a social corrective function (Tsakona & Popa, 2011). Since it is used to critique unacceptable norms, it supports social control based on the values and standards of a particular society. By identifying departure from acceptable norms, humour “highlight[s] the social boundaries between in-group and out-group members (Tsakona & Popa, 2011, p. 4). In other words, humour reinforces the bond between people who agree on the target of humour while at the same time increasing the gap between them and those who do not share the same attitude towards the target.

In political contexts, humour is often interwoven into political discourse. To be produced, processed, and interpreted it requires knowledge of the political context. People thus employ political humour as “an instrument to make a point, attack indirectly or voice the unspeakable” (Ermida & Chovanec, 2012, p. 1). They highlight “the inconsistencies and inadequacy of political decisions and acts, and the incompetence, recklessness, and corruption of politicians”

(Tsakona & Popa, 2011, p. 6). In other words, people often indicate their engagement in politics through use of humour.

Given the central role of humour in satire, it was not unexpected for humour to be prevalent in the *Man Saf Baladi* show, with 131 instances identified in the content of the episodes under investigation. Various forms of humour were used in the show, with some indirectly referred to in the previous sections. Nevertheless, the analysis found that the humour enacted in *Man Saf Baladi* could be categorised as verbal, physical, as well as multimodal. Before delving into these categories, it is worth pointing out that due to the complexity of humour as communicative practice, its operation may involve multiple mechanisms at play in a discourse (Berger, 1993). Therefore, although the humorous mechanisms used in the show are discussed in separate categories below, they inevitably overlap with one another to various degrees. This is particularly the case with physical and multimodal humour which work in tandem with other verbal mechanisms.

#### **4.2.3.1 Verbal Humour**

Verbal humour refers to humour “expressed through language” as opposed to other modes like facial expressions, gestures, images, etc. (Attardo, 2020, p. 177). This type was found to be the most salient in the show and was expressed through various mechanisms, such as wordplay, overstatement/understatement, invective, sarcasm, parody, irony, anecdote, and unscripted or spontaneous verbal exchanges.

Verbal humour in the show stemmed from the satirist’s ironic, sarcastic, parodic, and narrative treatment of issues as well as his use of lexical forms. AHZ was found to use language techniques such as malapropism, innuendo (double entendre), slips of the tongue, and peculiar expressions to create a humorous effect. While in some cases, humour arises from creative wordplay, in other cases it stems from the peculiarity or unexpected use of language in the show. For instance, the play on the words ‘Mansaf baladi’<sup>16</sup> (traditional dish) and ‘Mutee’ (surname of corruption figurehead) creates malapropisms and innuendos that, while humorous, also convey deeper ideas. The former points to kleptocracy of the country’s resources when interpreted as

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<sup>16</sup> A comprehensive discussion on the wordplay in ‘mansaf baladi’ (which constitute the title of the show) and its function is provided in Chapter 5 within Section 5.2.2.1 Titling Episodes.

*‘Man Saf Baladi?’* (Who gobbled my country?), and the latter points to submissiveness of the Parliament Members when describing them as the ‘Mutee’een’(acquiescent) and to their connection with corruption when described as the ‘Mutee’ians’ (plural eponym of the name Mutee).

In another example of verbal humour, AHZ comments on PM Razza’s talk on the national budget using the polysemous phrase ‘Ejri bhadeethak’. Humour here is invoked by the satirist’s creative collocation of the word ‘ejri’ (‘continue’ in standard Arabic; ‘my foot’ in colloquial Jordanian) with the phrase ‘bhadeethak (your talk), creating the double entendre, which can mean ‘continue your talk’ and ‘my foot your talk’ simultaneously. While the former is an innocent invitation for the PM to carry on his talk, the latter can be a caustic, disparaging, laughter-sparking critique that irrationalises the PM’s talk and undermines his discourse on the budget. The invective equating of the satirist’s lowest body part (i.e., his foot) with the PM’s talk can be seen (when resolved by the audience) as a humorous way of diffusing the idea that the PM’s discourse on the budget is invalid and nonsensical. Similarly, AHZ uses invective humour stating ‘when Razzaz appears in the media [...] he gives me renal colic; I get ‘taqrita’ (lientery)’. Humour in this sarcastic comment is invoked by the uncommon word ‘taqrita’. The word is so peculiar that it creates a situational humorous reaction in the studio, where a crew member behind the scenes is heard asking what ‘taqrita’ means. AHZ laughingly responds, ‘Ishaal’ (diarrhoea) and all crew laugh. By using an unusual expression representing a gross bodily malfunction and attributing it to exposure to the PM’s talk, AHZ seeks to disparage the validity of the PM’s discourse in the media.

#### **4.2.3.2 Physical Humour**

Physical humour is a non-verbal, action-based type of humour. It is expressed through mechanisms such as facial expressions, grimaces, clumsy movements, and unusual sounds, and it requires less cognitive processing to be understood (Juckel et al., 2016). This type was found to be associated with verbal humour and manifested through the satirist’s use of funny physical movements and gestures.

**Figure 4. 6**

*Screenshot of AHZ Using Physical Humour Technique to Poke Fun at PM Hani Mulki*



AHZ uses physical humour to poke fun at politicians and ridicule their political discourse. As shown in Figure 4.6, AHZ is seen turning to an inserted video screen. The inserted video shows former PM Hani Mulki talking about combating corruption and tax evasion. AHZ pulls a face, puts his hand above his eyes, and jeeringly wonders “who’s talking about tax evasion? You? Who exempted Awni Mutee from 150 million and reduced his payable tax from 155 to 5 million?”. The humour here stems from the unexpected use of the gesture, given the proximity between the satirist and the projected image of the PM. The placement of the hand over the eyes, a gesture often employed when looking at distant objects in the blinding sunlight, is used by AHZ to poke fun and demean the PM, and to ultimately question the validity of his discourse by constructing him as a blinding object that conceals the truth. Indeed, following the humorous gesture, AHZ verbally presents facts that run counter to the PM’s discourse on taxation.

Whereas the above example illustrates a disparaging kind of physical humour with the potential of simultaneously invoking viewers’ mirth and serving, discursively, to discredit politicians and undermine their political discourse, physical humour was also observed to be used innocuously throughout the *Man Saf Baladi* show; hence lending the show a humorous touch and an entertaining appeal. In such instances, AHZ is seen using vigorous body language benignly to amuse the audience or making gestures to poke less harmful fun at individual targets’

idiosyncrasies. His non-verbal performance, accompanying his description of China's national budget in Extract 4.10 provides an example of physical humour with entertaining intent:

**Extract 4.10**

It's 22 digits. As if it's a chassis number. I kept setting off digits with commas. I was like 3 digits, comma, 3 digits, comma, 3 digits comma, until it reached this long; half metre! (Episode 10)

AHZ supports this statement with a series of clumsy-looking, humorous gestures. For example, he bends his head forward, writes with his finger in the air, and makes measurements with his hands (see Figure 4.7).

**Figure 4.7**

*Consecutive Screenshots showing AHZ Demonstrating China's Budget with Clownish Body Language*



In another segment, in which he parodies an interview with PM Omar Razzaz, AHZ is seen clapping his hands and blowing a whistle with his fingers (see Figure 4.8). This humorous situation starts with AHZ pretending to ask the PM if the election law will change. Following the question, a short clip showing the PM staring blankly is projected, at which AHZ claps and whistles in a playful performance. This physical display is perceived as a humorous signal to attract the PM's attention and bring him back to focus. Using such a physical technique, AHZ exaggerates the PM's empty gaze and delayed response, and resultingly invokes the viewers' pleasure over the PM's idiosyncratic behaviour.

**Figure 4.8**

*Consecutive Screenshots Showing AHZ Blowing a Whistle to Draw the PM's Attention*



Such light-hearted, clownish physical humour might be perceived as lacking any earnest political judgement and may only serve to create an enjoyable atmosphere and draw the audience into the show. In other words, AHZ's use of physical humour, for the most part, might have been designed to foster a stronger connection between the satirist and his audience, and thus make the latter more receptive to the other more serious messages occurring in the show.

#### **4.2.3.3 Multimodal Humour**

The multimodal humour found in the show employed communicative modes other than verbal or body language, and mainly used the modes of image, animation, and music. These were not part of the show's core structure and were found to be used in combination with linguistic resources to enhance the humour in AHZ's critique. For example, AHZ uses images of vehicles to critique the government's poor response during flash floods that hit the touristic city, Petra. Following AHZ's serious suggestions for spreading alerts to people in hazardous areas, a pickup animation appears on the screen, driving and pulling over on the desk in front of him. AHZ then comments 'concerning tourism, kiss goodbye to tourism [...] because transportation there was a 4-star service'. At this moment he points to the screen corner where a picture appears (see Figure 4.9). The picture shows a group of tourists being evacuated in the back of an old pickup.

**Figure 4.9**

*Screenshot Showing AHZ pointing to an image of a Group of Tourists Evacuated in a Pickup Box*



The situation invokes humour through creating incongruity between the viewer's conception of '4-star service' (which would normally activate a conceptual image of a fancy, comfortable coach) and the real picture of the vehicle used in the evacuation, which is contrary to expectation. By combining such a humorous image with verbal mockery, AHZ presents an entertaining experience to the audience through which they can laugh at the contradiction between reality and the government statements, while at the same time refute the government's allegations of professional response to the crisis and the proper evacuation of tourists.

In a similar use of multimodal humour, the image of former PM Hani Mulki was used by AHZ as a humorous commentary on his justification for the government's failure to investigate the leader of an illegal tobacco operation during his tenure. Mulki's explanation was that the investigation could alert other corrupt individuals and put the government's anti-corruption efforts at risk. Using explicit sarcasm, AHZ commends the PM's ingenuity before turning to his inserted image and addressing it stating, "I can't get the better of you, Conan! Where did you get this genius from?! May God protect you from the evil eye!". The image shows Mulki in a formal suit, wearing black sunglasses; a look reminiscent of the stereotypical image of private detectives (see Figure 4.10). Humour in this situation is invoked by AHZ's sarcasm, especially in

addressing Mulki ‘Conan’, which refers to a popular anime character known for its detective skill, ingenuity, and sharp intellect.

**Figure 4.10**

*Screenshot of AHZ Addressing an Image of PM Hani Mulki*



The humorous effect culminates with the display of Mulki’s detective-like image, which often symbolises sharp intellect. However, the image generates tension between the projected smart persona and its naive logic of not exposing a major corruption case, lest other corrupt individuals become alarmed. Altogether, the multimodal presentation of the issue can be seen as a creative discursive technique for highlighting the PM’s absurdity and lack of sound political judgement; however, at the same time it brings joy to the audience.

Music was also found to be employed in the show for creating humour and contributing to AHZ’s humorous treatment of topics. For instance, an episode that tackles fuel prices starts with the beat of an energetic piece of fast-tempo music in the background, with AHZ synchronously stating, ‘on behalf of the *Man Saf Baladi* team and myself, I’d like to congratulate the great, valiant Jordanian people on the occasion of Razzaz’s government showing sympathy and stabilising fuel prices until September’. The rhythm of the music peaks as he articulates the clause ‘I’d like to congratulate the valiant Jordanian people’, creating a sense of suspense and excitement. The musical climax conveys a sublime moment, as if articulating a grand occasion, before it gradually fades into the ironic ‘wah wah waaaah’ beat as AHZ states that ‘Razzaz’s government shows sympathy and stabilising fuel prices until September’. The creative use of

music (combined with the verbal performance of the satirist) creates a humorous bathos in which an epic atmosphere (established through music and language) suddenly descends into ludicrous content. The mismatch between the viewers' initial expectation and what they eventually hear incites a humorous moment in which the viewer laughs at the frivolity of the government decision. By using such a combination of language and music, the satirist debases the government decision and trivialises its effect while at the same time engaging his audience with a compelling experience.

In combination with the other humorous mechanisms, multimodal humour in the *Man Saf Baladi* show is used to critique and subvert the dominant political discourse and expose the inadequacies and absurdity of political actors. Altogether verbal, physical, visual, or musical, humour in the show can be seen as a powerful discursive tool at the satirist's disposal. It allows AHZ to explore complex and serious political issues and disperse his ideas about the Jordanian political landscape in a way that is accessible and engaging for the audience. Using a mixed bag of good-spirited albeit harsh humour, AHZ engages himself and his audience in politics, providing a respite from the often-serious political landscape. It could be argued that his political humour attempts to discredit politics and politicians and undermine their dominance, while at the same time affect the ideological orientation of his audience.

### **4.3 Concluding Discussion**

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate *Man Saf Baladi* as a political satire that engages in serious public affairs, challenges power, and uses humour as a tool for political critique. Such findings provide insights into the practice and nature of political satire within the unique political context of Jordan, which presents a distinct political environment. The country could arguably be considered one of the most democratic in the Middle East (Wiktorowicz, 1999) in which political satire is more tolerated than in any of its Arab neighbours (Freedman, 2009). However, the country's real democracy is weak; freedom of expression is questionable, and the system is often indexed as non-democratic and authoritarian<sup>17</sup>. The objective of the

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<sup>17</sup> See Democracy Index (2021) and Freedom House (2022).

analysis in this chapter was to highlight the satiric features of the renowned Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi* show and ultimately draw conclusions about its potential implications as a political satire operating within the context of Jordan.

The chapter demonstrates that *Man Saf Baladi*'s creative use of humour serves as a central feature of the show's satire. The various humour mechanisms identified in the analysis enable the show to criticise power and provide an entertaining experience. AHZ utilises verbal, non-verbal, and multimodal humour to mock and ridicule, and highlight absurdities and incongruities within the Jordanian political landscape. The show strategically incorporates humorous language, visuals, animations, and sound effects to reinforce AHZ's satirical viewpoints and add an extra layer of amusement for the audience. This effective use of humour in the show seems to serve multiple functions. Firstly, it engages the audience through presenting complex politics in a digestible and entertaining manner. Humour in this way acts as a bridge between the satirical critique and the viewers, facilitating their understanding and encouraging their active participation in political discourse. This comedic approach not only entertains but also educates, as it prompts viewers to critically reflect on Jordanian politics and its shortcomings.

Secondly, humorous critique of the various components of the political system (i.e., political figures, institutions, positions, and policies) provides a platform for expressing dissent. By using humour to expose deficiencies and challenge the political status quo, *Man Saf Baladi* show offers a means of empowerment for viewers who may feel powerless in the face of political realities. Humour, as Paletz (1990) maintains humour "enable[s] people to confront authority, to diminish it, reduce its distance and majesty, thereby revealing authority-holders as imperfect mortals, error-prone humans [and] ordinary people unworthy of special respect" (p. 484). Hence, through satirising politics and politicians, the *Man Saf Baladi* show punctures the hallowed surface of the Jordanian political system, spotlights its defects, and encourages the reluctant public to engage in a resisting discourse and rebel against political authority.

Furthermore, the use of humour in *Man Saf Baladi* can be seen as a coping strategy in the context of Jordan's political landscape. While the show critiques various levels of power, it strategically avoids explicit targeting of the monarchy and the monarch, potentially to avoid direct confrontation with security authorities and arrest or prosecution under broadly-worded

penal laws such as the Lese Majeste, the Crime Prevention Law and the Cybercrime Law that authorities use as a tool for political suppression to “unjustly prosecute” activists and limit free expression (Euro-Mid Monitor, 2023, para. 10). However, criticism directed at the ‘nahj’ (approach) and the generic target of ‘mas’ul’ (official) suggests that the monarchy is not completely absolved of AHZ’s critique. This is due to the fact that “Jordan is monarchy in which the king plays a dominant role in politics and governance” (Freedom House, 2022, para. 1). He is virtually the highest-ranked ‘mas’ul’ (official) in the Jordanian ‘officialdom’ and the one who is virtually responsible for forging, changing, or maintaining the country’s political ‘nahj’ (approach). Such discussions on the King’s authority and his role are often approached with extreme care and criticising him is a taboo in the Jordanian public sphere; yet through making implicit allusions and attacking wobbly targets such as ‘masu’l’ (official) and ‘nahj’ (approach), AHZ arguably appears to tap into this area. This cautious approach allows the show to navigate through the sensitive dynamics of the Jordanian political environment while still delivering its messages and disseminating its satirical discourse in the Jordanian public sphere.

Focusing on issues of paramount significance to the Jordanian citizen, the show demonstrates comprehensive engagement with Jordanian public affairs. It delves into Jordan’s politics by addressing corruption, governance, crisis management, and the attitudes of politicians towards their roles and the public. Economic aspects are also tackled through discussions on national debt, privatisation of companies, wasteful public spending, taxation policies, unemployment, and the rising living costs in the country. The show challenges the dominant political narratives and diffuses opposing interpretations of these topical political and economic issues, and by doing so, deconstructs the dominant political discourses disseminated by the state’s political authority and adopted by its mainstream media. While social topics receive relatively minor attention, the show contextualises them to place the blame on governments and politicians rather than the community itself. This reflects the show’s alliance with the Jordanian public through strategic selection of topics/events that maximise the defects of the political system and minimise the defects of the Jordanian community. The show’s commitment to covering such vital political and economic issues reflects its nature as a satire that integrates “comedy with serious political intent” (Corner et al., 2013, p. 32). Such serious political intent, in effect, reflects its aim to inform and engage its audience in politics through addressing prominent topics and events that

make news and resonate with the Jordanian public. The show, therefore, demonstrates a strong potential to raise awareness of its audience and catalyse their critical examination of the political system and its functioning.

Overall, the *Man Saf Baladi* show presents a unique media platform that offers an alternative voice in the Jordanian political landscape; a voice that blends subversive humour with serious political critique. With such amalgamation in its content and style, the show offers an interesting model of political satire that operates effectively within the constraints of the Jordanian non-democratic environment. By choosing the Internet and social media platforms as its broadcasting space, the show avoids institutional censorship and sets its own level of critique, which, given the magnitude of the topics and the targets of critiques shown in the analysis of the show, seems limitless. The show deliberates on the most significant issues in the Jordanian political arena and strategically navigates the limitations imposed by its political environment to cast critical judgements on the entire political system and subvert its dominant discourse. It does so through explicit targeting of tolerant levels of political authority (e.g., government, parliament, PMs, policies, ministries, etc.) and employing a cautious approach toward sensitive subjects and avoiding direct, intolerable criticism of the monarch and the monarchy<sup>18</sup>.

Previous research argues that Jordanian satire serves as a catharsis rather than driving real political change (Barahmeh, 2020, 2022, 2023). This view is based on the premise that Jordanian satire targets political authority vested in the government, whereas the Jordanian political system—reified in the king—remains beyond criticism. However, the analysis of *Man Saf Baladi* challenges this view, showing that the show satirises a broad spectrum of political authority, including implicit critiques of the monarchy. AHZ strategically navigates political constraints, making his satire more impactful than Barahmeh suggests. This will be further explored in the discussion chapter.

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<sup>18</sup> See Section 5.2.2.2.1 in the subsequent chapter which illustrates how AHZ satirically expounds the notion of power monopoly in the Jordanian political system through his strategic employment of an anecdotal comic approach which enables him to navigate this sensitive area and deliver his implicit message. Had it been raised in a traditional political programme; the notion of power monopoly could not have been discussed without direct critique of the king's dominant role in the Jordanian politics and governance. Such a risky venture would potentially lead to serious security repercussions, including incarceration of the discourse producer. However, through his political satire, AHZ manages to safely tackle this area.

The following chapter will offer a wider understanding of *Man Saf Baladi* as Jordanian political satire through exploring its discourse and highlighting a set of unique discursive strategies that the show employs to effectively communicate its critical messages and leverage the potential impact of its satirical discourse.

## **Chapter 5: Key Discursive Strategies in *Man Saf Baladi's Discourse***

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents findings of the analysis of *Man Saf Baladi's* discourse. The analysis explored the 20 videos under investigation with the aim of unpacking the key discursive strategies employed in the show. These strategies are deliberately used by the creator to achieve multiple goals, ensure the show's continuity, and secure its success in Jordan. The chapter begins with an overview of discursive strategies as a concept and the role these linguistic and semiotic means play in discourse. It proceeds to identify how satire is discursively constructed in *Man Saf Baladi* by shedding light on the use of episode titles, anecdotes, emotional shifts, and metaphors as distinctive strategies in the show.

### **5.2 Discursive Strategies in *Man Saf Baladi* Show**

#### **5.2.1 On Discursive Strategies**

As a political satire created and disseminated through the Jordanian internet and social media, *Man Saf Baladi* constitutes a media production that not only engages with but also influences public political discourse. This aligns with van Dijk's (1996) argument that media, in its various forms, is deeply intertwined with political and public discourse, as it targets mass audiences to shape ideological perspectives. Building on this, Fairclough (1995) maintains that media has the power to represent people and events in particular ways, shaping public perception and steering emotions toward critical issues. Similarly, Baker (2006) highlights that any topic or concept can be constructed in multiple ways through media discourse. These effects are realised through language and other semiotic resources, which function as key meaning-making elements in any discourse. As Fowler (1991) asserts, all communication is ideologically situated: "Anything said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: Language is not a clear window, but a refracting, structuring medium" (p. 10).

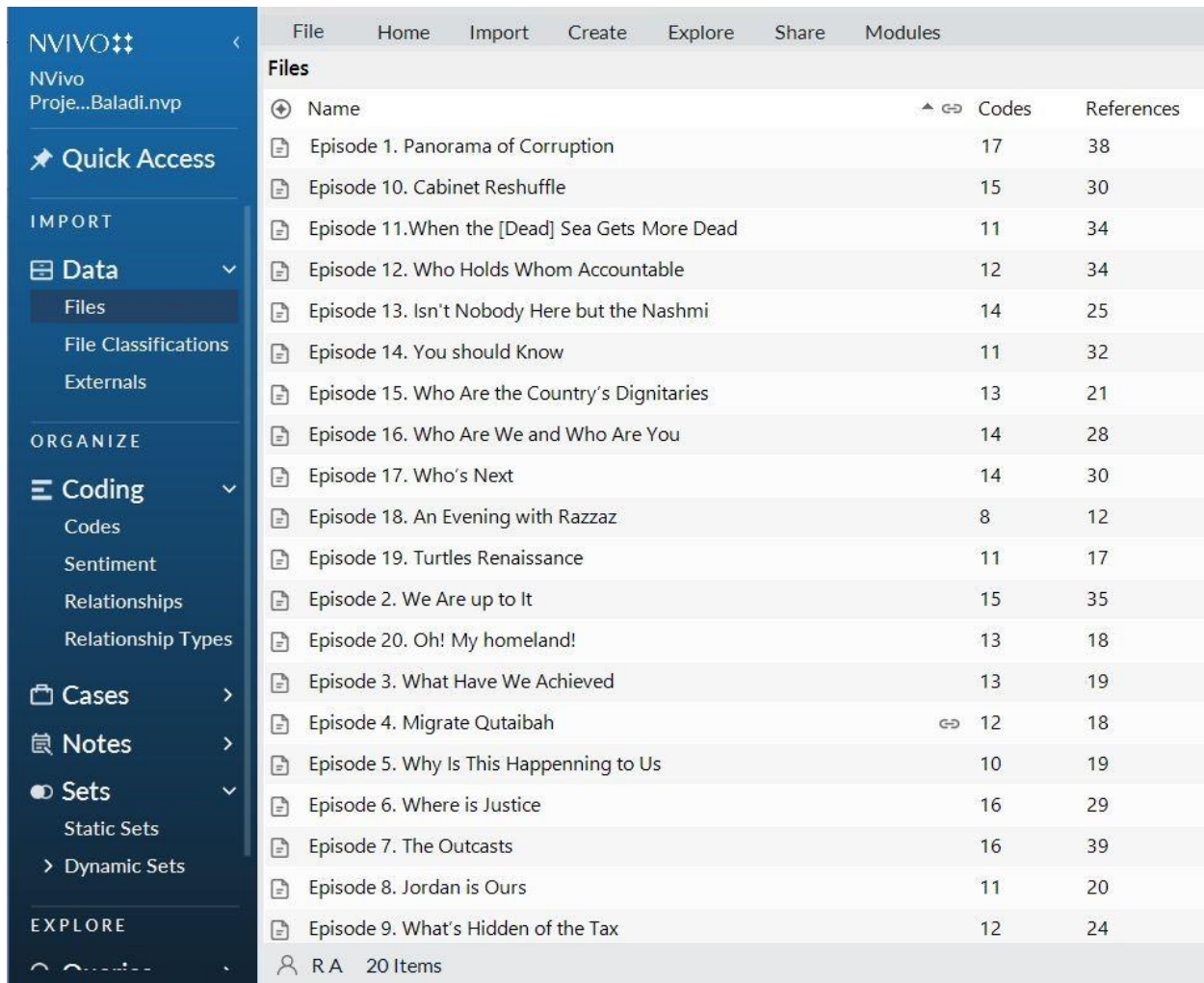
In its broader sense, political satire aims to challenge the political status quo. Central to understanding the political discourse of resistance is the notion of discursive strategies (Wu, 2018). These are fundamental linguistic and semiotic means of presenting diverse ideologies and points of view, maximising message effectiveness, and fulfilling certain communicative interests. According to van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), discursive strategies are employed through “various possible routes in a complete course of action in order to reach a wanted goal” (p. 11). For Mautner (2008), discursive strategies are devices employed to position consumers of a certain discourse “into adopting a certain point of view” (p. 49). As far as goals are concerned, Reisigl and Wodak (2016) refer to discursive strategies as an intentional plan of tactics and practices employed in discourse “to achieve a particular social, political or psychological goal” (p. 33). Political scientist Steven Kettell (2010) argues that discursive strategies are particularly important for understanding political practice owing to the fact that “politics is a linguistic practice” (p. 789). For Kettell (2010), discursive strategies are ways through which agents present issues, arguments and themes in the media, political institutions or anywhere else. Discursive strategies, as such, can have “multifarious” goals which include providing “a common interpretation of the main problems and challenges”, setting out “a coherent explanation of objectives,” justifying and legitimising political action, persuading, and mobilising support, as well as undermining, challenging, and otherwise calling into question opposing arguments (p. 790).

### **5.2.2 Strategies Employed in the Show**

As indicated in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.1.2), the process for analysing the show’s discursive strategies involved NVivo ‘open coding’ (Barat, 2012, Glaser 2016, Saldana 2013). Transcripts of the 20 episodes under investigation, which served as the research data, were uploaded into NVivo software as separate MS word documents (see Figure 5.1) and thoroughly read several times.

**Figure 5.1**

*Screenshot From NVivo Showing Episodes Transcripts as Data Files- NVivo project 2: Discursive Strategies*



The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with navigation options: NVivo, Project: Baladi.nvp, Quick Access, IMPORT (Data, Files, File Classifications, Externals), ORGANIZE (Coding, Codes, Sentiment, Relationships, Relationship Types), Cases, Notes, Sets (Static Sets, Dynamic Sets), and EXPLORE. The main window shows a 'Files' table with the following data:

Name	Codes	References
Episode 1. Panorama of Corruption	17	38
Episode 10. Cabinet Reshuffle	15	30
Episode 11. When the [Dead] Sea Gets More Dead	11	34
Episode 12. Who Holds Whom Accountable	12	34
Episode 13. Isn't Nobody Here but the Nashmi	14	25
Episode 14. You should Know	11	32
Episode 15. Who Are the Country's Dignitaries	13	21
Episode 16. Who Are We and Who Are You	14	28
Episode 17. Who's Next	14	30
Episode 18. An Evening with Razzaz	8	12
Episode 19. Turtles Renaissance	11	17
Episode 2. We Are up to It	15	35
Episode 20. Oh! My homeland!	13	18
Episode 3. What Have We Achieved	13	19
Episode 4. Migrate Qutaibah	12	18
Episode 5. Why Is This Happening to Us	10	19
Episode 6. Where is Justice	16	29
Episode 7. The Outcasts	16	39
Episode 8. Jordan is Ours	11	20
Episode 9. What's Hidden of the Tax	12	24

At the bottom of the table, there is a search bar with the text 'RA 20 Items'.

Using the open coding approach (or ‘free’ coding, using NVivo terminology), codes, which represent categories, emerged inductively from the ‘original data’ (Yin, 2016) without any code predetermined. The open coding process involved ‘breaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data’ (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 195). Recurring themes which bore significance to the research question were identified across the episodes under investigation, and the process resulted in the emergence of four main categories. These four categories, which present the more prominent discursive strategies employed in the show, can be seen in Figure 5.2

along with the frequencies of the references (text segments) that have been assigned to each code.

**Figure 5.2**

*Screenshot From NVivo Showing the Codes in Codes List View- NVivo project 2: Discursive Strategies*

Name	Files	References
Titles	20	20
Descriptive Titles	6	6
Declarative Titles	4	4
Interrogative Titles	8	8
Imperative Titles	1	1
Exclamatory Titles	1	1
Providing Anecdotes	12	24
Comic	4	4
Evidential	10	12
Affective	4	9
Shifting Emotion	19	39
Overall Emotion	20	20
Largely Serious	10	10
Largely Humorous	3	3
Mixed	7	7
Interesting Examples	0	0
Humorous to Serious	12	16
No Shift (serious)	9	12
Serious to Humorous	6	10
Using Metaphor	20	116
Domain	0	0
War	8	13
Health	9	24
Animal	12	26
Sanitation	3	4

RA 31 Items

Table 5.1 shows the key discursive strategies that were identified as being used in the show along with the objectives they discursively serve in AHZ’s satiric discourse. These strategies are titling episodes, providing anecdotes, shifting emotion, and using metaphor. It is worth mentioning that although the discursive strategies identified are presented separately in the table and in the subsequent sections, they are not mutually exclusive. It was possible for certain parts of the text to be assigned to more than one code. For example, a text segment like ‘When the sea dies more’ was assigned to both the ‘Titling Episodes’ and the ‘Using Metaphor’ codes. Similarly, some segments which included metaphors were also parts of texts that were assigned to the ‘Providing Anecdotes’ code.

**Table 5.1**

*Key Discursive Strategies in the Show*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
Titling Episodes	Drawing viewers’ attention; signalling the satirist’s perspective and impacting the audience perceptions of the issues addressed in the show
Providing Anecdotes	Explicating political ideas in a simple, entertaining way; attesting and reinforcing messages; evoking emotions and leveraging the show’s persuasiveness and ability to impact the audience perspectives
Shifting Emotion	Impacting the audience evaluation of issues and minimising their counterargument; maintaining the credibility of the show and the presenter and emphasising their serious intention to engage in serious politics
Using Metaphor	Conveying political messages; evaluating political actors and political affairs and framing them negatively; Encouraging the audience (implicitly) to reflect on politics and take reparative action

**5.2.2.1 Titling Episodes**

A title of any work, be it a book, a play, a video clip, a scientific article, an artwork, or an episode of a show, is its designated name. It “introduces, metonymically represents and advertises the content it labels” (Gesuat, 2008, p. 127). Soler (2011) argues that titles are brief and concise “descriptive labels of texts” that “are meant to serve a variety of functions, including identifying and unifying a piece of work, summarising its content and appealing to its

audience” (p. 125). Titles can influence the way people see and interpret artworks (Franklin et. al., 1993). In this sense, they are not mere name tags, but rather interpretive lenses through which people construct meaning and see the aesthetic face of a work of art (Levinson, 1985). In scientific discourse, titles are of particular interest due to their significance in informing audiences and constructing, communicating, and progressing knowledge (Soler, 2011). In the movie industry, effective titles are not randomly chosen, but rather carefully constructed phrases imbued with informative and highly connotative words presented in a revealing and intriguing way to warrant viewership (Haidegger, 2015). In the same vein, in online videos, titles of pre-roll advertising clips accompanied by emotional valence can impact the effectiveness of the advertisement and the viewership of the main content of the video (Yiling et. al., 2022).

Titles were found to be important elements in the *Man Saf Baladi* show, serving most of the time as indicators of the show’s functions and the topics addressed in its episodes. Indeed, through its concision, pithiness and use of malapropism, the title of the show itself seems to serve a tripartite function: engaging the audience, creating a humorous tone, and prompting the Jordanian public to reflect on their major economic and political issues. The title plays upon the word ‘mansaf’—one of the most popular words in the Jordanian lexical and sociocultural repertoire which not only signifies their most famous dish, but also represents their social heritage (Alobiedat, 2016), historical culture (Wojnarowski & Williams, 2020) and national identity (Shunnaq et. al., 2021). When articulated (or written) as one word, ‘mansaf’ is unequivocally the label Jordanians use for their totem ‘baladi’ (national) dish. However, split by a pause between its two syllables (or typographically by a space), the word spawns into two, with ‘man’ meaning ‘who’ and ‘saf’ meaning gobbled or devoured, leaving the viewer (or the reader) with the interrogative clause ‘*Man Saf Baladi*’, in which the word ‘baladi (originally a single adjective word that collocates with mansaf and means ‘national’), is a phrase consisting of the noun ‘balad’ (country) and the attached first person possessive pronoun *y /I/* ( baladi = my country). Stemming from the play on the syntactic structure and lexical choices in the title, the incongruity between the two notions ‘national mansaf’ (mansaf baladi) and ‘who gobbled my country’ (*Man Saf Baladi*) is meant to set the comic mood of the show and create a humorous effect on the part of the viewer/hearer, making a playful invitation to the show, with the intended notion serving as its masthead and its solemn mantra—which can tacitly read as ‘do you want to know who gobbled Jordan? Tune in!’.

Arguably, the *Man Saf Baladi* episode titles are creatively developed to draw attention to the episodes and provide the audience with a way to reference them when commenting on social media or discussing the show online. This is likely why all titles are short, ranging from a single word (e.g., Elmatarid (the outcasts)) to five words (e.g., Ehna meen w ento meen (who are we and who are you)) in the original Arabic, with an average length of 2.6 words per title. This feature of the titles may contribute to the marketability of the show and findability of its content in the social media spaces which are loaded with tremendous audio-visual content.

Considering their content, the episode titles were found to display a variety of semantic and grammatical features. As shown in Table 5.2, five types of titles were identified: descriptive, declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory. These types will be discussed in the following sections.

**Table 5.2**

*Types of Man Saf Baladi Episode Titles*

<b>Type</b>	<b>Title</b>
Descriptive	Cabinet Reshuffle (Ta'adeel wazari)
	The Outcasts (Almatarid)
	The Hidden Part of the Tax (Elmakhfi min eldharibeh)
	Panorama of Corruption (Panorama Elfasad)
	An Evening with Razzaz (Sahrah ma'a Alrazzaz)
	Turtles' Renaissance (Nahdhat alsalahif)
Declarative	We Are Up to It (Nahno laha)
	Jordan Is Ours (Al'ordon elna)
	When the Sea Dies More (Endama yazdado elbahro mawtan)
	You Should Know (Lazim te'araf)
Interrogative	What Have We Achieved? (Sho anjazna?)
	Who Holds Whom Accountable? (Meen yhasib meen?)
	Why Is This Happening to Us? (Laish sayer fina haik?)

Where Is Justice? (Wain El'adaleh?)

Isn't Anybody Here but the Nashmi? (Ma fi ghair elnashmi?)

Who Are the Country's Dignitaries? (Meen kbar elbalad?)

Who Are We and Who Are You? (Ehna meen w ento meen?)

Who's Next? (Elli ba'adoh?)

Imperative Migrate Qutaibah! (Hajir ya Qutaibah!)

Exclamatory Ouch, My Country! (Aakh ya balad!)

### 5.2.2.1.1 Descriptive Titles

Descriptive titles mainly consist of nouns and noun phrases and are indicative of the episodes' topics. However, not only do they give the audience a clue about the main subject addressed in the episode, but they also signpost the viewers towards seeing events and topics in a particular way. Through their use of what Haidegger (2015) calls 'stimulus words'— "words that trigger a certain association by means of conditioning" (p. 427), the titles create a schema deliberately shaped by the show's producer in the viewers' minds. For instance, while the episode titled 'Panorama of Corruption' tackles a corruption case that was exposed to the public, the word 'panorama' in the title triggers a wider view, a whole landscape, and a perspective of entirety in the viewers' cognitive space, leaving them with a complete notion of widespread corruption that engulfs the Jordanian landscape and goes beyond individual cases. Similarly, the phrase 'hidden part' in the title 'The hidden Part of the tax' triggers the sense of concealed truth, deliberate manipulation, and lack of transparency in the tax bill and the government that proposed it.

The title 'Cabinet Reshuffle' (Ta'adeel wazari) is obviously indicative of the episode's content. However, the word 'ta'adeel (literally amendment) is typographically played upon to stimulate a particular perception of the act of changing government ministers. The word ta'adeel (Arabic typography تعديل) is split into two by inserting two dots between its two syllables (تعديـل) (see Figure 5.3). This use of non-alphabetical characters creates a typographical pun in which two semantically independent words are generated: the Jordanian Arabic 'ta'a' (تع) which means 'come' and the English word 'deal' (ديـل), which is commonly used in Jordanians' interaction. To

the viewer's eye, the entire title reads as a call to strike a deal (Come .. Ministerial deal). The word 'deal' stimulates the viewers' conception of the term in the business field and triggers their reading of this political event as a business transaction, involving mutual benefits between the parties concerned (i.e., the Prime Ministers and the Ministers).

### Figure 5.3

*Screenshot Showing the Typological Play in the Title Cabinet Reshuffle*



The single-worded title 'Almatarid' (the outcasts) employs a word that has an extreme negative association in the cultural realm of Jordan. The term has its origin in the early Jordanian and Arabian Bedouin life. Though it is rarely used in everyday interaction, it was made popular through Jordanian Bedouin drama. The term denotes someone who is expelled from their own tribe due to substantial wrongful conduct, such as homicide, theft, or a sexual crime that disgraces the collective pride of the tribe. It carries rich connotative meaning in the sense that it is not simply a description given to someone being ousted, but rather a "social status" (Slyomovics, 1987) that stigmatises individuals, depreciates them, and mars their reputation. Being an outcast in the Bedouin culture is "a mark of Cain that can make life intolerable for the bearer" (Ginat, 1983, p. 30). Broadcast following a major political occurrence in Jordan, the episode highlights the reaction of the public towards ministerial delegations visiting governorates to promote new tax legislation. Delegations were rejected and ministers were expelled from

panel discussions by the angry and fed-up crowds (Magid, 2018). While the title is indicative of the event, it further draws a very repulsive image of ministers from a Jordanian perspective by giving them one of the most stigmatising attributes in the Jordanian cultural repertoire, depicting them to the audience as sin-makers who deserve to be extracted from the collective Jordanian social body.

#### **5.2.2.1.2 Declarative Titles**

Declarative titles take the characteristic form of a declarative sentence (e.g., We are up to it) or verbal clause (e.g., When the sea dies more). Interestingly, these titles were found to bear little indication to the content of the episodes. Considered out of their context (i.e., respective episodes), they might sound ambiguous. However, they are informative and assertive, reinforcing conclusive notions that are discursively linked to lines of arguments about the topics and events addressed in the episodes. In the episode titled ‘We are up to it’, AHZ addresses the Chief of the Anti-Corruption Commission following his appearance on TV, in which he talked about a mega corruption case (locally known as the tobacco case or Mutee’s case) stating that the Commission had been under some pressure to overlook the case, but he refused to reveal the source of the pressure. AHZ urges the Chief to expose the figureheads who backed Mutee’s illegal business, and not be intimidated by their power, saying “stamping out corruption is your choice, not ours. All we can do is spotlight a mistake here, a flaw there [...]; however, if you need us, we’ll be the hand that you strike with [...] We will always be there for you”. The title is an assertive concluding remark derived from AHZ’s words that he and his show can undertake a different role and probably adopt a different discourse (than satirical critique) should the state genuinely decide to curb corruption.

While the title ‘Jordan is ours’ is assertive of the notion of belongingness, it implicitly communicates the opposite; that is if ‘Jordan is ours’, it is NOT somebody else’s. The plural possessive pronoun ‘ours’ implies unity between the satirist and the audience. For the regular viewer of the show, figuring out who this somebody is does not require much inferential work. The title is an emphatic concluding quote from AHZ’s argument in the episode (in which he addresses the government’s economic approach) that politicians are working deliberately on dismantling Jordan by increasing its national debt, selling its public assets, and destroying its

organisations. The title symbolically presents Jordan as the public's sacred homeland, an idea the show implies is implicitly denied by governments and politicians. Consequently, the title reinforces viewers' perception of the government's political actions as acts of treason and collusion.

#### **5.2.2.1.3 Interrogative Titles**

Interrogative titles were found to be the most frequently used. Eight out of the twenty titles were structured as questions (interrogative titles) and have an intrinsic function of attracting attention (Haidegger, 2015; Jamali & Nikzad, 2012). Right from the outset, they can hook the audience "with an arresting directness" (Hyland, 2002, p. 539). Interrogative titles in the show are likely chosen to spark audience curiosity and foster a more intimate engagement. Rhetorical questions such as 'what have we achieved?' and 'why is this happening to us?' arouse the audience's curiosity, trigger certain ideas, and prompt them to seek answers from the show. Titles like 'where is justice?' and 'who are you and who are we?' are not necessarily reliable indicators of an episode's focus as they provide little information about the topic to be viewed. For instance, inquiring about justice implicitly communicates its absence to the audience. Following the authorities' extradition of the main suspect in a major corruption case, a title like 'Who's next?' is likely to shift the audience's focus away from what could be seen as a commendable achievement, instead framing it as an incidental and trivial move by a government entrenched in corruption itself. The use of pronouns in 'who are you and who are we?' (and in other titles) presupposes shared attitudes and worldviews between the audience and satirist, while simultaneously presupposing a divide between the audience/satirist and politicians. Furthermore, the use of the plural pronouns 'we' and 'us' referring to the audience and the satirist as one entity creates a sense of audience relatability, discursively constructing them as directly involved in the issues addressed. This strategic use of pronouns in episode titles shapes the show's tone and reinforces its resistant populist discourse.

#### **5.2.2.1.4 Imperative and Exclamatory Titles**

Imperative and exclamatory titles were the least used in the show (one title each). The imperative title 'Migrate, Qutaibah' picks up on an event that went viral on Jordanian social media, when a young man named Qutaibah tagged the PM on Twitter asking him if Jordan would seriously

change and if youths should stop thinking of emigration. The PM responded by advising Qutaibah that emigration was not necessary and assured him of serious change. The show's title, which advises Qutaibah to do the opposite, not only mocks the PM's message, but also undermines his entire rhetoric and presents a counter-government discourse to the public. The only exclamatory title in the show uses the stimulus interjection 'aakh'(Ouch), an emotion-laden expression associated with physical pain. With the 'Aakh ya balad!' (Ouch, my country!) episode being the last, the title wraps up the season with an intense expression of sympathy for Jordan's pain inflicted by its politicians. It encapsulates the show's critique of the Jordanian status quo, portraying a public grappling with poverty and unemployment, and ultimately evoking a powerful and painful image in the viewers' minds.

Although it can be challenging to determine how much of a video's success on social media is due to content quality versus the title (Lakkaraju et al., 2021), the titles of *Man Saf Baladi* episodes arguably do contribute to the show's popularity. As discussed in Section 5.2.2.1, this is often due to their particular discursive features, which are likely to play an important role in engaging audiences and expanding the show's reach. Specifically, their grammatical forms, semantic content, use of pronouns, stimulus words and cultural references, are all indicative of a purposefully designed discursive strategy which not only captures viewers' attention but also conveys the creator's perspectives on the issues addressed, influencing the audience's interpretation. Overall, the titling of episodes presents an important discursive strategy in the *Man Saf Baladi* show and plays a key role in shaping the audience's perception of the issues addressed in its episodes.

### **5.2.2.2 Providing Anecdotes**

Anecdotes<sup>19</sup> are miniature stories that are relevant to a topic at hand. They are "short, freestanding account[s] of particular events" (Gossman, 2003, p. 143) and they can be 'fictional' or 'real' (Kennedy, 2015). Importantly, scholars view anecdotes as illustrative rhetorical devices that play a significant role in shaping our world. Gossman (2003), for example, maintains that

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<sup>19</sup> The intricacies of the terms, anecdote, story, and narrative in scholarly literature as well as their ability to stand alone as genres and accommodate a variety of verbal and written texts are acknowledged by the researcher. However, the words are used interchangeably in their simplest sense to refer to text segments in the form of storytelling and/or personal accounts.

“highly structured anecdotes”, learned by rote and collected into anecdotal repertoires can “confirm established views of history, the world and human nature” (p. 143). In public religious communication, anecdotes also play a significant role as discursive strategies through which leaders connect with their audience, capture their interest, and diffuse complex dogmatic messages and religious worldviews to the masses (Lo, 2018). Anecdotes, therefore, entertain audiences and explicate complex ideas to them, and when narrated with a humorous tone, arouse their praise.

Anecdotes are widely prevalent in the media. According to Tallis (2007) this prevalence stems from the often-accurate assumption by media professionals that audiences enjoy anecdotes. She states that when “set among data”, the “human face” of anecdotes gives them considerable persuasive power, making them “like queen ants in the colony” (p. 139). Anecdotes in educational TV programmes (Moyer-Guse & Nabi, 2010) and comedic documentaries (Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2017) entertain audiences, reduce their reluctance to accept the programmes’ messages and impact on their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours in a message-consistent manner. Similarly, when used in journalistic news, they illustrate ideas and messages and lead to greater audience support due to their ability to facilitate an audience’s emotional attachment with the characters presented in the story (Oschatz et al., 2021). Similarly, anecdotes in political satire increase the likability of the satirist, reduce audience counterargument, and foster attitudes consistent with the narrative and the attitudes espoused by the satirist (LaMarre & Grill, 2019; Tchernev et al., 2021).

The analysis of the *Man Saf Baladi* show revealed twenty-five instances of anecdotes used in the episodes under investigation. Most of the anecdotes were quite short, and predominantly involved a single storyline narrated in a few sentences. Some were fictional while others referred to actual events. The fictional anecdotes included folktales and stories invented by AHZ, whereas those referring to actual events were either personal stories reported by AHZ, or personal accounts of individuals expressing some aspects of their lives. This latter type mainly occurred in the form of video clips inserted into the episodes.

In terms of the tone, features, and discursive role played by anecdotes in the show, they were found to display different characteristics and could be categorised into three subtypes: comic,

evidential, and affective anecdotes. Table 5.3 shows the types of anecdotes used in the show, and the following sections will discuss each type in detail.

**Table 5.3**

*Anecdotes in Man Saf Baladi*

Type	Tone	Features	Function
Comic	Humorous/ sarcastic	Fictional/ invented	Explicate/diffuse political ideas; arouse humour; discredit political actors
Evidential	Serious (with some humorous remarks)	Personal accounts of AHZ; reported stories	Provide evidence/support ideas; establish connection with the audience
Affective	Serious/ sombre	Video clip inserts; reported stories	Induce viewers' empathy; evoke their emotion

**5.2.2.2.1 Comic Anecdotes**

As shown in Table 5.3, comic anecdotes are characterised by their humorous and sarcastic tone. They are fictional accounts of events that AHZ uses to make a point. This type was the least frequently used in the show (4 out of 25). Fictional stories' tendency to entertain and engage audiences is already established in media research (see Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Borum Chattoo & Feldman, 2017). The humour that AHZ infuses in these fictional narratives is likely to appeal to viewers and engage them in the show. Nevertheless, their discursive function in *Man Saf Baladi* extends beyond this primary role of facilitating audience engagement. They were also employed to discredit political actors and elucidate the narrator's political messages. For example, in one of the episodes, AHZ addresses PM Omar Razzaz's call for a national renaissance enterprise that involves comprehensive political and economic reform:

**Extract 5.1**

When I read your press release, I thought to myself, where am I going to take off to now in the middle of the night? Razzaz said we should get ready to take off into the renaissance! Get up wife! Get up kids! We're going to jump into the future. My wife was like 'C'mon man! It's the middle of the night! Let's wait

till morning! The kids are sleeping! Let's not disturb them now!' I was like 'no! get up, now! we're taking off into the renaissance right now!' (Episode 15)

This sarcastic story in Extract 5.1 discredits PM Razzaz's reform discourse deployed in the media at the time. To the politically informed viewer, the anecdote presents a political critique of Razzaz's renaissance enterprise on the premise that his propagated reform is a utopian dream; a mere rhetoric lacking realistic grounds, effective plans, and practical implementation tools. AHZ's anecdotal message reflects the critical position on Razzaz's project which was adopted by many Jordanian intellectuals who had high hopes for Razzaz when he assumed office but were then disappointed with his incapacity to address pressing political and economic demands (see Braizat, 2018). However, AHZ simplifies this sophisticated political idea using a humorous anecdote, rendering his communicative intent accessible to the lay viewer in a simple, yet entertaining way. The communicative power of the anecdote lies in its ability to establish a linkage between the real political situation and its fictitious embodiment. In this anecdote, AHZ's desire to embark on a journey into the future is analogous of Razzaz's idealistic reform and desire to lead Jordan into a renaissance. The awakened wife and kids are analogous of the Jordanian nation. The timing of the event (i.e., midnight) implies inappropriacy and unpreparedness. Embarking on the journey via 'jumping' is indicative of the absence of viable means. Through providing this simple anecdote, AHZ allows his viewers to subconsciously grasp the projected political situation while ostensibly enjoying a humorous narrative and perhaps laughing at it.

In another episode, AHZ expounds the notion of power monopoly in the Jordanian political system and the lack of government's de facto authority by providing a humorous tale which simulates a political situation whereby PM Omar Razzaz was unable to withdraw a proposed tax law as he pledged upon assuming office. The tale states:

#### **Extract 5.2**

There was a stake driven on the road tripping up whoever passes by. The villagers came together- the men, the young men, those with strong muscles, they all tried to pull it out, but all in vain. It was so strong and deep-driven. A curious old man came by creeping around, and asked, 'what's the matter?' They told him the story. He rolled up his sleeves, and he was like move over, let me

give it a try. They were like oh man! You'll hurt yourself. He insisted. No, no. let me try! Just listen to me! I'll pull it out. He kept nagging until they eventually succumbed to him. They were like come! Let's see your strength! He grabbed the stake with both hands, pulled and pulled, and oops! I'd rather not say what happened, but let's say, he just flipped on his back. (Episode 6)

In tandem with giving the audience an engaging story, the anecdote in Extract 5.2 elucidates a situation that reflects on a sensitive problem in the Jordanian political milieu; that is, the governments' full constitutional authority (see Aljazeera, 2012, and Al Isawe, 2012, for an example of a situation in which a former PM resigned six months after his appointment by the king, as a result of the PM's inability to claim his full authority). In the folktale, the main character symbolises the prime minister; his old age represents frailty and a lack of power. The stake in the tale symbolises the tax law that the PM promised to withdraw. The act of pulling the stake implies the PM's attempt to exercise his political authority whereas the deep thrust of the stake coupled with the old man's flip while trying to pull it out alludes to a mysterious power that commandeers political decisions and propels against the PM's force, rendering him politically powerless. AHZ tackles this sensitive area by employing an anecdotal rhetoric that to be interpreted does not require much political knowledge on the part of the audience. The anecdote creatively reduces a complex political notion, illustrating it with a humorous undertone. Without much elaboration and intellectual, political argumentation, AHZ arguably simplifies the political message that the PM is powerless and political authority in the system is monopolised, leaving it open for the viewers' cognition to map the fiction with reality, critically examine the political situation and conclude who might have driven the stake and hijacked the PM's authority. Such comic anecdotes can present fictional embodiment of actual situations through which political messages can be easily deduced.

#### **5.2.2.2.2 Evidential Anecdotes**

Evidential anecdotes were the most frequently used type in the show (12 out of 24). Although some were punctuated by humorous, sarcastic remarks, these anecdotes were mostly narrated using a serious tone. In these stories, AHZ primarily recounts personal experiences by positioning himself within an event using the formula 'X told me that' or by reporting events and experiences he has learned about through the media. In terms of their discursive role, they were found to serve as illustrative cases or exemplifications of economic problems. AHZ used these

evidential anecdotes to consolidate, or provide evidence to support his arguments, while at the same time establishing an argument that appears to be more objective than often contrasting official reports. For example, in an episode tackling fuel and electricity prices, AHZ recounts the event of calling a Lebanese friend, to ask him about the fuel prices there:

### **Extract 5.3**

I called a friend in Lebanon [...] I asked him about the fuel price in Lebanon. He said, it's 27900 Lebanese Lira for the octane 95. I did the math, and it was around 13 Jordanian dinar! This is Lebanon that we all know for its apportioned economy: X owns something; Y owns something else; sect X controls the north; sect Y controls the south. Anyway, it turned out that the sectarian government is more compassionate than our good government. O you who don't fear God! 3.5 JD per tank more expensive than Lebanon! (Episode 4)

While the full accuracy of the story in Extract 5.3 may not be important to the audience, it reinforces AHZ's argument that fuel prices in Jordan are the highest in the region and that the government's claim of pegging local prices to crude oil prices is deceptive. The numbers used in the story (i.e., the price provided by the Lebanese friend and the number resulting from AHZ's calculation) may give credibility to AHZ's point and serve as real evidence coming from Lebanon—a country with a comparable economy and reliance on oil importation, yet with a worse sectarian and political atmosphere. Using an evidential anecdote, which discursively constructs a sense of veracity, AHZ's claims about the fuel pricing issue may sound more objective than those of the government, potentially leading to a greater acceptance of AHZ's position by his audience.

The use of evidential anecdotes as a strategy to substantiate political messages was found to be commonly used by AHZ when addressing aspects of the Jordanians' challenging economic conditions. In an example, he recounts a story of an investor in the Hassan Industrial Zone unsuccessfully trying for two years to invite the relevant minister to visit the zone and listen to their concerns. In another such narrative, AHZ recounts the case of a friend who is leasing a restaurant and who complained to him about the challenges in the business, showing him his sales books, expressing inability to secure the restaurant rent, and having to shut down the business due to financial losses. These narratives present illustrative examples of business

owners burdened by taxes and economic stagnation and real cases of citizens suffering from the deteriorating economic standards which, throughout the show, AHZ attributes to the governments' corruption and failing policies.

In addition to the discursive ability of these evidential anecdotes to support the narrator's messages and contribute to the validity of his arguments, they are also inclined to establish his social identity and status within the community. In other words, they implicitly emphasise his social connection with different segments of the Jordanian public and hence reinforce his bond with his audience. For example, AHZ narrates:

#### **Extract 5.4**

Brothers, I was at an olive oil mill a couple of days ago. The owner told me he had been in this industry for 30 years, and this was the first time he had seen the Jordanian citizen buying olive oil one or two litres at a time. They couldn't afford to buy a tin for 100 JD! Where would they get the money from, and how would they survive?! What would they eat?' (Episode 16)

The use of the endearment term 'brothers' in this evidential anecdote conveys a sense of intimacy and social proximity with the audience. The place in which the narrated experience takes place implicitly indicates AHZ's social identity, economic status, and identification with the largest component of the Jordanian public. In Jordan, the olive tree is a symbol of national identity to which Jordanians are socially, culturally, and historically attached (Olio Officiana, 2017). However, as an economic activity, olive farming is only common in rustic areas and associated with rural families and low-income farmers (Al-Hiary, 2015). The olive mill is a seasonal venue where members of the disenfranchised community come together for a commercial purpose. Farmers get their olive crops milled while others seek cost efficient deals through direct oil purchase, avoiding extra costs added by retailers and stores. Whether as a farmer in the mill or as a customer, the narrated experience in the evidential anecdote highlights AHZ's economic status and reinforces his connection to the poor public.

#### **5.2.2.2.3 Affective Anecdotes**

Nine anecdotes employed in the show were identified as affective. These were mainly in the form of short video excerpts inserted in the episodes. They are characterised by a sombre tone

and a heightened salience of negative emotion as they showed individuals expressing the challenges in their personal lives with intense emotion. The excerpts highlight the characters' words as they cry out against economic hardship, unemployment, and struggle to meet basic needs. These anecdotes were found to be used in episodes that tackle economic topics. In these episodes, AHZ provides a collage of poignant short clips of citizens voicing their personal struggles in public gatherings or in home-filmed videos. For example, a video shows a young man in a public event clamouring, 'I'm an engineer, I swear to God, I can't feed my only daughter bread anymore. I'm surprised how people feed their children'. Another clip shows a woman crying, 'when I pay the electricity bill, I deprive my children of eating chicken or meat for a whole month, whereas the dogs of officials thrive on eating meat'. A third shows a young man shouting before a minister, 'have mercy on us for God's sake! We're five young men in a house and we're all jobless!' By incorporating these succinct, emotion-laden narratives in the show, AHZ showcases the undeserved suffering, harsh circumstances, and poor life standards of the characters. Taken together, these clips function as a small-scale story told by real characters who present an empathetic tableau of the disenfranchised public. The high-octane feelings of anger and sorrow in these video narratives are likely to arouse the viewers' concern for the characters presented and evoke compassion with their fellow citizens. One of the video narratives provided shows a young man (see Figure 5.4), who along with hundreds of others, marched from the southern governorates to the Royal Court in Amman and camped in cold rainy weather to protest about his difficult economic situation and to demand job opportunities. The young man is seen discussing a short exchange between himself and his father:

#### **Extract 5.5**

I'm 35 years old. My youth is wasted! Before leaving the house, my father asked me not to leave! Because he has diabetes, he didn't want me to join the protest. He said, 'they'll arrest you. They'll harm you. I told him, I'm already in jail. We're fed up! (Episode 20)

**Figure 5.4**

*Screenshot of a Young Man Narrating a Short Emotional Personal Story*



Expressed in a few poignant words, the young man’s narrative in Extract 5.5 encapsulates his ordeal and is likely to draw the audience into his personal struggle. At the same time, it evokes a mix of anger and sadness over his wasted youth, which is theoretically meant for personal growth and self-actualisation, as well as sympathy for his sick father, who, out of fear of the authorities’ reaction, would rather see his son silently endure a meaningless life than protest and demand his rights publicly. The Arabic clause on the screen *شبابي راح* (My youth is wasted)—presumably added by the show’s crew—condenses the young man’s story into an experience of wastefulness, one that young viewers in similar circumstances may identify with. The power of the story lies in its ability to engage the audience through an emotion-driven approach, thereby reducing any reluctance or motivation to counterargue the messages conveyed in the show.

Alongside other types of anecdotes that entertain and explicate (comic) or attest and reinforce messages (evidential), affective anecdotes function as a strategic tool within a well-crafted discursive approach. Their use enhances the show’s persuasiveness and its ability to shape the audience’s perspective, ultimately contributing to their metanoia.

### **5.2.2.3 Shifting Emotions**

Emotions are commonly conceived of as “internal mental states” that represent evaluative reactions (Nabi, 2015, p. 114). These states are subjective feelings that “result from appraisal of a situation” and “give rise to action tendencies” (Yeo & McKasy, 2021, p.2). Due to their nature,

emotions are vital components of human communication, whereby people express feelings and attitudes in everyday interaction (Cmejrkova, 2004). They offer a generous source of meaning that enables people to understand the relationship between themselves and their world and cope with issues posed by their natural and social environment (Dennison, 2023). Emotions can regulate social behaviour and fulfil functions pertinent for maintaining (or conversely undermining) political order, such as establishing solidarity and disciplining non-compliance (Koschut, 2020).

When infused into a discourse, emotions can “cancel rationality” (Weigand, 2004, p. 10) and stifle the power of reason. In this sense, emotions can be viewed as a dynamic “system of language” which functions to express “the speaker’s feelings, mood or affective experience”, and manifests itself in the discourse in verbal and non-verbal ways (Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2019, p. 18). This capacity primes emotions as a powerful communication strategy and gives them a unique role in shaping the way people engage in discourse. Emotions can, therefore, impact the way information is processed and influence attitudes toward issues (Yeo & McKasy, 2021). This role of emotions is utilised in the media and firmly established in communication scholarship, with an extensive body of research supporting the ability of emotions to persuade and drive attitudinal and behavioural change. For example, emotion-based climate change communication drives people to adopt climate change mitigating behaviours (Brosch, 2021), impacts their attitudes toward policy support and climate advocacy (Nabi et al., 2018), and encourages them to seek information (Lu, 2016). Emotions are also effective in communicating migration policies (Dennison, 2023), scientific information (and correcting scientific misconceptions) (Yeo & McKasy, 2021), marketing and advertising (Saitarli, 2019) and communicating health messages (Nabi, 2015).

In the context of politics, emotional experiences engender political discourse and political expression (Henry & Eveland Jr, 2023). Political satire demonstrates the ability of humour to foster rational deliberation, knowledge about politics and audience engagement in public affairs (e.g., Feldman, 2013; Lee & Jang, 2017; Young, 2013). This is in part due to the processing of humorous discourse through an emotional pathway that reduces message scrutiny, declines counterargument, and hence impacts attitudes over time (Nabi et al., 2007; Young, 2008).

However, the constant treatment of serious issues in a funny way may also lead to ‘message discounting’ (i.e., audience perception of the issue as less serious) and may dilute any immediate persuasive impact (Nabi et al., 2007).

To avoid the occurrence of ‘message discounting’, a common approach to political satire is what Nabi et al. (2007) call “restoration of gravity”; that is, the shifting from a humorous to a more serious presentation of political issues to “re-establish serious intent” (p. 50). Evidence suggests that this use of ‘emotional flow’ (i.e., evolution of emotions) (Nabi, 2015; Nabi & Green, 2015), or ‘emotional shift’ (Winkler et al., 2023) proves to be highly effective in endorsing message-consistent attitudes in political satire. Furthermore, the emotional fluctuations encountered during exposure to certain content may lead to subsequent involvement with the content through both online and offline means of social sharing (Winkler et al., 2023).

Given this understanding of the role of emotions in mediatic discourse, it was not unexpected for *Man Saf Baladi* to display a slew of emotional appeals. However, an interesting observation about emotions in the show was the remarkable variation between its humorous and serious modes of delivery, and the wide range of emotional shifts across and within the episodes under investigation. AHZ’s transitions from an outwardly expressive and forceful emotional state to a more subdued and intimate one, and his alternation between sadness, anger, and hope-evoking appeals are common features of the show. Altogether, 39 emotional shifts were identified in the show’s dataset. While acknowledging the range of emotional shifts within each episode, it is useful in the first instance, however, to examine the prevalent emotional emphasis of each individual episode; that is, the specific emotion that prominently characterises each episode. This can be seen in Table 5.4.

**Table 5.4**

*Emotion of Overall Episodes in the Man Saf Baladi Show*

<b>Emotion of Overall Episodes</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
Largely Serious	10
Largely Humorous	3
Mixed	7

Table 5.4 shows that out of the 20 episodes under investigation, 10 tended to be largely serious, 3 largely humorous, whereas 7 displayed an equal mixture of serious and humorous appeals. For the sake of brevity and given that the Mixed Episodes category involves a combination of the features of the two other categories, only the Largely Serious and Largely Humorous categories will be discussed in the following sections. These episodes provide the most poignant examples of emotional shifts, which will be illustrated through examples of their discursive employment in the episodes.

#### **5.2.2.3.1 Largely Serious Episodes**

Largely serious episodes were characterised by their strong tone, lack (or absence) of humorous remarks, and—in some cases—the employment of semiotic resources that together established a serious, yet emotional deliberation of the issue. For example, the episode addressing the death of schoolchildren in a flash flood begins with humming sombre music and a black screen with the phrases ‘To the childhood lanterns; to the souls of the Dead Sea calamity’. This is followed by the appearance of AHZ in a dimly lit studio, dressed in a white shirt and black blazer, projecting a solemn expression (see Figure 5.5). This opening segment carries affective potential at both the linguistic and non-linguistic levels, whereby the black screen, AHZ’s grim expression, his attire, and the darkness of the studio combine to evoke a mournful atmosphere. The accompanying phrases on the screen are infused with ‘emotion terms’, ‘emotional connotation’, and emotional metaphor’ (Koschut, 2020) which are further intended to provoke the viewers’ affective experience. For example, the word ‘lanterns’ connotes with light and metaphorically portrays children as the joy of life. The word ‘soul’, however, conveys death and nonexistence, whereas ‘calamity’ (fajia’ah in Arabic) is an extremely emotive word that connotes with loss and tragedy. The choice of the word ‘fajia’ah’(calamity) to describe the Dead Sea incident reflects AHZ’s emotional stance and value judgement, framing the event throughout the episode as a case of political mismanagement and a consequence of governmental corruption<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> A more elaborate discussion of AHZ’s presentation of the incident, framing it as a form of political mismanagement and a result of corruption was presented in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1.1 Political Topics.

**Figure 5. 5**

*Screenshot of AHZ in Black Blazer with a Dim Light in the Studio*



Both phrases can emotionally transport the audience into the children's world. The first evokes a fleeting warmth, reminiscent of the joy of having children, while the second delivers a shocking contrast, triggering a lasting sense of sadness—and perhaps anger—upon realizing that the children are no longer alive. Right from the outset, before a single word is uttered, the episode strategically harnesses emotions to serve AHZ's purpose. This discursive strategy impacts on the viewers' perception of the incident, while simultaneously minimising any counterargument and fostering attitudes that align with his own. The episode continues to unfold with AHZ's serious tone, presenting his view of the incident as a tragedy resulting from government mismanagement, weak infrastructure, and corruption. Emotional shifts characterised by angry and sad appeals are then observed in the intensity of AHZ's words, along with accompanying prosodic features and facial expression, with his sadness appeal climaxing toward the end of episode. Using a fast-speaking rate and high pitch range, he articulates:

**Extract 5.6**

This message is for the state media [...]. Take it easy with sycophancy! Especially at such a time when Jordanian blood is haemorrhaging, and mothers' tears are not drying [...] A child returning safely to his house is more important than all ranks and positions. (Episode 11)

In this extract, AHZ employs strong emotional words (i.e., blood, haemorrhaging, and tears) to aggravate the sadness surrounding the incident and to censure state media for not undertaking an objective role in such a serious situation. Using the imperative clause, ‘take it easy’, alongside the strong judgmental term ‘sycophancy,’ AHZ expresses his anger toward the state media and prompts a negative audience evaluation of their coverage. He frames it as excessive fawning and an insincere narrative designed to deceive the public and appease authority. Importantly, a shift in emotion occurs as AHZ delivers a message to the families of the deceased schoolchildren in a whispered *sotto voce*. At this moment, a close-up camera shot emphasizes his mournful expression (see Figure 5.6).

### Figure 5.6

*Screenshot of AHZ while Addressing the Families of the Deceased Children*



Employing both a slow speech rate and a low pitch, and accompanied by sombre flute music in the background, AHZ states:

### Extract 5.7

My last message is for the families of the deceased schoolchildren. We’re parents like you. Your children are ours. Every day, we eagerly wait for the clock to strike 2 to see our children returning from school [...] At sunsets, we see their open notebooks lying on the furniture like drowning seagulls on the beach. We behold their pencils tracing the letters. [...] We’re parents like you. We feel the magnitude of your grief, and all the hearts of Jordanians from Aqaba to Ramtha are beating with grief over your loss. Your children are ours. They are the balls of our eyes [...]. Their images are carved in our memory. You have every right

to grieve but be confident that whoever has a great nation like ours will heal from the loss. Our nation is great! And with your determination and willpower, Jordan will be fixed. It will be fixed for the souls of your children who left early; be it sooner or later. (Episode 11)

As can be seen in Extract 5.7, AHZ's concluding message unfolds with an emotional appeal that invokes empathy and emphasises solidarity with the families of the deceased schoolchildren. This is evident in his subdued and intimate manner of speaking and the language he employs. Declarative clauses such as 'we are parents like you' and 'your children are ours' employ a highly personal and relatable language which can establish an emotional connection with the families of the children and the audience at large.

AHZ then paints a vivid picture of a parent-child experience, portraying parents eagerly awaiting their children's return from school (Extract 5.7). This moment is depicted through emotional metaphorical language (the children's notebooks as seagulls on the beach) and strong imagery (their pencils tracing letters). These devices are strategically designed to immerse the audience in the children's imaginary world, evoke identification with the experience, and intensify the sadness and anger over their loss in reality, ultimately shaping the viewers' evaluation of the entire incident. The strategy is also realised through the use of the possessive pronoun 'ours' to refer to the children and the emotionally charged metaphorical phrases 'balls of our eyes' and 'carved in our memory'. AHZ employs this emotional strategy to ensure that both the families of the children and the broader audience are inclined to interpret and internalise the incident in a way consistent with his own and ultimately target their rage toward the government and politicians.

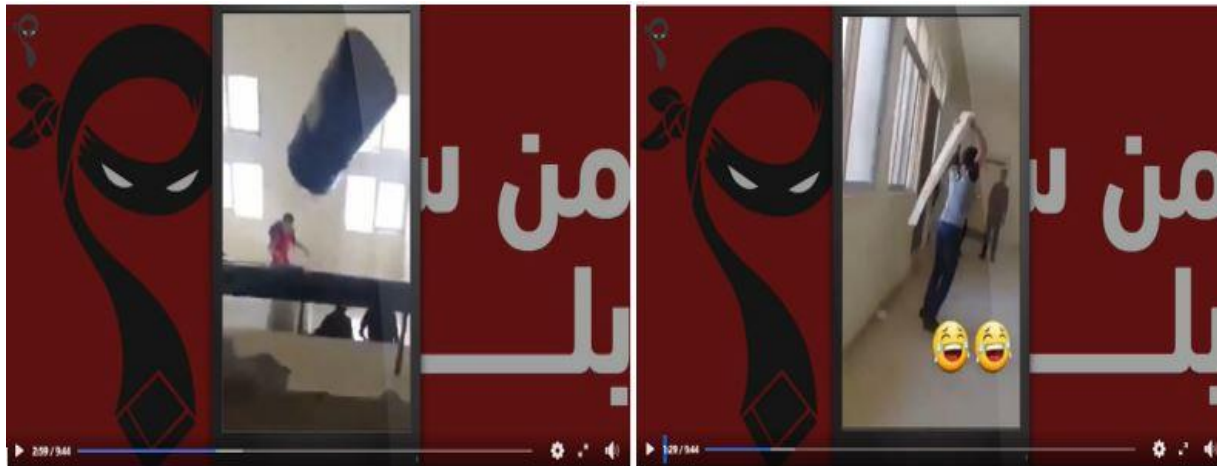
AHZ then moves on towards offering a more hopeful appeal and uses terms with positive emotional connotations such as 'confident', 'great', 'determination', 'willpower', and 'fixed' (Extract 5.7). Such language choices are likely to create a sense of reassurance and self-efficacy in the families of the children and the broader audience and instil hope that Jordan will have a brighter future. Altogether, AHZ's shifts between sadness, anger, and hope function as a well-crafted discursive strategy aimed at influencing viewers' evaluation of the issue, reinforcing his argument, and discrediting the official portrayal of the incident as merely a natural disaster—one for which the school, if anyone, should be held responsible.

### 5.2.2.3.2 Largely Humorous Episodes

Largely humorous episodes were characterised by their extensive use of humour in presenting topics. Issues were presented through sarcasm, irony, jocular mockery, and other mechanisms of verbal humour, accompanied by exaggerated intonation, humorous facial expressions, excessive body gestures and multimodal semiotic elements that enhanced the comedic effect.<sup>21</sup> However, an interesting observation about these episodes is the shift in the emotional valence of humour and the serious concluding arguments at the end of episodes. For example, in the episode titled ‘Why is this happening to us?’ AHZ addresses the misbehaviour of public-school students on the first day of the school year, taking a humorous perspective on the situation and jokingly defends the students’ unruly behaviour, presenting it as a reflection of strength and potential of students as future politicians. Throughout the episode, AHZ displays a set of prosodic features that add to his humorous delivery, such as exaggerated intonation, funny faces, and clumsy hand movements. This is evident in Figure 5.7, which displays screenshots from the video clip AHZ presents to the audience, showing students dropping a barrel and hitting the floor with a piece of timber.

**Figure 5.7**

*Screenshots from the Video Showing Misbehaviour of School Students*



AHZ also adds a humorous commentary to the video clip of the event:

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<sup>21</sup> See Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3 for a more elaborate discussion of humour and the discursive functions humour plays in the show.

### Extract 5.8

Are you going to tell me you expect a 9th or 10th grader, whose moustache is poking out and his throat is popping, to blow balloons?! Is this a good way to celebrate the new school year?! Come on! It only suits them to deflate the principal's car tyres or throw a barrel here or there. (Episode 5)

In this extract, AHZ addresses the audience through the sarcastic use of interrogatives featuring idiosyncratic expressions such as ‘poking moustache’ and ‘popping throat’, typically associated with the age of puberty and humorously refer to the students’ adolescence. His utterances carry an ‘emotional connotation’ (Koschut, 2020), as they ironically express AHZ’s pride in the mischievous students. He suggests that traditional celebratory acts, such as blowing balloons and decorating classrooms, are unsuitable for them, whereas mischief—like deflating the principal’s car tyres and throwing barrels—is more fitting. Altogether, AHZ’s ironic commentary taps into the audience’s emotions by providing them with a light-hearted humorous experience containing a positive emotional valence. In other words, while this kind of humour may have a positive affect (i.e., entertain the audience and trigger laughter at the students’ behaviour), it is unlikely to provoke negative emotions (such as anger) toward the students. Humour in this segment can be seen as a strategy to engage the audience and make them more receptive before AHZ turns to a more serious political issue.

### Figure 5.8

*Screenshots from Video Clips Showing MPs Fighting*



Using a collage of video clips (see Figure 5.8) and sarcastic commentary, AHZ highlights the regularity of brawling, and lack of real political debate in the parliament. He addresses the audience commenting:

#### **Extract 5.9**

Anyway brothers, don't look at the dark side. [...] The young man with the piece of timber, or the one with the explosive barrel might get lucky. He might become a member of parliament, for example. What would you expect him to do then? Act as a legislator? Or sit like an idiot monitoring and evaluating the government's performance? No, brothers; no. Parliamentary membership [...] needs sturdy and well-built people; muscular ones. They might get involved in a fight [...] or get involved in a legislative wrestling match, or vote-of-confidence boxing. They'd be able to handle it then. (Episode 5)

As can be seen in Extract 5.9, AHZ humorously morphs the school students' issue into a more serious political one. By suggesting that those unruly young students might become MPs, he shifts his emotional attitude and value judgement to the role of the Jordanian parliament, and hence strategically channels the viewers' affect toward this issue. His sarcastic statements imply that the necessary qualities for successful parliamentarians include physical strength and the ability to handle fights, rather than intellect, knowledge, and political experience. Furthermore, while expressions such as 'like an idiot monitoring and evaluating', 'legislative wrestling', and 'vote-for-confidence boxing' generate instant humorous effect, they are also capable of arousing acerbic emotional judgements and driving the audience to feel disillusioned, cynical, and livid at the MPs' behaviour, which is inconsistent with the role they were elected for. The shift in the humorous valence from positive (addressing students' behaviour) to negative (addressing MPs' behaviour) can be seen as a strategy for highlighting the absurdity of both students' and MPs' behaviours on one hand, while ultimately steering the viewers' negative emotional judgements toward the MPs, on the other.

The episode then turns to a concluding message with AHZ adopting a serious expression and commenting:

### Extract 5.10

We tried to show you today some samples of small and large roughhousing [...] and if you ever ask why this is happening to us, I tell you why. Because we flattered the corrupt, the wrongdoers, the villains, and the losers [...]. But despite all this, don't give up or get frustrated. We are here, going after them. And this homeland will be fixed; it will be fixed, be it now or later. (Episode 5)

As can be seen in the concluding message in Extract 5.10, AHZ shifts to addressing the audience using more serious language, refraining from any verbal or nonverbal humorous remarks. He uses the word 'roughhousing' (Arabic: mbataha) to denote the aggressive behaviours of the school students and the MPs. The word conveys an opinion and emotional judgment about the behaviours as being violent and obnoxious. It is affectively loaded in the sense that it can provoke feelings such as contempt, anger, or even hatred toward the agents. However, AHZ uses the epithets 'small' and 'large' which function as 'markers of intensity' (Koschut, 2020) to scale the emotional force directed at the agents. The quantifier 'small' (contextually understood to be describing the students' behaviour) down-tones the negative emotion likely to be directed at the students, whereas the quantifier 'large' (contextually understood to be describing the MPs' behaviour) amplifies the negative emotion directed at the MPs. AHZ then attributes the source of the problem to the flattering of 'the corrupt', 'wrongdoers', 'villains', and 'losers', terms which implicitly refer to politicians. This evokes a strong negative judgement of their political roles and consequently has the potential to stir the audience's anger towards the politicians. Additionally, by implicitly describing the public's inaction toward the politicians as a form of flattery in the clause 'because we flattered the corrupt, etc<sup>22</sup>', AHZ blends anger with an appeal to guilt, placing part of the blame on the public for their complacency with politicians. AHZ finally transitions to a positive appeal, invoking hope ('don't give up or get frustrated'), mitigating guilt and reinforcing the public's perception of self-efficacy ('we are here') and boosting their capability to challenge politicians ('going after them') and take part in the reform of Jordan ('homeland will be fixed')—a strongly hope-invoking metaphor. Altogether, AHZ's alternation between his appeals to anger, blame and hope in this concluding message can be seen as a tactic

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<sup>22</sup> The use of the pronoun 'we' here is seen as an in-group marker through which AHZ emphasises connection with the audience and the public at large and mitigates the guilt appeal in the utterances. Apparently a 'you' instead of 'we' in such context might backfire at the source of the message.

used to stir the viewers' feelings and prompt them to adopt reparative attitude, take a stance, and challenge politicians.

In conjunction with other strategies employed in the show, emotion seems to be a common persuasive tactic in the *Man Saf Baladi* Show, whereby AHZ strategically varies his appeals to incite certain emotional responses that can influence the viewers' attitudes and beliefs. Although humour can substantially contribute to this role, it seems that in the context of authoritative environments such as Jordan's, where people are naturally reluctant to engage in dissenting politics, the presentation of serious politics in a merely humorous mode is insufficient to produce enduring impact and drive the desired attitudinal change. Therefore, AHZ strategically shifts between humour and serious delivery, which evokes a multitude of negative and positive emotions including anger, sadness, fear, and hope<sup>23</sup>. These emotions can provoke meaningful reflection on political issues and catalyse the audience to engage in public discourse (Lee & Jang, 2017). Whereas humour can attract people, enforce in-groupness, and render complex political ideas comprehensible, non-humorous messages infused with emotional appeals can emphasise the serious intent of the show and restore the gravity of AHZ's discourse. This is evident in his tendency to refrain from humour in his treatment of grievous issues in which humorous play might backfire and have an adverse impact (e.g., death, suffering of people and economic woe) and his tendency to conclude the episodes with serious messages that appeal to an affective, nationalistic discourse—messages that glorify Jordan and its people, promote a sense of pride, and prophecy a better future for the nation.

Extant arguments on the role of emotion in Western political satire suggest that continuous presentation of serious politics in a funny way may have undesired effects. Taken as an emotion of mirth, humour that predominates satirical shows may discredit serious politics and lead the audience to discount the satirist's messages and take them less seriously (Nabi et al., 2007; Young, 2008). Indeed, prominent satirists such as Jon Stewart are accused of "political hearsay", and their shows are accused of detaching people from serious politics and causing political inertia (Hart & Hartelius, 2007, p. 263). In the context of *Man Saf Baladi* show, which operates in a sociopolitical environment in which people are stereotypically characterised by their natural

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<sup>23</sup> Fear appeals did not surface in the examples discussed in the section. However, they were common in the show.

tendency to ‘seriousness’ and ‘humourlessness’ (Hijawi, 2015; Nunez Ledesma, 2016; Barahmeh, 2023), AHZ’s constant shifts between humour and seriousness along with his emotion transitions are arguably an effective strategy to prevent the audience from undervaluing his show and for reducing the likelihood of viewers perceiving his discourse as mere play. By employing such strategic shifts, AHZ can effectively communicate his serious ideas to his viewers and probably influence their perspectives.

#### **5.2.2.4 Using Metaphor**

Metaphors “describe one thing in terms of another” (Wyatt, 2021, p. 411). They are traditionally understood as “implied comparison[s]” between naturally “dissimilar objects”, whereby comparisons lead to the “transfer” of some aspects that normally pertain to one object onto the other object (Sopory & Dillard, 2002, p. 382). They involve cross-domain mappings in which some information from a source domain is carried over or mapped onto a target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In this way, metaphors are language tools with a cognitive role. These tools identify one conceptual domain in terms of another (Kovecses, 2002) and provide images that can render thoughts more tangible than their presentation in a direct, non-metaphorical way (Bratu & Kazoka, 2018). Metaphors, therefore, can explain intricate, abstract, and complex concepts or ideas that are sometimes difficult to communicate in plain language (Droog et al., 2020).

In terms of their use, metaphors are available to all language users (Wyatt, 2021). They are a staple aesthetic and rhetorical feature of everyday communication (Kovecses, 2002). However, metaphors are particularly prevalent in persuasive communication (Sopory & Dillard, 2002), of which media and political discourses are typical. Their suasive power is attested in a meta-analysis of data-based quantitative studies, showing that metaphors are persuasive and capable of changing audience’ attitudes and enhancing communicators’ credibility (Sopory & Dillard, 2002). Metaphors also play a significant role in the “emotionalisation” of arguments (Musolff, 2021, p. 628) and influence beliefs and values through provoking emotions (Gibbs & Colston, 2012). Charteris-Black (2011) foregrounds this emotion-based persuasive nature of metaphors, upholding that metaphors are “bearers of affective meaning” (p. 31), and they trigger emotional associations and impact beliefs and values by transferring positive or negative emotional

associations into the metaphor target. Metaphors play a vital role in constructing social reality for both individuals and communities (Reist, 2022). In political discourse, they are particularly effective as framing devices, influencing how people perceive issues and shaping public opinion by assigning meaning to the topics discussed (Charteris-Black, 2011; Burgers et al., 2016; Musolff, 2019). Fundamental to the working of metaphor in discourse are metaphor scenarios. According to Musolff (2006), metaphor scenarios consist of sets of assumptions about a target situation, including, “its participants and their roles, the ‘dramatic’ storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal, or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate” (p. 28), which emerge from a metaphorical mapping between a source domain and the target domain. Over time, metaphor scenarios become entrenched within discourse, shaping how the target domain is framed and influencing attitudinal evaluations within the relevant discourse community. They enable discourse recipients to complete the untold parts of a metaphorical narrative, and construct explanations based on their experiences and understandings (Cameron, 2010). An example is the metaphor scenario of France and Germany as a partnership or marriage, which emerged and evolved over time in various news articles about the European Union and was later creatively adapted to frame Britain—specifically Tony Blair—as a lover or mistress (Musolff, 2004).

Metaphors can also function as reasoning devices, indirectly promoting specific interpretations, moral evaluations, and implied treatment recommendations for the issue described. (Burgers et al., 2016). In this way, they offer interactive ways for influencing political attitudes and, thus, new paths to action (Musolff, 2016). Metaphorical framing of corruption in the New Zealand media, for example, encourages a stronger focus on solutions and supports “anti-corruption through public debate” (Berti, 2019, p. 1595). Similarly, metaphorical scenarios constructed by New Zealand’s print media around the alliance between two political parties—The Internet Party and Mana Party create destructive public narratives about the alliance of the two parties (Peters & Hocking, 2022). The image constructed of the alliance and the political figures involved through “complex sets of systematic metaphors” (p. 198) deployed damaging, evaluative attitudes which are believed to be a contributing factor to the public’s negative evaluation of the alliance and, thus, its poor result in the 2014 general election.

Metaphors lend themselves very well to political satire (Simpson, 2003). Their incongruity-resolution configuration gives them a humorous potential (Dyrel, 2009) that satirists can utilise to fulfil various functions of their satirical discourse. According to Droog et al. (2020), metaphor in political satire programmes reflects political satire's core functions of providing humour, informing audiences, and criticising power. They argue that "metaphors can shape public discourse" by giving meaning to issues addressed in the programmes and framing them through explaining and/or criticising them (p. 3977). The authors put forward a typology of metaphors in political satire, according to which metaphors can be solely humoristic, explanatory-humoristic, and evaluative-humoristic with the possibility of overlap, depending on their discursive role.<sup>24</sup>

Given the important role of metaphors in discourse, an analysis of metaphors deployed in the *Man Saf Baladi* show was carried out. The analysis involved extensive reading of the episodes' text, paying particular attention to metaphorical language (i.e., words and phrases which are not used literally). Text segments which included metaphorical language were identified and coded into a major NVivo code (Using Metaphor). The procedure resulted in identifying 116 instances of text segments in which AHZ uses metaphorical language. Following this procedure, metaphor keywords in each instance were scrutinised to identify their relationships based on meaning, identify the semantic field to which they belong and group them into different categories according to their source domain. The analysis revealed a salient use of metaphors through which AHZ projects a variety of conceptual scenarios, drawing mainly from four source domains: war, animals, sanitation, and health. Table 5.5 shows categories of metaphors used in the show based on their source domain, and the following subsections will discuss them in detail.

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<sup>24</sup> Droog et al. (2020) acknowledge that satirists may use non-humoristic metaphors in political satire programmes. However, they assume that almost all metaphors used in political satire have a humoristic goal so as to configure metaphors with their proposed typology, which focuses on humoristic metaphors. Their typology consists of four categories, with the fourth being 'complex metaphors', whereby all three functions can be realised in a single metaphorical instance.

**Table 5.5**

*Metaphors in Man Saf Baladi Show*

Source Domain	Topic (Target Domain)	Metaphorical Pattern
War	Politicians/ Corruption	POLITICIANS ARE ENEMIES CORRUPTION IS AN EMEY
Animal	Politicians	POLITICIANS ARE PREDATORY ANIMALS POLITICIANS ARE PARASITIC ANIMALS
Sanitation	Corrupt officials	CORRUPT OFFICIALS ARE DIRT
Health	Jordan / Jordanian people	JORDAN IS A SICK PERSON JORDANIAN PEOPLE ARE A DYING PERSON

#### **5.2.2.4.1 War Metaphors**

War metaphors are used by AHZ to criticise politicians and denounce corruption, casting them in a highly negative light. Through these metaphors, politicians and corruption are both directly and indirectly depicted as an ENEMY that intends to destroy the Jordanian people. Common lexis that evoke the war metaphors in the show include military expressions such as ‘enemy’, ‘opponent’, ‘soldiers’, ‘battalion’, ‘defence’ and weapons such as ‘tank’ and ‘sword’. For example, the following excerpt projects a war scenario in which politicians are conceptualised as an aggressive ENEMY who intends to subjugate the Jordanian citizens:

#### **Extract 5.11**

Brothers, the Jordanian would never kick a visitor out of their house no matter how harmful the guest is. But when the visitor is brandishing a sword [...] and wants to promote hunger by force and bring Jordanians to their knees, then all rules of hospitality are void. We would bravely kick him out as this is not a visitor; this’s the edge of the sword. (Episode 7)

The metaphors in Extract 5.11 arise from the context of ministerial visits to the governorates aimed at promoting a new tax law. In this extract, AHZ uses an intersecting complex metaphor to depict the actual event (i.e., ministers visiting major cities and holding public meetings to discuss the new tax law) and to convey an evaluative judgement on both the ministers and the purpose of their visit. Firstly, words such as ‘kick out’, ‘house’, and ‘rules of hospitality’, which evoke a hospitality metaphor are used to highlight the traditional values of the Jordanian community

and emphasise their generosity, openness, and willingness to accommodate even the most unwelcome into their homes. This alludes to the real-life event in which visiting ministers, who reside in the capital, Amman, would typically be received as guests by citizens in the governorates under normal circumstances. However, the metaphorical scenario subverts this expectation and portrays the ministers in terms of invaders who are ‘brandishing swords’, evoking imagery of danger and aggression. The symbolic script of the brandishing of swords is mapped onto the minister’s political act of promoting the tax law, reinforcing an association with hostility. The symbolism of ‘brandishing sword’ in the Jordanian culture traces back to the Jordanian pre-state Bedouin history in which cavalrymen of conflicting tribes brandished swords as an implication of enmity and aggressive intention (Al-Uzaizi, 2012). By depicting the visiting teams as intruders brandishing swords, rather than well-intentioned guests, the metaphor **MINISTERS ARE ENEMIES** unfolds to convey an extremely negative judgment of the ministers and their purpose. It implies harm and threat associated with their presence—an implication which not only disqualifies them from being welcomed visitors but also frames them as forceful aggressors and potentially destructive raiders. Through this militarising metaphor, AHZ justifies the strong reaction of the angry crowds and their defiance of the ministers’ visits. Additionally, the metaphor amplifies AHZ’s criticism of politicians and reinforces a sense of resistance toward both the government and the tax law they promote, framing them to the audience as an **ENEMY** with malicious intentions. With such metaphorical framing, AHZ implicitly conveys a ‘treatment recommendation’ (Droog et al., 2020) to the audience, which may be interpreted as: an aggressive **ENEMY** should be confronted. In this way, war metaphors in AHZ’s discourse function as an implicit call for the Jordanian public to take oppositional action and adopt a dissenting stance.

#### **5.2.2.4.2 Animal Metaphors**

Animal metaphors liken humans to animals. In AHZ’s discourse, various metaphors depict politicians and corrupt officials as animals, framing them as brutal predators and parasitic creatures that harm the country and its people. Major animal-related metaphors included verbs

such as ‘suck (blood)’, ‘bite’, ‘sting’, ‘bore’ and nouns such as ‘worms’, ‘fleas’, ‘wolf’, ‘whales’, ‘raptors’, ‘hyenas’ and ‘snake’<sup>25</sup>. For example, in one of the metaphorical scenarios, AHZ states:

### **Extract 5.12**

And then we wonder why the national debt is rocketing, why our departments are deteriorating [...]. This happening because nobody cares about our homeland; because it's ambushed by the raptors and hyenas that pray on its flesh, each one tears a bite and leaves, unconcerned about its pain, its bleeding, and its death. (Episode 12)

AHZ's discourse in Extract 5.12 is triggered by the magnitude of financial corruption in the public departments that appeared in the annual Audit Bureau report at the time. AHZ conveys a highly negative evaluation of the current state of Jordan (i.e., national debt and financial corruption) by invoking a predator-prey scenario. He portrays the country as a living entity experiencing torture and bleeding, and ultimately facing death, while corrupt officials are depicted as PREDATORY ANIMALS (raptors and hyenas), stealthily lurking to attack the country and feast on its flesh. The mapping of the predatory scenario onto the political and financial scenario of Jordan, suggests that politicians and state officials who embezzle and squander public funds exhibit predatory traits such as greed, opportunism, and lack of empathy. Analogous with raptors and hyenas that tear apart their prey, corrupt politicians are depicted as individuals who exploit the country's public resources without regard to the depletion of its wealth and eventual destruction. The metaphor further highlights the detrimental impact of these politicians, suggesting that, like raptors and hyenas which belong to different species, corrupt individuals across various political levels and state positions operate collectively. Each appropriates a portion of the country's resources and public wealth, contributing to the skyrocketing national debt, the weakening of institutions, and overall national decline. In this way, the metaphor figuratively frames financial corruption as a systemic, networked phenomenon permeating the entire political stratum. It also conveys a sense of urgency, urging the public to take action in defence of their country.

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<sup>25</sup> The ‘snake’ metaphor was not implied or stated verbally. However, it is presented visually in the show's credits, which is loaded with graphics including a black snake that crawls in an S-shape locomotion before turning into a black necktie with snake eyes, and forming the logo of the show which appears on the top right corner of the screen.

#### 5.2.2.4.3 Sanitation Metaphors

Sanitation metaphors are employed to characterise politicians as abhorrent and repulsive. Through these metaphors, politicians and corrupt officials are stripped of their human nature and ontologically conceptualised as DIRT, shaming their families and tainting the purity of the nation. For example, AHZ comments:

##### Extract 5.13

Don't be intimidated by the families. A real tribe wouldn't protect a corrupt person. A real tribe should disown the member that disgraces it and stains its reputation. (Episode 17)

The context of Extract 5.13 is motivated by the escape of Awni Mutee, the central figure in a tobacco corruption case, and the facilitation of his illegal business by influential politicians. AHZ directs his message to the Chief of the Anticorruption Commission, urging him to expose the corrupt politicians involved and resist intimidation from their tribal affiliations. The sanitation metaphor is invoked through the word 'stain', denoting the discolouring of clothing or other objects, rendering them dirty. By portraying the target of the metaphor as DIRT that taints the tribe's reputation, AHZ provides a negative moral evaluation of corrupt politicians, implying that their behaviour has a lasting immoral impact that smears the collective pride and dignity of their tribe. In Excerpt 5.14, AHZ creatively extends the DIRT metaphor, mapping the contrast between cleanliness and contamination onto the country as a whole:

##### Extract 5.14

Our dream as Jordanians is simple. Our dream is to have our country clean from the thieves and the corrupts who occupied positions they can't handle. (Episode 17)

The use of the adjective 'clean' in Extract 5.14 triggers the conceptual image of politicians as DIRT, which harms the purity and cleanliness of Jordan. This metaphor conveys an acerbic judgement, further intensified at the lexical level through the characterisation of politicians as 'thieves' and "corrupts" who 'can't handle' their 'positions'. The implied dirt in the metaphor positions politicians as agents of contamination, with their corrupt acts—such as embezzlement and facilitating illicit businesses—alongside their incompetence in leadership, contributing to the

country's deteriorating state. This 'dirtiness' manifests in stagnation, rising national debt, and economic decline. Like other highly evaluative metaphors in the show, sanitation metaphors convey implicit treatment recommendations, emphasising the need for a thorough purification of the country and a comprehensive cleansing of its political stratum.

#### **5.2.2.4.4 Health Metaphors**

Health metaphors are used to express citizens' living conditions and highlight the impact of corruption and political power abuse on the country and its people. Drawing from the health source domain, AHZ repeatedly portrays Jordan and its citizens as a SICK PERSON suffering from severe health conditions using nouns such as 'pain', 'wound', 'disease', 'symptoms', 'cure', 'prescription'; adjectives such as 'unwell', 'afflicted', and verbs such as 'groan', 'crouch', 'recover', and 'cut'. The power of these metaphors lies in their ability to convey the impact of harsh economic and political conditions by mapping them onto physical human experiences, thereby eliciting strong emotional reactions.

#### **Extract 5.15**

Brothers, the homeland is unwell. (Episode 16)

#### **Extract 5.16**

It has become clear for everybody that this great homeland is afflicted; afflicted by its politicians. (Episode 20)

As can be seen in Extracts 5.15 and 5.16, AHZ uses the words 'unwell' and 'afflicted' respectively to describe Jordan (the homeland). Both words relate to the semantic field of health and their metaphorical use involves the personification of the country into a human being who is experiencing a state of illness and poor physical condition, evoking the metaphor JORDAN IS A SICK PERSON. The metaphor is ontological in the sense that it embodies Jordan as a human being who is unable to function properly, suggesting that the underlying political and economic problems of corruption, unemployment, and poor living conditions are severe and require immediate attention. This scenario of sickness emphasises the struggle of the country and implicitly communicates a treatment recommendation for urgent remedial action to restore the country and recover its health. Furthermore, the clause 'afflicted by its politicians' in Extract

5.16 suggests that it is the actions and behaviours of politicians that are negatively impacting the well-being of the country, thus entailing the related metaphor POLITICIANS ARE A DISEASE. By depicting politicians as the DISEASE or the cause of nation's illness, the metaphor discursively channels the negative emotional charge of the sickness scenario towards Jordan's politicians. It implicitly communicates the unstated idea that politicians must be treated to restore the nation's health and well-being.

AHZ extends the health scenario to describe the struggle of the Jordanian citizens, portraying them as a DYING PERSON.

#### **Extract 5.17**

Believe me, the citizens got tired and desperate. They lost faith in all political symbols and figures. The citizens are catching their final breath, and this is reality, not metaphor. (Episode 6)

As seen in Extract 5.17, the metaphor is evoked by the clause 'catching their final breath'. The clause conveys a human experience that precedes death and is often associated with extreme physical and spiritual pain. Metaphorically, it conveys the suffering and despair of Jordanian citizens, implying the depletion of their power and endurance. The power of the DYING PERSON scenario lies in its ability to immerse the audience in the emotions it evokes, stirring feelings of pain, grief, and sympathy toward the political and economic hardships faced by Jordanian citizens. The affirmative statement 'this is reality, not metaphor' emphasises AHZ's intent to avoid being seen as merely embellishing his argument with figurative language. Instead, he presents it as a stark reflection of reality. This emphasis can amplify the affective force of the CITIZENS ARE A DYING PERSON metaphorical scenario and is likely intended to provoke the audience into resuscitative action.

#### **5.4.2.4 .5 The Discursive Power of Metaphors in the Show**

Overall, metaphors of war, animals, sanitation, and health play a significant discursive role in communicating AHZ's political messages in the *Man Saf Baladi* show. These conceptual representations do more than describe political and economic issues; they express strong evaluative opinions and cast a critical judgment on Jordanian political actors. In this way, they

can contribute to the ‘figurative framing’ (Burgers et al., 2016) of the topics in the show, fulfil its critical function, and indirectly shape the viewers’ attitudes toward the positions embedded in its figurative messages. In other words, they function as embedded invitations for the audience and the wider Jordanian public to adopt reparative attitudes and take corrective actions aligned with the implied metaphorical message: enemies must be defeated, harmful animals eradicated, dirt cleansed, and sickness treated.

While the majority of metaphors deployed in *Man Saf Baladi* are characterised by their evaluative nature and strong judgment, metaphor use in the show also has humoristic, explanatory, and affective functions. Some metaphors are intentionally humorous and were in the form of playful descriptions used to make jokes and poke fun at issues, thereby attracting viewers to the show.<sup>26</sup> Others were used to express political ideas more intuitively, helping the audience comprehend political issues by mapping them onto familiar, easily understood, sources. In doing so, they play a crucial role in the show and contribute to its educational function.

Some metaphors were characterised by their use of affective language and strong emotional appeals. Metaphors imbued with emotional appeals and emotive words can serve as a discursive tactic designed to provoke emotional reactions and influence the evaluation of an argument (Ervas et al., 2021). This was seen in the analysis of the Dead Sea incident (Section 5.2.2.3.1). Indeed, the title of the episode addressing the event—When the Sea Dies More—itself evokes a highly affective metaphor, portraying the Dead Sea as a human experiencing death. The adverbial ‘more’ functions as an intensity marker, amplifying the sense of loss and reinforcing the emotional impact of the tragedy. The metaphorical reification of the Dead Sea as a DYING PERSON experiencing additional death alludes to the incident and conveys an overwhelming sense of sorrow and grief over the schoolchildren’s demise.

AHZ further employs metaphorical representations of the deceased schoolchildren, invoked through clauses such as ‘childhood lanterns’, ‘we see their open notebooks lying on the furniture like drowning seagulls on the beach’, and ‘their images are carved in our memory’. These metaphors tap into the audience’s emotional experiences, aiming to create a vivid and deeply

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<sup>26</sup> Humorous metaphors in the show are discernible through AHZ’s mode of delivery. Their delivery is often accompanied by humorous body language and facial expression.

resonant portrayal of the incident—one that elicits a stronger emotional response than objective reasoning alone. By embedding such emotion-laden metaphors into his argument, AHZ strategically short-circuits the viewers' critical thinking process, discouraging alternative evaluations of the incident. In doing so, he secures alignment with his perspective, fosters acceptance of his opinion, and ultimately legitimises his position and worldview.

Altogether, the use of metaphors in *Man Saf Baladi* demonstrates a powerful discursive strategy at AHZ's disposal for conveying his political satire. Through a diverse range of metaphors he integrates humour, communicates political messages, evaluates political actors, and frames issues within Jordanian public discourse. By eliciting strong emotional responses, these metaphors engage viewers and encourage them to critically reflect on the issues addressed in the show.

### 5.3 Concluding Discussion

The findings presented in this chapter reveal a set of unique discursive strategies employed by *Man Saf Baladi* in its satirical discourse. The show utilises episode titling, anecdotal storytelling, emotional shifts, and metaphor use as key strategies that enable it to effectively critique political actors and political issues in Jordan.

As the show operates online, titling in the *Man Saf Baladi* episodes may serve as a crucial tool for drawing viewers' attention to its video clips within the content-saturated landscape of social media. In a political context where avenues for open critique are restricted, and the prospect of broadcasting on Jordanian traditional television is limited, clever and provocative video titles become essential for *Man Saf Baladi* to capture viewers' interest and stand out amid the countless videos circulated on social media. Given their discursive features (i.e., grammatical forms, semantic and connotative meanings, and cultural references), titles in *Man Saf Baladi* can spark curiosity and entice the audience to watch and engage with its episodes. They likely contribute to the show's popularity among Jordanian social media users<sup>27</sup>. Often laced with subtle symbolism and implicit meaning, these titles allow the show to present complex political

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<sup>27</sup> Viewership of the *Man Saf Baladi* show videos included in the study ranged from 56.5K to 251.K on the show's Facebook page, with an average of 123K view per episode.

topics and guide viewers to interpret them through its critical lens. Furthermore, titling episodes serves as a compelling tool for the satirist to express his perspectives on political issues and actors. By employing thought-provoking titles for his short satirical videos, AHZ can subtly convey his critique of the political landscape, challenge the status quo, and stimulate critical thinking among his audience. The strategic choice of titles is crucial to the show's role as a political satire that seeks to create and foster an alternative political discourse while shaping public opinion within the limited space available for political dissent in Jordan.

The use of anecdotes has a particular significance in *Man Saf Baladi*. They serve as a powerful tool for simplifying political ideas, discrediting political actors, and navigating the boundaries of freedom of expression. By presenting relatable stories—often disguised as harmless comic anecdotes—the show circumvents direct criticism while effectively conveying its satirical messages. Anecdotes involving personal experiences of Jordanian citizens play a crucial role in reinforcing the show's messages. In a non-democratic context where the voices of the disenfranchised public are rarely heard in mainstream media, providing evidential anecdotes that highlight the harsh conditions faced by Jordanian citizens enables *Man Saf Baladi* to substantiate its critique and present a realistic portrayal of the country's political and economic landscape. Research on the role of anecdotes in political satire suggests that they contribute to a satirist's appeal, reduce audience counterarguments, and foster attitudes aligned with the narrative and the satirist (LaMarre & Grill, 2019; Tchernev et al., 2021). Hence, by presenting real-life experiences that resonate with the audience, *Man Saf Baladi* can enhance its credibility, foster affinity toward AHZ, and cultivate audience attitudes that align with those he espouses. Moreover, by leveraging emotions within these anecdotes, the show can evoke empathy and outrage, compelling the audience to identify with the disenfranchised public and coalesce against political authority, which is consistently portrayed as the root cause of the country's problems. Whether humorous or otherwise, storytelling in *Man Saf Baladi* arguably reinforces its persuasiveness and ability to shape audience perspectives.

The use of emotional shifts in *Man Saf Baladi* is a defining feature and crucial strategy that appears to be adaptive to the sociopolitical environment in which the show operates. Unlike similar shows in democratic contexts, where political satire is primarily characterised by

entertaining humour—and where prototypical shows such as *The Daily Show* include more jokes than serious substance (Fox et al., 2007)—the Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi* show maintains a balance between playful humour and substantive critique, with a tendency toward seriousness. The show alternates between humorous delivery that entertains and serious commentary that evokes negative emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear. In a non-democratic context such as Jordan, where people tend to avoid dissenting politics (Al-Azzam, 2012), the adept shifting of emotional appeals appears to be an effective strategy for engaging audiences, prompting them to evaluate political issues, and encouraging them to adopt a political stance. Skilfully employed by its presenter, humour in *Man Saf Baladi* enables the show to navigate serious and sensitive political topics, making them more digestible for the audience. However, impacting the audience and driving attitudinal change through humour alone seems inadequate in a society naturally inclined toward ‘seriousness’ (Hijawi, 2015; Nunez Ledesma, 2016; Barahmeh, 2023). This is where maintaining the seriousness and credibility of both the show and its presenter becomes paramount. Shifting emotions allows *Man Saf Baladi* to strike a balance between playful humour and serious political critique, showcasing a nuanced approach to political satire in the Jordanian context. This balance between humour and seriousness underscores an earnest intent behind the show’s satire and reinforces the credibility of its presenter as a devoted, patriotic critic committed to engaging in serious politics and driving change.

Metaphors play a pivotal role in *Man Saf Baladi*’s discursive arsenal and its effort to shape viewers’ cognition of political reality, influence their attitudes, and construct an alternative public discourse. By illustrating politics through a variety of metaphorical scenarios, the show not only conveys political messages but also evaluates political actors and affairs, framing them negatively without explicit criticism. Thus, it avoids direct confrontation with political authority and the risk of litigation under the state’s unjust penal laws, which Jordanian authorities use as a tool for political suppression and a means to “limit freedom of opinion and expression” (Euro-Mid Monitor, 2023, para. 3). Hence, metaphorical representations in the show enable veiled criticism of those in power and their policies, while also constructing an alternative narrative in the absence of democratic spaces for opposing voices in the Jordanian media. Moreover, the recurring use of metaphorical representations of the Jordanian political landscape encourages the audience to reflect on politics and consider remedial action. The depiction of Jordanian politics

and political actors through metaphorical scenarios involving animals, war, death, disease, and dirt prompts viewers to abhor the current state of affairs, question existing political power, and contemplate potential solutions. In other words, *Man Saf Baladi*'s use of metaphorical scenarios can be seen as an implicit call for the Jordanian public to seek viable avenues for political reform.

The examination of the *Man Saf Baladi* show, as discussed in this chapter and the preceding one, is not intended to provide evaluative appraisals of the show or its efficacy in influencing viewers. Rather, it aims to offer insights into the functioning and dynamics of political satire within the specific context of the Jordanian political environment. However, considering the findings of the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 alongside evidence regarding the effects of similar political satire programmes in the literature (e.g., Baum & Jamison, 2006; Young, 2013; Young & Cundiff, 2013) suggests that the show may produce a variety of effects with potential implications for political participation and societal change. First, the content of the show has the potential to inform the audience about a range of political and economic issues in Jordan, thereby serving an educational function similar to that of political satire shows in democracies, such as *The Daily Show*. Furthermore, the use of various discursive strategies, including titles, emotion, anecdotes, and metaphors, contributes to the framing of political issues and presents Jordanian politics from a perspective different from that of political power. This framing carries a potential persuasive effect that may influence viewers' attitudes and prompt them to take action.

The next chapter examines the satirist's perspective on the *Man Saf Baladi* show and presents the findings of an interview with AHZ, highlighting his views on political satire, his role as a political satirist in Jordan's public communication arena, and the impact of his satirical work on the audience.

## **Chapter 6: The Satirist’s Perspective: AHZ’s Perceptions of Satire, His Role, and the Impact of His Satirical Work**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the satirist’s perspectives on the *Man Saf Baladi* show. It presents the findings derived from an in-depth analysis of the interview with the satirist, AHZ. The interview was conducted via Zoom video conferencing platform and was carried out in Arabic. It was then transcribed and translated into English (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7 for a detailed discussion of the translation process). The interview aimed to provide an understanding of satire in the context of Jordan from the perspective of AHZ, the creator, scriptwriter, presenter, and producer of *Man Saf Baladi*. The analysis, therefore, sought to examine his viewpoints and elucidate his perceptions of political satire, the role he plays as a political satirist in the Jordanian public sphere and the potential impact of his satirical work on the audience. To understand how AHZ conceptualises his political satire, it is necessary to contextualise his work and explore his professional life, as understanding the conditions in which he operates can provide insights into his motivations and perspectives on political satire. The chapter, therefore, begins with a brief background that highlights AHZ’s professional trajectory and then proceeds to present the findings of the interview analysis.

### **6.2 Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi (AHZ): A Brief Background**

AHZ is a famous Jordanian figure. He is a trained journalist and a renowned political satirist. Born in 1975 to a middleclass family in the northern town of Ramtha, AHZ pursued his education in Jordan, earning a bachelor’s degree in accounting from a Jordanian university in 1998. Throughout his academic tenure, he received several national awards for his short story writing (Abu Ramis, 2022). His contributions to the media have been recognised by reputable institutions, earning him accolades such as the Jordanian Writers’ Association Award in 1999 and 2003, the King Hussein Award for Excellence in Journalism in 2010, and the Arab Youth Innovation Forum Award for Free Speech on YouTube in 2015 (Albtoush, 2020; JPU Newsletter, 2016).

AHZ's journalistic career started in the year 2000 in the UAE, where he wrote satirical columns for the *Emarat Al Yaoum* (Emirates Today) newspaper and other Emirati magazines such as *Ahwal* and *The Gulf* (Albtoush, 2020). In Jordan, AHZ gained prominence in 2004 upon joining the prominent Jordanian newspaper, *Al Rai* and writing his satirical column *Sawaleif*; a column that attracted wide readership and after which he named his own news website that he launched in 2008 (Alghweiri, 2016). In 2011, during the period referred to as the Arab Spring, AHZ wrote his well-known political satire play, *Al'an Fahimtukom* (Now I have Understood You), whose popularity captured the attention of the Royal Palace and was subsequently attended by the King of Jordan (Brand & Hammad, 2012). A performance of the play has been uploaded to YouTube and has received over 8,000,000 views.

In addition to his widely read daily articles, AHZ is also recognised for his published manuscripts. He has authored several volumes that achieved bestseller status in Jordan (Albtoush, 2020). These acclaimed books include *Sawaleif* (Parables, 2006), *Almam'out* (The Featherless Bird, 2008), *Awja'a Watan* (The Pains of a Homeland, 2012), and *Nazf Munfared* (Solo Bleeding, 2012). All satirically address key sociopolitical issues and like his other works, advocate for "an emancipatory agenda" which focuses on "eliminating corruption, promoting social equity and political advancement", as well as conveying his "spirit of nationalism" towards Jordan (Albtoush, 2020, p. 91). The prominence of his texts has attracted several Jordanian researchers to examine different linguistic aspects of his written discourse, such as his use of cohesive devices (Abu Ayyash, 2016), diglossic code switching (Alghweiri, 2016), and metaphor (Albtoush, 2020).

Despite his considerable fame and public stature, AHZ has maintained a critical stance toward the Jordanian political establishment. This persistent critique, evident in his satirical works and prolific social media commentary, has elicited unease among political elites and attracted the scrutiny of Jordanian authorities. At the time of the interview for this study, conducted in December 2021, he had been the subject of 19 lawsuits, filed against him by individual politicians and government entities predominantly under the auspices of the cybercrime law. In May 2018, during a period marked by extensive public protests that culminated in the government's dissolution, AHZ faced a suspension and writing ban from the state-owned

newspaper, *Alrai*, for a duration of nine months (Albawaba, 2018). Although a subsequent editorial board reinstated him for a brief period, he was suspended and prohibited from writing again in September 2019. The Jordanian Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ) has publicly criticised instances of AHZ's unlawful treatment by security agencies, condemning them as breaches of his constitutional rights and deviations from international journalist freedom standards (CDFJ, n.d.). In March 2022, while on route to the airport, he was intercepted by preventive security personnel who confiscated his passport and detained him at a police station (RSF, 2022). The arbitrary detention of AHZ, akin to actions taken against other prominent Jordanian activists and journalists, was attributed to the controversial Crime Prevention Law, which authorities deploy as a tactic to preclude public upheaval and inhibit protests (DAWN, 2022). A significant incident occurred in March 2023, when AHZ was detained over a Facebook post in which he criticised the state's response to widespread protests over fuel prices and, in a flagrant legal transgression, was presented to the public prosecutor without legal notice. The act ignited a substantial outcry within Jordanian civil society, compelling over 300 lawyers to assemble at the courthouse, showing solidarity with AHZ and offering pro bono defence in his legal proceedings. The action of these lawyers subsequently pressured the prosecutor to postpone the session (Christou, 2023a). On August 10, 2023, AHZ received a 12-month prison sentence (Middle East Monitor, 2023). According to his lawyers, the ruling contained several legal errors, the most evident of which was the denial of AHZ's opportunity to properly defend himself in the appeals process. Additionally, their request on September 21 for a case review was rejected by the Minister of Justice (Christou, 2023b). On July 2, 2024, AHZ was arrested by security forces to serve his prison sentence. His arrest was strongly condemned by human rights organisations, describing it as an arbitrary violation of human rights and part of a broader crackdown on dissent and freedom of expression in Jordan (Euro-Med Monitor, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024). Despite the evident tensions with political authorities, AHZ's satirical critique continues to navigate the complexities of the Jordanian political landscape. Given the challenges he faces for voicing his opinions and disseminating his satirical critique, it is not surprising that Pen America—an eminent non-governmental organisation that champions the rights of individuals persecuted for the expression of their opinion across the globe—has listed him in its Writers at Risk Database (Pen America, 2023).

Marked by his evolution into a prominent public figure, his involvement in litigation, and his confrontational relationship with the political establishment, AHZ's professional journey provides a crucial context for understanding his conceptualisation of political satire within the Jordanian context. His experience as a satirist offers a unique perspective on political satire. Although this experience involves the fame of public recognition often associated with satire, it is equally fraught with serious risks and challenges. His commitment to satirical critique despite these hurdles, and the complexity of the environment in which he operates, emphasises his adoption of unique perceptions of satire and makes his viewpoints a valuable contribution to the understanding of its nature in Jordan's public discourse and its potential societal impact. The following section presents findings of the interview analysis and explores AHZ's perceptions.

## **6.3 Findings of the Interview Analysis**

### **6.3.1 AHZ's Perceptions**

As indicated in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5.1.3), the analysis of the interview was carried out using NVivo data management software and involved an inductive analytical approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2012, 2022; Yin, 2016). During this process, verbatim excerpts from the interview were examined and labelled with codes signifying recurring ideas or concepts. Following this phase, axial coding was employed, wherein these initial codes were collated into broader categories based on their mutual characteristics and interconnections. This aggregation procedure allowed for the identification of four major themes that encapsulated the core insights of AHZ's responses. These themes provided a comprehensive understanding of his opinions and guided the interpretation of his perceptions, which centred on:

- The role he plays in Jordanian society.
- The nature of political satire as a form of public communication.
- The impact of his show on its audience and wider public discourse.
- The challenges he faces in delivering his political satire.

Figure 6.1 illustrates these themes in NVivo, and the following subsections discuss them in detail.

**Figure 6.1**

*Screenshot from NVivo Software Showing the Codes that Emerged in the Interview Analysis*

Codes			
⊕ Name	↔ Files	References	
○ Role Perceptions	0	0	
○ Journalist, opinion maker	1	2	
○ Educator (raise awareness)	1	9	
○ Activist with specific agenda	1	8	
○ Provide perspective & give voice	1	5	
○ Not entertainer	1	2	
○ Not problem solver	1	4	
○ Technological Innovator	1	4	
○ Perceptions of Satire	0	0	
○ Attracting audience & delivering messages	1	2	
○ Highlighting deficits (diagnostic satire)	1	2	
○ Problematizing (polarizing & Provoking)	1	4	
○ Explaining politics (understandable,relatable way)	1	3	
○ Providing alternative voice in the public sphere (expr	1	3	
○ Impact of the Show	0	0	
○ Promoting constitutional awareness	1	2	
○ Encouraging free expression	1	3	
○ Encouraging political participation	1	3	
○ Developing critical thinking	1	3	
○ Challenges to his Satirical Work	0	0	
○ Institutional (State-driven)	1	5	
○ Operational (Commercial)	1	2	
○ Societal	1	2	

### 6.3.1.1 AHZ's Perceptions of his Role

In his narrative about *Man Saf Baladi*, AHZ demonstrated a multifaceted perception of his role as political satirist operating in the Jordanian public sphere. His opinions, assertions, and self-

perceptions, as derived from the interview, navigate an intricate interplay among the roles of journalist, educator, activist, and technological innovator. Each of these roles is discussed in the following sections.

#### **6.3.1.1.1 AHZ as a Journalist**

AHZ positions himself at the centre of the journalism profession and identifies as a “journalistic writer”. As a profession, journalism is understood as the “practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance” (Schudson, 2011, p. 3). Hence, by associating himself with this profession, it would appear that AHZ conceptualises his role as a public communicator who actively participates in commenting on Jordanian political life. His alignment with journalism indicates his perception of himself as engaging in the practice of dissemination of information, interpretation of issues and analysis of events, and shaping public opinion. AHZ refers to his team and himself as “opinion makers” or “independent opinion makers” who hold their own points of view while participating in political life. His use of the term “opinion makers” foregrounds his understanding of his role as a dynamic societal figure who seeks to influence the sociopolitical life through satirical commentary and critique. For AHZ, the primary contribution of his active journalistic role to the Jordanian public sphere, thus, entails informing the public, analysing political events, and representing public interests through satire. He iterates:

Well, as you know the role of the journalistic writer in general is not to entertain; it’s educational—to deliver messages and raise awareness among people.

AHZ’s commitment to delivering messages and raising awareness among the Jordanian people demonstrates a role that extends beyond merely entertaining the masses. Indeed, he expresses reluctance to associate his societal role with that of an entertainer. Reflecting on the current trajectory of content on social media, for example, AHZ laments the prevalence of what he describes as “pure entertainment” content, stating that:

Considering the content presented on social media in the past few years, of which the majority has unfortunately been pure entertainment, we wanted to give people a dose of awareness and deliver real messages to let people know what’s going on in their country, what they need to do, and what’s going on around them.

AHZ frames prevalent social media content as mere entertainment and against this backdrop, positions his own work as ‘real’ satire capable of delivering critical messages and raising awareness. AHZ, in other words, indirectly distinguishes his satire from what could be deemed ‘pseudo-satire’ (i.e. forms that entertain but lack depth and critical substance (Declercq, 2018)) while simultaneously setting his own work apart as a genuine form of satire that not only entertains but also has social impact.

#### **6.3.1.1.2 AHZ as an Educator**

AHZ believes that he offers an alternative to social media content that goes beyond simple entertainment; instead, he aims to foster the audience’s intellectual curiosity and encourage deeper social reflection. He contends that his satirical endeavour is inherently “educational” and that “the purpose of the show is to create a state of political awareness in a satirical way”. He also states that the aim of his messages is “to let people know what’s going on in their country, what they need to do, and what’s going on around them”. His words indicate a drive to inform the public about the intricate dynamics of their country through his satirical critique and political commentary. They also convey a clear intentionality to not only to enlighten people about politics in the Jordanian political landscape but also influence their behaviour (i.e., “let them know what to do”).

While speaking about his satirical work, AHZ draws on war-related metaphors, employing language from the war semantic domain. Clauses such as “my battle is a battle of awareness” and “spreading awareness is also a battle that resembles traditional battles” metaphorically frame his commitment to educating people as a form of martial engagement. He conceptualises his endeavour to the raising of awareness as a battle. Through this metaphorical representation, AHZ appears to magnify his efforts and imply a substantial challenge that he endures against an adversary, which is presumed to be the Jordanian political establishment, in his attempt to enlighten people. His insinuation becomes clear in his explicit assertion of being “in a conflict stage with authority”, arguing that the most viable mechanism for him in this conflict lies in creating a “well-aware” citizen. Implicit in this metaphorical conceptualisation is a critique of political authority in Jordan and, presumably in non-democratic or authoritarian systems more broadly. His use of the war metaphor frames political authorities in such contexts as deliberately

attempting to quell public political awareness in order to perpetuate a status quo in which citizens are disengaged from their political entitlements and responsibilities. However, AHZ remains optimistic about the potential of his satire to educate. Over time, he believes people might eventually cultivate a level of awareness that can drive them to pursue change.

AHZ believes his role is not merely equated with news reporting or updating the audience on the latest topical issues:

Nowadays every person has access to hundreds of TV channels from which they can get all serious news. So, what's the point if you present the information in the same way as the news? They've already seen, read, and heard it.

From his point of view, AHZ's role as a political satirist involves offering new ways of seeing reality and adding new perspectives to the public discourse, which are often at odds with, and neglected by, the mainstream media. He takes on a role that involves providing alternative narratives to the mainstream and offering nuanced insights into issues and events of public interest, illustrating how such issues should be critically engaged with in the public sphere. His approach to topic selection reveals this dimension of his role. He states:

If there's a trending event in the country, the event would be addressed in the way we see it. We pinpoint the flaw in it. We try to satirise the political decision associated with it if it's wrong and we try to offer our perspective on how the decision should've been.

AHZ reflects an understanding of his role in terms of reframing issues and bringing marginalised perspectives into the public sphere. This is operationally realised through his focus on issues that the mainstream media often sidesteps. In authoritarian contexts, mainstream media is often controlled in various ways by state authorities (Coskun, 2020). The situation in Jordan does not deviate from this trend, and often results in major media outlets aligning their narratives and framing of issues with the interests of political authorities (Tufaro, 2021). According to the observations of Reporters without Borders (RSF), authorities in Jordan exercise control over major media outlets in the country "by appointing their editors" and by maintaining a firm grip on "their finances" (RSF, n.d.). This consolidation of power restricts the critical capacity of the media outlets and renders them unable to engage in rigorous critique of political authority. AHZ

perceives his role as filling this void. His perception of this nuanced role is consolidated, for example, by an exemplification of how he might have addressed the Expo 2020 incident—a topical issue that was trending at the time of the interview<sup>28</sup>. He expounds on what critical insights he might have provided and what political perspectives he might have added to the deliberation of this event in the public sphere. The relevant authority and the mainstream media presented the incident as a mundane organisational mistake. AHZ explains how he would have addressed it as a profound problem of political governance:

Let's assume the show was running today. We would've definitely addressed what happened in EXPO 2020 in Dubai. This is a political occurrence that reveals the mechanism of choosing those who represent the country abroad; it reveals the mechanism of choosing state officials in Jordan, the elites of the country and their criteria.

Taking a closer look at his approach to topic selection, AHZ conveys a perception of his role as an educator who provides a platform to address political issues of public interest that are not usually deliberated on in the Jordanian media. Through his political satire, he aspires to address what he refers to as “chronic topics”; that is, long-lasting issues that have a paramount impact on the Jordanian public. These chronic topics include issues such as “political corruption”, “economic corruption”, “absolutism”, and “people’s right to self-determination”. While these issues might constitute standard discussions in democratic societies and ordinary topics for deliberation in western media, they are absent from the Jordanian mainstream political discourse. They are often avoided in Jordan’s dominant media narratives, or presented with a lack of critical engagement, if addressed at all. Corruption, in its various political and economic forms, for example, is a sensitive topic that is not critically deliberated on in the Jordanian media (Al Qudah, 2009). Similarly, the autocracy of the system and absolute power of the king are red lines, and “the king is beyond reproach” (Kuttab, 2021b). Indeed, explicit mention of the monarch is often avoided in evaluative media discourses, and journalists often use the ‘High-

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<sup>28</sup> On the Jordanian National Day themed by the Jordanian pavilion at Expo 2020 which was held in Dubai, UAE, two of the organising staff appeared in a media coverage giving shocking statements and outrageous misinformation about the history and geography of Jordan. Video of the incident went viral, spurring dismay and outrage of the Jordanian public on social media. The relevant Jordanian authority released a media statement, absolving itself from any blame for the incident, framing it as a ‘purely solo mistake’ of the reception company which was contracted to perform meet-and-greet duties in the event (Roya News, 2021) and ensuring the public that the company’s contract was terminated due to their lack of cultural knowledge and experience (The Jordan Times, 2021).

Profile Reference' metaphorical expression as an "anti-coercion" discursive strategy to implicitly refer to the king and soften any potential face-threat associated with the illocutionary force of discourses that address the king (El-Sharif, 2014, p. 138).

Despite being sidelined in Jordanian traditional media and public debates, "chronic" issues are common in AHZ's political satire. With his cautious satirical approach and his use of wit, metaphor, humour, anecdotes, and other discursive techniques, as shown in Chapters 4 and 5, he is able to navigate the sensitive dynamics of the Jordanian political environment and address issues that are rarely discussed in the Jordanian media. AHZ believes that these chronic issues constitute problems that "must be solved" in order for Jordanians "to have a better country". This commitment perhaps reflects a broader understanding of his role as a satirist in terms of foregrounding these marginalised issues in public debates and drawing public attention to them, thereby potentially prompting people to think critically, express their opinions, and engage in politics.

#### **6.3.1.1.3 AHZ as an Activist**

AHZ also identifies with an activist role. He presents himself as an advocate for a paradigm shift towards democracy, implying that Jordan does not have a fully democratic system. His discourse demonstrates an activist zeal with a commitment to a transformational political agenda that aims for comprehensive political change in the form of de facto democratisation. He speaks of the urgency of "fixing the defect" in what he believes is "a failing political approach" and seeks to challenge the current autocratic approach to governance, which he deems an archaic form of "guardianship", unfit for contemporary Jordan. He sees his role in terms of exercising "pressure through the street, that is, through creating a public opinion that demands change in the existing approach". The perspective implied here encapsulates the essence of activism, whereby AHZ's satirical endeavour can be seen as providing a platform for mobilising the public and encouraging them to seek political reform. Aligning himself with the Jordanian political Hiraq<sup>29</sup>,

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<sup>29</sup> The term Hiraq appeared in Jordan's political discourse in 2011, during the so-called Arab Spring. The term means 'movement' and was used to describe continuous youth protests that "marched to curb the monarchy's near-absolutist power, revise the Election Law to enhance pluralism and participation, and extirpate widespread networks of corruption" (Yom, 2014, p. 230). The Hiraq encompassed activist youth groups, who represented "rural communities long thought to be unflagging supporters of the autocratic regime, and a "populace long described

AHZ wears his political agenda on his sleeve and advocates for a progressive shift towards the implementation of representative democracy, envisaging a future state in which autocracy is abolished, and political power is restored to and vested in the Jordanian populace. He states:

The deficit is quite clear. There is a failing political approach that has been running the country for years [...] They now say the state is 100 years old, and they are celebrating its centenary, but we are still ruling in the same way that existed two thousand years ago. All peoples across the globe are done with the ruling of one individual and ended up with elected governments and people governing themselves. The show thus wants to reach its goal which eventually pours into the efforts of political parties, political activists and political HIRAK until we reach a state ruled by the people and restore power to the people. We want to have elected governments under public oversight and under a truly elected parliament [...] There are no people in the world over whom guardianship is exercised, as is the case with the Arab peoples, including the Jordanian people. It is imperative now to proceed to a democratic state and a constitutional monarchy if necessary.

Despite his impassioned activism and strong identification with an enlightening role, AHZ's self-awareness is evident in his acknowledgement of the limits of his role. While his role as a political satirist involves criticising and highlighting flaws, he emphasises that he does not provide solutions, and, in doing so, aligns with the widespread understanding that satirists spotlight issues rather than solve them. Commenting on the PM and media minister's attack on some Jordanian critics at the time, which he believes was indirectly addressed to him, AHZ iterates:

They kept singing from the same hymn sheet that 'these people are nihilists'; 'they are negativists and so on [...] because I don't offer solutions. Brother, if I had solutions, I would've offered them to you, but I'm not the one who's supposed to give solutions; I only tell you that you have a defect here or there—that's it.

#### **6.3.1.1.4 AHZ as Technological Innovator**

A vital dimension of AHZ's perception of his role as a satirist relates to the linkage he draws between satire and advancements in social media and modern technology. He believes that technology has redefined the role of satirists' and expanded their influence on public opinion,

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metaphorically as the monarchy's bedrock" (Yom, 2014, p. 229). The term was then appropriated by journalists, academics, and diplomats as a shorthand for any popular protest group in Jordan (Yom, 2014).

arguing that with the widespread availability of the internet and social media platforms, one can no longer deliver influential satire in the same traditional way that relied solely upon language and the satirist's rhetorical skill in crafting critical messages. He maintains:

The newspaper article in newspapers no longer does the job [...] If I want to guarantee a wider reach of my message, I have to utilise all possible means available to me: the sound, the picture, the word, writing and everything.

AHZ holds the view that satire, as a realm of influence, must adapt to shifts in behavioural patterns and audience engagement with conventional modes of satirical presentation:

People—and I'm saying this out of my experience—are no longer interested in reading a 600 or 700-word article; they want something more succinct and more visual.

In essence, the ability to produce constructive satire in contemporary times, in AHZ's opinion, demands the utilisation of new technology and social media communication platforms to align with the public's transition from established formats to more compelling, interactive digital forms. AHZ maintains that satirists "cannot fight a battle of F16 and B52 aircrafts with sword and spear" and that they "have to change their tools". His assertion offers a compelling metaphor that depicts social media and modern technology as advanced fighter aircraft, while portraying traditional forms of satire in terms of primitive weaponry (i.e., sword and spear). His metaphorical representation highlights the contrast between modernity and tradition and conveys the perceived inadequacy of traditional satire to function effectively as a mode of communication in the current digital revolution age. The metaphor underscores the necessity for satirists to recalibrate their public communication strategies and integrate their rhetorical dexterity with technical skills and modern message-creation tools. This not only necessitates adoption of new media as a channel of delivery and a medium for reaching audiences who are no longer attracted to traditional media, but also a holistic integration of infographics and multimodal elements in the creation of satirical content to ensure its efficacy. AHZ comments:

It was imperative to transform ideas from satirical articles on newspaper into motion videos that integrate feelings, reactions, music, 'inserts'- those are the clips used to support an idea- and include fast production techniques and visual surprise that facilitate the reach of the idea.

AHZ's embrace of technology reflects a strong perception of the satirist's evolving role as shifting from a traditional critic, reliant on language and rhetoric, to a technological innovator who harnesses new media to craft influential messages and shape public opinion. An examination of AHZ's video show provides a foundation for understanding the evolution of his satirical work. In *Man Saf Baladi*, AHZ integrates a diverse range of modalities and meaning-making resources with his verbal and linguistic skills. This integration enables him to create multilayered meanings, achieve various communicative functions, and provide a more engaging satirical experience, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of his critical messages. As indicated in Chapters 4 and 5, various semiotic and technical resources were employed in the show, including images, soundbites, music, animation, inserted videoclips, zoom shots and studio lighting. Whether visual or auditory these modes carry their own communicative weight and contribute to a richer and more nuanced communicative experience.

Music, for instance, can set the tone and contribute to the construction of both humorous and serious messages. In Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3.3), for example, it was demonstrated how energetic music helps AHZ construct a humorous message and criticise the government's decision to stabilise fuel price, whereas in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.3) sombre music, associated with faint studio lighting, was shown to evoke a mournful atmosphere suitable for addressing the tragic Dead Sea incident. Images and video inserts also play a crucial role in constructing AHZ's critical messages and amplifying the effectiveness of his satirical discourse. They can humorously highlight the controversies and absurdities of politicians targeted in his satire or, when capturing citizens' hardships, affectively impact his audience and persuade them of the validity of his critique. In Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.1) it was demonstrated how the insertion of video clips of a Jordanian PM, for example, enables AHZ to highlight the controversies in the PM's discourse on the nonexistence of corruption and portray him as a dishonest politician, and in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.2.3) video inserts capturing the citizens' hardships provide contextual grounding for AHZ's critique of economic policies and serve as an affective path to persuade his audience of his messages.

Yang and Jiang (2015) argue that the proliferation of online political satire mirrors the developments of new communication technologies. The advancement of the internet and social

media technology has contributed to the emergence of online satire in many contexts as a sophisticated form of political expression capable of criticising regimes and negotiating change (Esarey & Xiao, 2008; El Marzouki, 2015), mobilising against power (Yang & Jiang, 2015), and subverting official discourses and their claims of truth (Rahimi, 2015). These scholarly observations consolidate the role of satire as a powerful political communication tool, and the view of satirists as opinion leaders and social authorities for their audiences (Crittenden et al., 2011).

Political satire works, however, do not equally qualify to perform social functions and drive impact (Lichtenstein et al., 2021), and some content labelled as political satire in international media contexts may merely be frivolous forms of comedy devoid of any substantial critique (Declercq, 2018). As far as online satire is concerned, this could in part be due to the nature of the cyberspace and the easy access to social media platforms where anyone with a smart device and internet connection can create and broadcast satirical content. Crittenden et al. (2011) argue that the social media ecosystem and its associated behaviours led to the emergence of novice satirists who are more expert in social media and technology than creating critical messages and engaging people in critical inquiry. They, therefore, raise the question whether satire in the digital era will lose its role as a potent form of political discourse and posit that professional satirists have to adapt and keep abreast with emerging media platforms in order to uphold their opinion leader role and “maintain the true intent behind the creation of political satire” (p. 179). AHZ’s views on the use of social media and new technology indicate his awareness of this challenge.

Altogether, AHZ’s perspectives present a nuanced synthesis of the role he undertakes as a political satirist in the Jordanian society. Throughout the interview, his role emerges as a multifaceted public communicator who navigates the terrains of journalism, social activism, and technological innovation in bid to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity and produce constructive political satire that can drive societal change through informed and critical public discourse.

In order to further examine the intricacies of Jordanian political satire from the satirist’s perspective, the next section will delve deeper into AHZ’s perceptions of the nature of satire

itself and explore the underlying beliefs that guide his conceptualisation of satire. While his perceptions of his role as a satirist may provide insights into his motivations for using satire, the way AHZ views satire can offer a broader understanding of the conceptual foundations on which he constructs his satirical discourse and performs his satirical work.

### **6.3.1.2 AHZ's Perceptions of Satire**

As revealed in the various themes drawn from his interview, AHZ's perceptions of satire encompass a personal understanding of its multifaceted nature as comedy, critique, awareness-building and public empowerment. He views it as an appealing means of public communication that can simplify politics, diagnose societal flaws, provoke societal change, and provide alternative voices in the public sphere.

#### **6.3.1.2.1 Satire as Public Communication**

AHZ presents his understanding of satire in terms of a blend of comedy and earnest political critique. Throughout the interview, he emphasises both comedy and critical messaging as elements of his satire. However, while on the surface, AHZ appears to align with this traditional understanding of satire as an integration of entertaining comedy and political critique (Baym, 2005; Jones, 2010; Tsakona & Popa, 2011), with entertainment as its primary goal (Baym, 2005; Edson et al., 2018), he perceives the comedic element of satire as a means rather than an end goal to his satirical discourse. Commenting on *Man Saf Baladi*, AHZ argues that he had to “come up with a way that attracts viewers and draws their attention to [his] messages”, and that “the comedic satirical way is the best way through which [he] can convey [his] messages”. AHZ's comment indicates an understanding that satire's comedic element acts as a conduit to capture the audience's attention and engage them with underlying political messages conveyed in his satire. This tacitly entails his view of serious messages and political critique as the core substance of his satire, whereas comedy or entertaining humour serves as a rhetorical hook employed primarily to attract viewers. While the content of his satire, as demonstrated in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.3), displays a remarkable variation between humorous and serious delivery, a noticeable tendency to capitalise on serious content arguably reflects this perspective.

Political satire programmes in the Western tradition capitalise on comedy and satirists usually present politics in an entertaining manner that provides a pleasurable watching experience (Gray

et al., 2009; Cao & Brewer, 2008). This is quite predictable in contexts where political satire (and, by extension, the satirist) is influenced by commercial principles of media networks, which see satire as form of comedy and entertainment (Baym & Jones, 2012). Satire, however, does not have to be funny (Gray et al., 2009). Neither does it merely aim to produce a humorous outcome (Tesnohlikova, 2021). It can serve societal functions when it provokes annoyance (Chen et al., 2017) and can channel negative emotions such as anger and contempt, transforming them into impulses for political power and positive change (Gray et al., 2009).

AHZ's perspective also acknowledges the importance of connecting with people and resonating with them emotionally, emphasising the need to package his satire in an emotionally engaging way. With his satire, he aims "to reach people and touch their hearts", indicating an intentionality to employ emotions and connect with his audience on a deeper emotional level in pursuit of his goal of creating political awareness. This perspective explains content in the form of comments, anecdotes, metaphors, video clips, music, and images that has surfaced in his show. Many of these are not only non-humorous but also poignant in nature and capable of invoking a variety of emotional experiences such as sadness, fear, and anger<sup>30</sup>. The employment of such emotions not only indicates AHZ's intent to impact his viewers and propel his discourse into their cognitive space with minimal counterargument but also his intent to imprint his satire with a tendency towards seriousness.

The form of satire prevalent in established democracies—one that typically prioritises comedy and entertaining humour at the cost of serious substance (Cao & Brewer, 2008; Fox et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2009) seems unfit in its current form for the Jordanian context, which is characterised by an authoritarian political culture that propels people away from oppositional politics (Al-Azzam, 2012), and a societal disposition to seriousness (Barahmeh, 2023; Hijawi, 2015; Nunez Ledesma, 2016). AHZ seems aware of the portability of satire as a global means of political communication, albeit with the need for local adaptation to the sociopolitical nuances of the context in which he operates. Satire in Jordan, as reflected in AHZ's perspective and the content

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.2.3, Section 5.2.2.3.1, and Section 5.2.2.4.

of *Man Saf Baladi*, appears to be reconfigured to emphasise serious substance infused with emotional appeals while employing a moderate comedic element primarily for engagement.

#### **6.3.1.2.2. Satire as Simplifying Politics**

AHZ also presents a perspective on satire as a means of explaining and simplifying politics, stating that it is a valuable public communication tool for expounding complex political topics and making them accessible to viewers. Droog et al. (2020, p. 3966) maintain that satire attempts to educate and inform audiences “by explaining sometimes difficult, political, economic, or societal topics”. AHZ’s understanding of satire appears to align with this notion. For him, satire makes political themes understandable, and “raises awareness in a gentle and simple manner which is close to people’s vernacular”. This view of the nature of satire is mirrored in his work. As indicated in Chapter 5, AHZ’s discursive use of metaphors and anecdotes enables him to express political ideas in a clear and accessible way and draw parallel connections between abstract politics and everyday life experiences. Metaphors, as Droog et al. (2020) argue, can help to make sense of political events, issues, or institutions by conveying ideas and concepts that are otherwise difficult to express in literal terms. In the show, they allow AHZ to express various political ideas and make judgements on political actors and issues drawing from common semantic fields that are familiar to the viewers’ life experiences. Similarly, anecdotes provide real-life examples and testimonies that make the issues addressed more tangible and relevant to the viewers’ experiences. Using comic anecdotes, for example, AHZ was able to communicate notions such as power monopoly, lack of government authority, and facade renaissance enterprise in a relatable way, making it easier for politically inattentive viewers to grasp the underlying critical messages<sup>31</sup>.

In the interview, AHZ elaborates on the title of his show, describing what appears to be a staged and thoughtful process through which the choice was made. His narrative on reaching for the ‘*Man Saf Baladi*’ clause, as the designated name that introduces and metonymically represents his satirical show, indicates a sense of satire’s ability to highlight political issues in a simple manner, yet simultaneously engage the audience. AHZ comments:

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.2.1.

When we chose the title of the show [...], we wanted the title to be understandable and close to people [...]. The word ‘mansaf’ is one of the most popular words in Jordan since it’s the popular traditional dish [...] we suggested ‘Mansaf Baladi’, but then I split it. I thought it would be better to say, ‘*Man Saf Baladi*’, meaning who gobbled my country and who made us reach this deteriorating status, and I believe it’s a better choice. People now understand that the intended underlying meaning isn’t ‘Mansaf Baladi’- the dish, but rather the idea of ‘*Man Saf Baladi*’ with the meaning ‘who ate the country’.

The process behind selecting the title of *Man Saf Baladi* indicates how satire makes complex political issues more accessible. By playing on the word ‘mansaf’, the title immediately connects with the audience through a familiar cultural reference. The transformation of ‘Mansaf Baladi’ into ‘Man Saf Baladi’ reinforces the show’s political message in a digestible manner, making it easy for viewers to grasp its central theme. This linguistic play frames the show’s critique in a way that resonates with everyday language and common experience. The satirical title thus encapsulates a complex critique within a simple, culturally rooted phrase, demonstrating how satire can communicate intricate political ideas in an engaging and comprehensible form. It serves as an entry point into political discourse, using familiar language to translate abstract politics into an accessible and engaging critique.

#### **6.3.1.2.3. Satire as Diagnosing Societal Flaws**

Despite satire’s positive intentions, extant arguments posit that “satire is ultimately a negative form” (Gray et al., 2009, p. 14) and thus risks discouraging audiences and fostering a negative evaluation of political life (Baranowski, 2020; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Shao & Liu, 2019). Against the backdrop of this notion, AHZ reveals a view that pertains to what he sees as political satire’s diagnostic nature. He perceives satire as a tool for examining the sociopolitical landscape and identifying its flaws. In contrast to the notion that political satire is likely to spread pessimism and negativity, he emphasises its constructive role in highlighting and accentuating deficiencies that demand rectification:

I don’t see political satire programmes as programmes that spread negativity. On the contrary, such shows spotlight the location of defect [...] They tell you that you have a defect which needs to be fixed so that it doesn’t worsen.

This perspective aligns with a diagnostic function of political satire comparable to that of a medical procedure. Indeed, AHZ metaphorically likens political satire shows to ‘X-ray’ scanning, with the satirist being a ‘technician’ who scans the sociopolitical body of the country and reveals its internal deficiencies. He contends that confronting deficiencies head-on is imperative to prevent the exacerbation of existing problems in the country. Satire, therefore, not only critiques but also functions as a mechanism for societal improvement. Illustrating his point through commenting on unemployment in Jordan—an issue which surfaces extensively in his satirical show, AHZ iterates:

I mean, when the unemployment rate in Jordan is 50%, but you don’t admit it and claim that everything is fine and our youths have jobs, you would be lying to yourself and delaying your crisis, which will explode in the future. It’s better to know your problem right now, diagnose your illness and treat it.

The emphasis on diagnosis, early awareness, and treatment metaphorically underscores AHZ’s belief in satire’s proactive role in identifying and addressing societal issues. By highlighting deficiencies and the urgency of treating them, satire can potentially pressure the public to drive change and take corrective action.

#### **6.3.1.2.4 Satire as Provocative Force**

While AHZ acknowledges the potential of satire to foster change, he is also aware of its problematising and confrontational nature within the political context in which it operates. Satire exposes authority’s shortcomings (Tang & Bhattacharya, 2011; Ephraim et al., 2016) and encourages opposing voices that break from established norms and the consensus of mainstream political discourse (El Marzouki, 2015; Jones, 2017). In AHZ’s perspective, these outcomes constitute a domain for intellectual conflict (or ‘battle’ in his own words). He contends that he is “in a conflict stage with authority”, and that his duty as a satirical critic is to confront authority. His tool in this conflict is satire, which he perceives as an intellectual form of expression that materialises through challenging political power and polarising public debate, with the aim of creating self-aware citizens who can stand up for themselves and rally against political power. He states:

My battle is a battle of awareness. If awareness or the creation of awareness eventually incites against authority, then that's fine with me. There's no problem.

However, rather than advocating for physical confrontation with political authority, AHZ emphasises satire's role in cultivating an engaged and empowered citizenry. In his view, satire is a means of exercising "pressure through the street" and "creating a public opinion that demands change in the existing political approach". He emphasises:

My battle is to create an individual who is well-aware of his rights and duties and who can speak out for themselves and demand change. When people have this level of awareness, they themselves can confront and rally against authority.

As this comment reveals, AHZ's understanding of satire extends beyond criticising power to involve provoking the public to engage in politics, stand up for themselves and act to achieve the desired change. This understanding aligns with the conception of satire as an "intellectual" force with a "disruptive", "subversive", or even "revolutionary" potential (Griffin, 1994, p 158). Satire, in this way, can mobilise people not through direct action, but essentially through provoking them to question and critique political power, and hence encourage a spirit of civil resistance which can drive a surreptitious, gradual impact on social and political life (Kishtainy, 2009). In tandem with satire's subversive nature, this intellectual provocation can likely explain AHZ's critical relationship with the Jordanian authorities and authorities' actions against him. From the perspective of political decision-makers, AHZ and his satirical discourse may be seen as a mobilising threat—not because they incite direct confrontation, but because they foster a climate of resistance, questioning, and critical thinking among the public, with the potential to undermine established political narratives and, in the long run, political authority.

#### **6.3.1.2.5 Satire as Providing Alternative Voices in the Public Sphere**

A final, yet central, dimension to AHZ's understanding of satire is his perception of satire as a mode of self-expression. Regardless of how others may judge his work, he considers satire a vital avenue for his own voice to be heard in the public sphere:

Despite the high security risk [...] and despite presenting this show for free for many years [...], someone would pop up and say this is just venting. Well [...] what can I do [...] should I not speak out or write? Should I keep silent, so I

won't be just venting? Okay, suppose I keep silent, what would the result be? There would be no opposing voices in the public sphere. There would be no voice except the voice of authority and the voice of the regime itself.

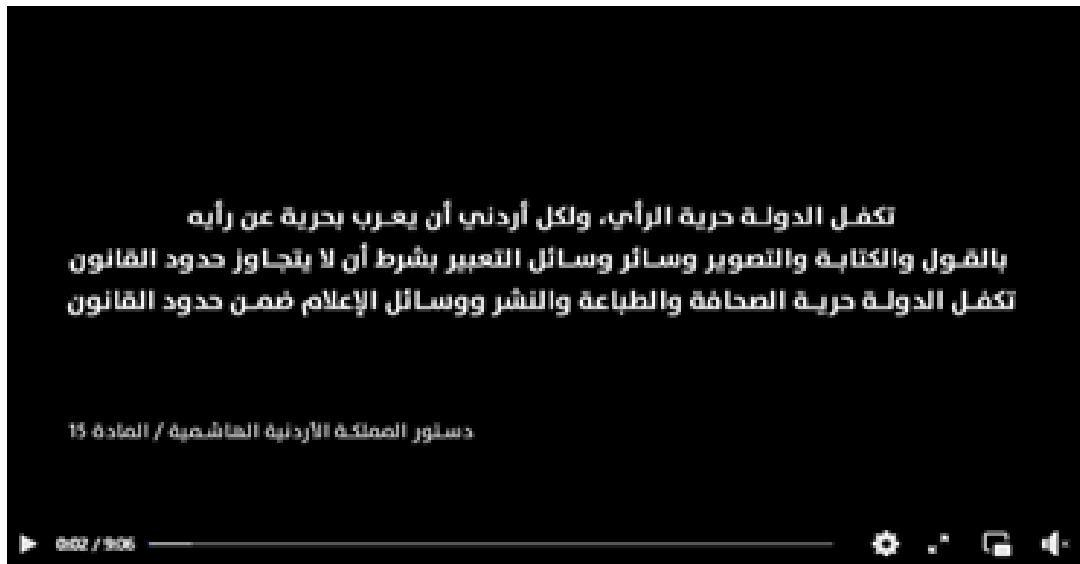
AHZ articulates a sense of duty as a writer, journalist, and intellectual to express himself and not to remain silent, ensuring that the public discourse is not solely dominated by political authority. His resolve to voice his opinion through political satire, despite potential criticism that it serves merely as a venting outlet, stems from his belief that silence would result in a one-sided political discourse dominated entirely by the voice of the regime. His political satire, thus, becomes a necessary form of self-expression to provide an alternative voice, disturb the monolithic mainstream discourse and ensure diverse viewpoints are part of the public dialogue.

In the interview, AHZ refers to political satire in the democratic western tradition, highlighting the freedom and acceptance of satirical shows in the US and Europe and arguing that people behind such shows are merely “expressing their opinions” and playing an important role in the social development of their societies. He juxtaposes this situation to the status of satire in authoritarian environments where satire, which is virtually a form of self-expression, “would be considered as inciting against authority” and hence against the holiness of rulers. Leonard Freedman opines that satire is “an expression of free speech” (Freedman, 2009, p. 164) that “contributes to the central value of democracies, the right of free and open dissent” and can thus function as an indicator of the degree of openness in a political environment (Freedman, 2012, p. 109). In the context of Jordan, the juxtaposition AHZ draws not only highlights the tight limits on expression in authoritarian systems but also implies that satire in such environments does more than merely offering an alternative viewpoint; it negotiates the boundaries of freedom and pushes against the constraints on free expression imposed by political authority in the country. Starting each episode by projecting Article 15 of the Jordanian constitution on a black screen (Figure 6.2), AHZ’s *Man Saf Baladi* reinforces this view, presenting satire as a constant reminder to the Jordanian political authority of the grim state of free expression in the country

and as a call to adhere to the provisions of the Constitution, which guarantees a healthy environment for a diverse public sphere<sup>32</sup>.

**Figure 6.2**

*Screenshot from Man Saf Baladi Show, projecting Article 15 of the Jordanian Constitution*



### 6.3.1.3 AHZ's Perceptions of the Impact of *Man Saf Baladi* Show

Throughout the interview, AHZ revealed an optimistic perspective on the impact of *Man Saf Baladi* show on Jordanian society. It is important to note that while his viewpoints may offer insightful observations, they are also likely to carry the subjectivity typical of an individual's assessment of their own work. Nevertheless, his perspective remains valuable. Although AHZ acknowledges the absence of empirical measurement and research-based judgement, his assessment—based on his observations, personal experience, and interactions with the audience—reveals significant transformative effects. He states:

Unfortunately, we don't have a measuring tool [...] We should have research centres that analyse political shows, evaluate their impact on the society and gauge the amount of the change they make. However, I can give an opinion based

<sup>32</sup> English translation of the text in the figure: The State shall guarantee freedom of opinion. Every Jordanian shall be free to express his opinion by speech, in writing, or by means of photographic representation and other forms of expression, within the limits of the law. Constitution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan/ Article 15.

on my personal experience and through my observations and what I sense from people. Yes, it had a lot of impact.

AHZ believes that *Man Saf Baladi* has served as a catalyst for societal change in key areas, including promoting constitutional awareness, encouraging uninhibited free expression, influencing political behaviour and participation, and fostering critical thinking.

According to AHZ, the show has illuminated viewers' constitutional rights and shifted their perspective from seeing these rights as mere favours granted by the political regime or the monarch to recognising them as state obligations and inherent citizen entitlements. These encompass freedoms such as voicing opinions, accessing employment opportunities, and availing education and healthcare. He believes that the show has played a pivotal role in raising awareness of these constitutional rights through fundamentally altering the way they are perceived by Jordanian youths:

Many young people didn't know their rights; they thought these are merely a favour from the state, the regime, or the king. Through the show, they were made aware that they have a constitutional right to express their opinions; [...] to work and employment; [...] to education and healthcare.

Another key contribution of the show, AHZ believes, is to encourage free expression and empower citizens to express their opinions without fear. He states:

I remember in the past twenty years, criticising a minister would cause disturbance among people. They would get scared. They had no courage to even listen to what one was saying about a minister. Now, they criticise, and their criticism has reached the highest levels without any fear.

According to AHZ's evaluation, the show has served as an encouraging model, cultivating a newfound "boldness among people", and inspiring them to voice their opinions in public spaces without fear. The state of consciousness and boldness created by *Man Saf Baladi* and similar critical content on his social media, AHZ argues, is "highly tangible". It has enabled criticisms to be levelled without fear, with citizens utilising the constitution as the basis for their critique and self-expression. According to AHZ, this empowerment of uninhibited expression has marked a significant shift in Jordanian societal behaviour.

Another significant area of impact, according to AHZ, is the show's influence on the citizens' participation in political life. AHZ demonstrates confidence in the ability of *Man Saf Baladi* to influence the political behaviour of the public:

Of course, it motivates people to participate in political life from our own perspective.

He also states that the show has had a great influence on the Jordanian citizens' behaviour in parliamentary elections and street protests. He contends that *Man Saf Baladi* has contributed to the shaping of the public's attitude toward the election and encouraged voters to deliberately abstain from participating in what he perceives a flawed and non-representative process, leading to a notably low voter turnout:

Through the show, we promoted for a boycott of the election because it doesn't represent us, and it came through a deformed law [...]. When we promoted the boycott, which is a form of political activity, we had a parliament that represented only 29% of the Jordanians. Only 29% of the voters participated in the elections [...] and it's not me who's saying this; all analyses say this. So yes, this show promotes activism and engagement with the political status.

Moreover, while AZH constantly frames his satire as an educative tool aimed at raising awareness, the show has nevertheless been pivotal in influencing political behaviour in the form of mobilising dissenting action and spearheading demonstrations in the streets. This underscores a tension between AHZ's stated intent and the tangible impact of his satire. Though he positions the show as primarily fostering political consciousness, his commentary also suggests a more immediate influence on civic engagement and protest culture. In this context, he speaks of the show's advocacy for several boycott campaigns such as the 'Pull it Over and Switch it Off' and 'Boycott Fuel' campaigns, and its role in inspiring people to act against government decisions, particularly concerning fuel price hikes:

I remember in the 'pull it over and switch it off' campaign [...] we objected to the fuel price hike. The show had a good role in enlightening people as all people had the same impression and the same distress, but people usually need somebody who can at least voice their concern or direct them what to do. I mean, a hashtag inspired by the show, or a phrase extracted from the show might lead people to a political act in the street and this is what actually happened.

Finally, an important impact noted by AHZ is the role of his show in fostering critical thinking among viewers and its ability to prompt them to be more inquisitive and seek further information. AHZ observes a marked shift in the mindset of viewers and their approach to the reception of the state's official discourse disseminated in the public sphere. According to his view, audiences, particularly younger generations, are no longer passive consumers of the state's official discourse. He observes that they now conduct in-depth searches, sift through archived information, compare various news sources, and even scrutinise the backgrounds of state officials. AHZ contends that exposure to *Man Saf Baladi* has played a crucial role in nurturing viewers' analytical approach and developing their skill set, prompting them to question and challenge the narratives presented by political authority:

There has become a critical dimension among people. They have become more cognisant and more forethinking now [...] when the news is broadcast on the official channel, you find tens of opposing stories which refute the official narrative using documented information, pictures, videos and with reference to exact dates. People would dig deep and search archived information and search even the history of the official speaker. So, this show and other shows helped in burgeoning- if we may say- awareness of people to argue with authority which used to give us a ready-made meal, like the kid's meal; you either have it or die starving. This is over now! Any viewer with an account on social media can search and refute government allegations.

Altogether, AHZ's perceptions of *Man Saf Baladi* underscore a constructive role of political satire in Jordanian society. While the absence of empirical evidence leaves room for subjectivity in his judgements about the impact of his work, his perceptions and observations as the creator of political satire are still significant to the understanding of its nature. Beyond entertainment, AHZ's political satire emerges as a vital public communication tool for social development in the context of Jordan.

#### **6.3.1.4 Perceptions of Challenges to Political Satire**

Challenges to satirical work as perceived by AHZ include institutional, operational, and societal factors.

#### **6.3.1.4.1 Institutional Challenges**

According to AHZ, institutional barriers, particularly state intervention and suppression of freedom, are perceived as the foremost challenge to political satire in Jordan. As in most non-democratic countries, restrictions on freedom of expression and the government's power to censor or shut down satirical content present a significant obstacle to political satire. While AHZ acknowledges having some degree of freedom in his work, he notes that his show has faced interruptions and suspensions from televised channels due to intervention by Jordanian authorities. As a result, he must navigate his limited freedom with caution to protect himself and his team; a challenge which reflects a constant struggle to sustain satirical work in a political environment that views political satire as a threat:

If we look at similar shows in Jordan, they have much less margin of freedom than that of *Man Saf Baladi*. This doesn't mean we live in a state of absolute freedom, and the evidence is that the show was stopped several times, the last of which was two months ago. It was suspended from Al-Arabi TV. So, we exercise our freedom within what's viably possible for us, without risking the crew and without exposing them to legal accountability, security accountability and security pressures.

#### **6.3.1.4.2 Operational Challenges**

Other challenges to political satire are operational and have to do with commercial or financial resources required for the production of satirical shows, especially shows as prominent as the *Man Saf Baladi* show. Commercial sponsors and local channels in Jordan are reluctant to support work that challenges the political status quo and annoys political authority, leaving AHZ with the constant concern of financial instability:

You know, a show like this cannot be done by one person. I can't film and montage, direct, and produce this show on my own. It requires a budget and a production company; that's why, unfortunately, the show has been stopped several times, either due to the lack of sponsors or the fact that there's no local channel that would host it and air it on its screen.

This inherent operational challenge hinders the consistency and longevity of AHZ's satirical work and prevents him from broadcasting on televised commercial media. Consequently, he is compelled to rely solely on social media platforms to ensure his show reaches the Jordanian

audience, minimising the intervention of media institutions and state authorities. In this way, AHZ believes he can maintain the level of freedom he himself sets for the show.

The relative freedom that AHZ gains by disseminating his satire via social media is crucial. In authoritarian contexts, where traditional media primarily serve the interests of those in power rather than the public, the internet and social media function as alternative platforms, enabling people to express their opinions, challenge authority, and shape public discourse (Tang & Bhattacharya, 2011). Since they are relatively free from the tight controls of the state, social media provide public communicators a more liberated space to criticise and expose truths that are often obscured or ignored by Jordanian media channels. This autonomy in content and distribution enables AHZ to explore sensitive topics, critique power structures more boldly, and expose hypocrisy and controversies of politicians in a candid manner. Such an approach would likely be censored or even totally banned on traditional media channels. The impact of this unfiltered political discourse on public awareness can be significant. Through uncensored satire, viewers are exposed to alternative narratives and critical perspectives on politics and political issues that are rarely addressed in traditional, state-controlled media. This, in turn, encourages them to question, reflect on, and critically evaluate the realities of their political landscape.

#### **6.3.1.4.3 Societal Challenges**

Like many societies, Jordan has its own set of social and cultural norms. AHZ recognises these norms and understands the importance of not crossing social boundaries with his satirical discourse. This approach aligns with the concept of the “normative community”, which suggests that every society or social group has unwritten rules about what can be considered acceptable material for satirical humour (Davies et al., 2008, p. 8). AHZ acknowledges Jordanian societal values that restrict him from using profanity or explicitly insulting his targets in his satirical work. Balancing satire’s power to critique with respect for cultural sensitivities poses a social challenge, one that AHZ navigates adeptly in his work. He states:

People who have been watching us for years, know that our discourse does not contain profanity or sexual implications; neither does it include insults, degradation or bullying of others.

With this in mind, AHZ endeavours to maintain a strong ethical stance in his satirical work. This necessitates constant assessing of the appropriateness of his content, refraining from personal attacks or sexual insults, and avoiding culturally sensitive themes. He aligns his satire with a sense of moral responsibility that forces him to exercise self-censorship and take viewers' criticism into consideration in order to refine the show:

I read comments available on my personal pages or on the YouTube channel [...] and I take the real criticism in the comments into consideration. I mean, the criticism that improves my performance and the crew's, and we try our best to implement it.

AHZ speaks of receiving comments about using inappropriate expressions in the early episodes of one season of his show. He took these comments into consideration when producing subsequent episodes. By crafting his satirical discourse with careful attention to the sociocultural boundaries of what can and cannot be joked about in the Jordanian context, AHZ can arguably strengthen 'in-groupness' through the mutual identification of values with his audience (Meyer 2000; Tsakona & Popa, 2011). This approach also reduces the possibility of satire's 'misfire' (Simpson, 2003), paving the way for a successful and potentially influential satirical discourse.

Taken together, AHZ's perceptions reveal that satirical work in the context of Jordan is far from a straightforward endeavour; it is a complex and multifaceted experience fraught with both external and internal challenges. These challenges include navigating state pressures and financial constraints, as well as observing cultural norms, and upholding ethical considerations to ensure both success and continuity. Nevertheless, these challenges also underscore the significance of satire as a vital tool for political communication and societal change. AHZ's resolve and adept navigation of these challenges within this intricate landscape of Jordan testify to this enduring nature of satire.

## **6.4 Concluding Discussion**

The findings presented in this chapter contribute significantly to the understanding of political satire and its potential impact within the context of Jordan. Looking at satire through the lens of AHZ, the creator of Jordan's most prominent satirical show, can provide valuable insights into its multifaceted nature and operation as a means of public communication. These insights

support its potential capacity to impact political life and function as a ‘route to social change’ (Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019) in the Jordanian sociopolitical landscape.

First and foremost, AHZ’s perceptions of his role and the nature of his satire highlight the remarkable ability of this form of public communication to disrupt conformity and challenge dominant political narratives. Political satire, as perceived in AHZ’s narratives, serves as a tool to break through group mentality and encourage individuals to think critically about political authority and mainstream discourse. This function is particularly significant in Jordan, where autocracy, limited political rights, and restricted civil liberties (Freedom House, 2023) create an environment in which political engagement is often discouraged and adherence to the status quo is the norm. In such a context, satire acts as a catalyst for political awareness, prompting individuals to question prevailing power structures and engage in more critical discussions about governance. Through its ability to expose contradictions and critique authority, satire fosters a shift from passive acceptance to active reflection, encouraging engagement in critical dialogue and positioning itself as an essential force in reshaping public discourse.

Primarily, political satire involves two elements: playful, entertaining humour and serious critique. However, not all satirical works qualify equally to perform these social functions and drive impact (Lichtenstein et al., 2021). Focusing on the playful, entertaining side of a political satire may marginalise its impact. The ability to balance these two elements and establish serious intent, along with a more serious presentation of politics, determines its capacity to make a constructive contribution (Nabi et al., 2007). As revealed in the interview, the political satire created by AHZ is far from the merely playful forms which are often devoid of substantive content. AHZ distinguishes his work from shallow satire—or what he views as ‘pure entertainment’—divorced from its constructive role. Koivukoski and Odmark designate such forms of satire as being “based on the mere carnivalisation of politics with little to no substance” (Koivukoski & Odmark, 2020, p. 743). Furthermore, Dieter Declercq challenges the classification of such forms as satire and labels them as “pseudo-satire”, differentiating them from fully-fledged forms of satire that can entertain while simultaneously serving a critical function (Declercq, 2018, p. 321). The version of satire espoused by AHZ underscores its role as

a form of serious expression, a vehicle for exploring serious political topics, and a means of educating the public, while providing critical insights into political issues in a relatable way.

A remarkable aspect of AHZ's political satire, as revealed in his perspective, lies in his commitment to journalism and his adoption of an activist role with a clear political agenda. This approach stands in contrast to political satire in established democracies where political satire programmes "promote themselves as delivering entertainment first and foremost", and satirists refrain from adopting a journalistic function, considering themselves "comedians or entertainers" (Edson et al. 2018, p. 141). Scholars and satirists as well often argue that entertainment is satire's main agenda and making people laugh is satirists' primary goal (Baym, 2005; Burgers & Brugman, 2022). Jon Stewart, whose satirical show dominates North American satire research, for example, denies that his show engages in serious politics and identifies himself primarily as having an entertaining role (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007). Similarly, John Oliver, host of the famous *Last Week Tonight* programme, emphasises that he is 'not a journalist at all' and he is a 'comedian', when asked about the journalistic role of his show (Brachmann, 2016). In the same vein, Catalan satirists highlight entertainment and "comic relief" as their primary function and use the "court jester" analogy to describe the role of their satire in the Catalonian political environment (Alvarez Fuentes, 2019, p. 253). German satirists too consider entertainment as "the primary goal in their work"; nonetheless, they identify with an entertainer's "accommodative role" associated with development of public opinion (Lichtenstein et al., 2021, p. 1763). In the context of Jordan and AHZ's *Man Saf Baladi* show, satire is seen as a core journalistic practice and a form of political activism, with the satirist engaged in a dissenting intellectual challenge against political authority for the primary goal of revealing reality, shaping public discourse and, eventually, driving sociopolitical change. The relevance of entertainment to this continuum lies solely in its audience-attraction function.

This view of satire in Jordan contradicts the notion that satire primarily fosters political cynicism and discourages citizens from engaging in politics (e.g., Baumgartner & Morris 2006; Hart & Hartelius, 2007; Baranowski, 2020). Instead, AHZ's perspective aligns more with the notion of satire as a force for societal awareness and political mobilisation. This stark contrast can be exemplified by comparing AHZ's perspective to Shao and Liu's perspective on political satire in

the Chinese context (Shao & Liu, 2019). While Shao and Liu perceive satire in authoritarian systems such as that of China as a ‘route to cynicism’ that breaks the citizens’ trust in politics, reduces their self-confidence to impact politics and discourages them from participating in political life; hence, perpetuates the status quo and helps political authority maintain its stability, AHZ’s approach conversely positions satire as a means to challenge political authority and push for change through provoking citizens to take action and, thus, counter the road to cynicism and engage people in political life. AHZ’s perceptions of the impact of his *Man Saf Baladi* political satire and its role in promoting constitutional awareness, encouraging free expression and political participation, and sharpening citizens’ critical thinking and encouraging them to dig-deep and seek information speak to the legitimacy of this view.

Moreover, AHZ’s experiences and perceptions of his own satirical work challenge previous academic arguments that political satire in Jordan serves as a carnivalesque form of licensed catharsis with little tangible effect on the ground, and thus supports the political system maintain the political status quo (Barahmeh, 2020, 2022, 2023). A satirist whose work supports the system would normally be a cogwheel in the system’s machine. They would criticise at night and enjoy the economic and political privileges of the system the next day (Paletz, 1990). AHZ’s ongoing conflict with Jordanian political authorities, characterised by authorities’ constant attempts to hinder his work, destabilise his income, and silence his voice, serves as compelling evidence that his satire is impactful and is indeed a source of contention for the political establishment. This conflict between AHZ and the Jordanian authorities contradicts the notion that satire in Jordan is a passive and inconsequential form of popular resistance that serves the political system in perpetuating the status quo. Altogether, AHZ’s insights into Jordanian satire offer a new way for understanding satire. These insights support a strong argument that what has been traditionally and academically viewed as merely cathartic outlet in Jordan can in fact be a catalyst for political awareness and social action, despite the challenges it faces from political authorities.

The following chapter will shift to the audience of *Man Saf Baladi* and explore their reception of the show through analysing a collection of viewers’ online responses to the show’s videos posted on its Facebook page.

## **Chapter 7: Audience Reception: Viewers' Online Responses to *Man Saf Baladi* on its Facebook Page**

### **7.1 Introduction**

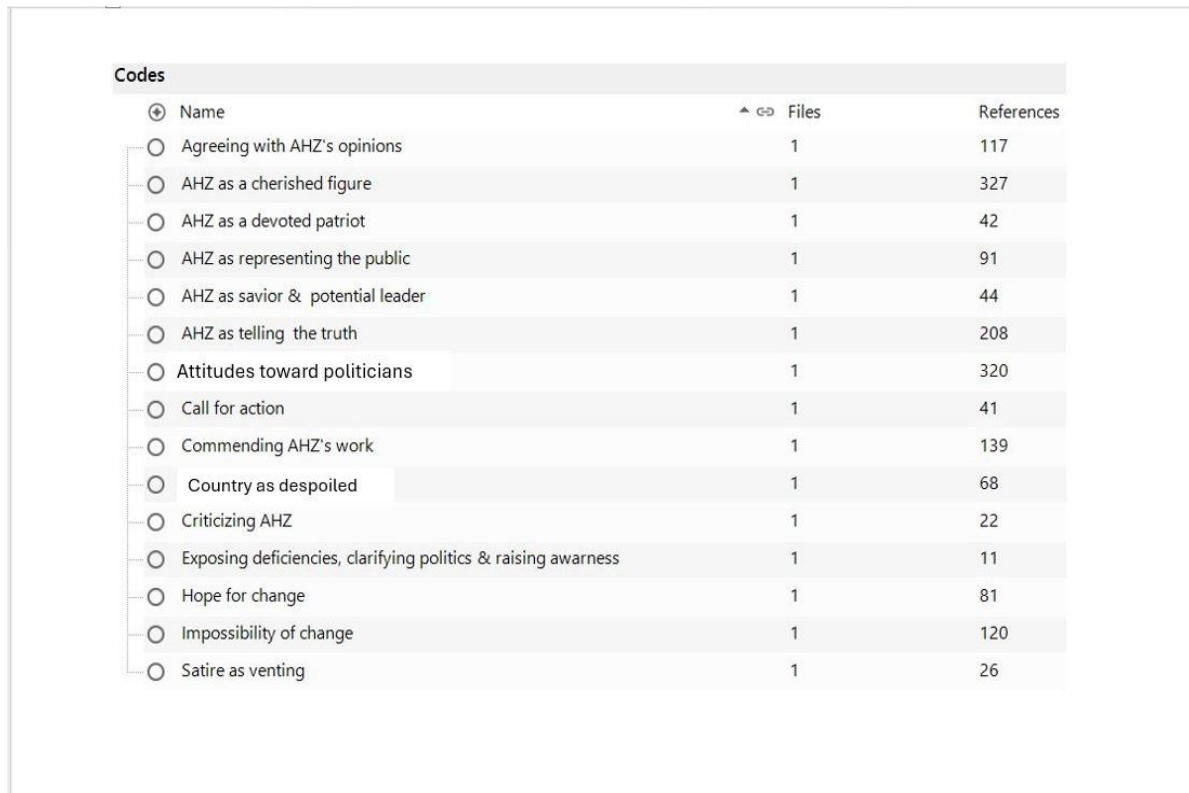
This chapter presents the findings of the thematic analysis of a collection of viewers' online responses to the *Man Saf Baladi* show on its Facebook page. The comments subjected to analysis were the viewers' written responses to the 20 online videos included in the study. Originally written in Arabic, these comments have been translated into English to add a layer of anonymity by avoiding the inclusion of the verbatim Arabic text in the study. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.7 for a detailed discussion of the translation process). The analysis in the chapter seeks to explore how viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* interact with the satirical show online and identify the salient discourses that emerge in their comments. The chapter discusses the insights that this analysis provides into the understanding of the nature of satire in the Jordanian context.

### **7.2 Findings of the Analysis of the Viewers' Comments**

As indicated in Chapter 3, (Section 3.5.1.4), a thematic analysis of the viewers' comments was carried out using NVivo data management software. The comments were manually extracted from the show's Facebook page and stored in a Microsoft Word document. A translated English version of the comments was uploaded into NVivo and served as the dataset for the analysis. An initial stage of the analysis involved 'open coding' (Barat, 2012, Glaser 2016, Saldana 2013), whereby viewers' comments were read thoroughly and recurring patterns and concepts in the comments were labelled with codes as they emerged inductively from the data. The process resulted in the identification of fifteen initial codes. These codes can be seen in Figure 7.1 along with the frequencies of their references (i.e., comments or comment segments that have been assigned to each code).

**Figure 7.1**

*Screenshot from NVivo Software Showing the Initial Codes in the Analysis of the Viewers' Comments*



Name	Files	References
Agreeing with AHZ's opinions	1	117
AHZ as a cherished figure	1	327
AHZ as a devoted patriot	1	42
AHZ as representing the public	1	91
AHZ as savior & potential leader	1	44
AHZ as telling the truth	1	208
Attitudes toward politicians	1	320
Call for action	1	41
Commending AHZ's work	1	139
Country as despoiled	1	68
Criticizing AHZ	1	22
Exposing deficiencies, clarifying politics & raising awareness	1	11
Hope for change	1	81
Impossibility of change	1	120
Satire as venting	1	26

Subsequent to this stage, axial coding was employed, whereby these initial codes were collated into broader categories based on their mutual characteristics and interconnections. The aggregation of the codes allowed for the emergence of four major categories that encapsulated the various ways in which viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* show respond to its episodes online. These categories provided a comprehensive understanding of the viewers' comments which centred on their:

- Perceptions of AHZ.
- Reaction to the content of *Man Saf Baladi* show.
- Reflection on the political landscape of the country.
- Reflection on the nature of satire and AHZ's satirist role.

Figure 7.2 shows these categories as the parent codes (i.e. major themes) in NVivo software along with their connected child themes (i.e. sub-themes). These will be discussed in detail in the following subsections.

**Figure 7. 2**

*Screenshot from NVivo Software Showing All Codes in the Analysis of the Viewers' Comments*

Codes			
+	Name	Files	References
[-]	Perceptions of AHZ	0	0
	○ AHZ as a cherished figure	1	327
	○ AHZ as a devoted patriot	1	42
	○ AHZ as representing the public	1	91
	○ AHZ as savior & potential leader	1	44
	○ AHZ as telling the truth	1	208
[-]	Reaction to show's content	0	0
	○ Agreeing with AHZ's opinions	1	117
	○ Commending AHZ's work	1	139
[-]	Reflection on satire and AHZ's role	0	0
	○ Criticizing AHZ	1	22
	○ Exposing deficiencies, clarifying politics & raising awareness	1	11
	○ Satire as venting	1	26
[-]	Reflection on the political landscape	0	0
	○ Attitudes toward politicians	1	320
	○ Call for action	1	41
	○ Country as despoiled	1	68
	○ Hope for change	1	81
	○ Impossibility of change	1	120

## **7.2.1 Viewers' Perceptions of AHZ**

In their online comments on the show's Facebook page, viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* reflected a multifaceted perception of its presenter, AHZ. The analysis of the comments posted on the episodes involved in the study revealed an intricate construction of AHZ as a candid truth-teller, a representative of the common public, a devoted patriot, a saviour and potential leader, and a cherished figure.

### **7.2.1.1 AHZ as a Truth-Teller**

The thematic analysis of the viewers' comments foregrounded the viewers' perception of AHZ as a candid truth-teller (208 instances). This perception was vividly expressed through a variety of assertions and acknowledgments that revealed the viewers' profound trust in AHZ's honesty and the veracity of his satiric discourse. He was depicted as an honest individual who tells truths that are often left unspoken in Jordanian public discourse.

#### **Extracts 7.1- 7.14**

7.1. I swear to God you're an honest person.

7.2. I swear you are telling the truth.

7.3. You are telling the core of the truth.

7.4. Everything you say is true.

7.5. What you say is 100% true.

7.6. You are the voice of truth and the beacon which we cherish.

7.7. I swear nobody speaks the truth like you.

7.8. Your words are gems, and the grievances of the citizens are in our hearts; nobody speaks the truth except you.

7.9. You speak what happens in real life with a clear conscience.

7.10. Your words are realistic and 100% true.

7.11 May your mouth be safe! You said it all. Your words come from an honest heart.

7.12. May God keep you steadfast in speaking the truth.

7.13. May God keep you safe, give you long life and keep you steadfast in speaking the truth.

7.14. You are a nashmi who dares to speak the truth and fulfil his duty.

As can be seen in Extracts 7.1- 7.14, comments consistently emphasised the validity and relevance of the arguments AHZ presents in *Man Saf Baladi*. Comments such as “I swear you are telling the truth” (7.2), “You’re telling the core of the truth” (7.3), “Everything you say is true” (7.4), and “What you say is %100 true” (7.5) were common in the dataset, and they can be seen as direct affirmations of the trust that viewers place in AHZ’s discourse. They indicate that AHZ is perceived as a reliable narrator of the sociopolitical reality of his audience. He is also metaphorically described as the “voice of truth” and the “beacon” that his viewers “cherish”<sup>33</sup> (7.6). This metaphorical portrayal underscores a unique position that AHZ occupies in the minds of his audience. It conveys the high esteem that the audience of the show hold for his persona, perceiving him not only as an honest show presenter, but also as a guiding voice in a political landscape which is often obscured by misinformation and concealment of truth. This is evident in comments that reflect viewers’ perception that AHZ’s approach to revealing the truth of politics in Jordan is unparalleled among political commentators, as exemplified in Extracts 7.7 and 7.8, where commenters express the belief that he is the only one who speaks the truth.

In a similar vein, statements such as “Your words are gems and the grievances of the citizens are in our hearts” (7.8), “You speak what happens in real life with a clear conscience” (7.9) and “Your words are very realistic and 100% true” (7.10) highlight AHZ’s ability to articulate the real-life experiences and sentiments of his viewers. These comments reveal that viewers not only agree with AHZ’s perspectives but also feel that he speaks to the essence of their lived experiences. They suggest that AHZ’s honesty lies not only in the accuracy of the information he

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<sup>33</sup> The equivalent of these metaphorical expressions in the original Arabic text was ‘sawt alhaq’ (literally: voice of truth or rightness) and ‘nibras na’ataz beh’ (literally: light or cresset we take pride in).

presents, but also in his ability to voice the collective experiences and feelings of his audience and thus act as a mirror to their grievous reality.

One of the most recurring phrases in the comments was “May your mouth be safe” (7.11), along with its other variant “May your tongue be safe”. The Arabic equivalents of these phrases are traditional Jordanian expressions of approval and encouragement. They are often articulated in response to an outspoken person who speaks direct and veracious words without reservation or prevarication. Their recurring appearance in the comments can be read as an expression of the appreciation that viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* show have for AHZ’s candour. In addition to signifying viewers’ agreement with AHZ’s discourse, they express a desire for his continued safety and ability to speak out, and they reflect his viewers’ perception of the risks associated with political critique and truth-telling in the country.

Further reinforcing the notion of perceived risks associated with speaking the truth in the political context of Jordan was the recurrence of religious and heartfelt invocations in comments that highlight AHZ as a truth-teller. Invocations such as “May God keep you steadfast in speaking the truth” (7.12) and “May God keep you safe, give you long life and keep you steadfast in telling the truth” (7.13) were quite common. These invocations extend beyond mere appreciation and instil the quality of truth-telling with a religious and moral dimension. They suggest that viewers recognise AHZ as a valuable truth-teller on the one hand, and they align this quality with religious virtues and moral integrity, on the other. The viewers, in other words, can be said to intertwine AHZ’s act of speaking the truth with divine support and elevate it to a higher-level act; that is an act of religious and moral righteousness which aligns with divine principles.

Moreover, the description of AHZ as “a nashmi who dares to speak the truth and fulfil his duty” (7.14) brings to light another crucial aspect of the viewers’ perception, that is, an aspect of courage and duty. The term ‘nashmi’<sup>34</sup>, often used to describe someone who is brave and noble (Al-Mahadin, 2022), highlights the viewers’ perception of AHZ as someone who not only speaks

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<sup>34</sup> Nashmi (plural, nashama) is an Arabic word of obscure origin (Al-Mahadin, 2022). The word is used as a reference label in Jordan. It denotes trustworthiness and noble manners, such as “chivalry, generosity, hospitality and courage” (Al-Mahadin, 2022, p. 63). The term and its culture-specific connotations will be discussed in further detail in Section 7.2.13 that addresses viewers’ perception of AHZ as a devoted patriot.

the truth but does so bravely and fulfils a perceived civic duty. Such a description indicates viewers' acknowledgement of the potential risks and challenges associated with speaking truth to power and underlines their perception of the courage inherent in AHZ's role as a satirical critic operating in an authoritative political environment. Therefore, viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* show are arguably said to view AHZ's satire as an act of valour and heroism in the face of potential risk.

#### **7.2.1.2 AHZ as a Representative of the Common Public**

Analysis of the viewers' comments on the *Man Saf Baladi* show revealed a strong audience perception of AHZ as representative of the common public (91 instances). In their comments, viewers tend to portray AHZ as a critical voice for the underrepresented and the marginalised segments of society. These comments collectively construct AHZ as an emblematic figure who articulates the struggles and aspirations of the ordinary Jordanian people, especially those from the lower socioeconomic strata.

#### **Extracts 7.15- 7.28**

7.15. Keep speaking out about these significant topics which express the pulse of the downtrodden and the honourable people in this homeland. You always put your finger on the pain.

7.16. You are the most honest man who voices out the Jordanian pulse.

7.17 You are the tongue in which the citizens speak.

7.18. You are the pen of the poor and the voice of the needy. Keep speaking out, Ustad<sup>35</sup> Ahmad. You are the best to express our voice.

7.19. Thanks to those who write, speak, film, and produce to represent the voice of the people.

7.20. All gratitude and appreciation, Ustad Ahmad as you are expressing what's in our minds.

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<sup>35</sup> Ustad is an honorific title in Arabic, often used for teachers, scholars, and university professors.

7.21. I swear your talk expresses the feelings of every citizen.

7.22. Your words touch the heart of our problem.

7.23. This is the most realistic show that represents the middle class.

7.24. You spotlight the pain that we feel, dear.

7.25. Ustad Ahmad, you are the best to express what we go through.

7.26. Man, you represent the nation, north to south and east to west.

7.27. You are the voice of the pain of every Jordanian and every person who loves this country [...] You're the clear conscience, feeling, and authenticity of Jordan and the official spokesperson of the citizens.

7.28. Ustad Ahmad. You will always be the tongue and the word that express our concerns and problems. You will always be the hope for all sincere people, and we will keep on working for our homeland, and keep reverberating 'it will be fixed, sooner or later'.

As can be seen in Extracts 7.15- 7.28, viewers portray AHZ as a representative of the common public. Their comments commend his ability to address significant political and economic issues that resonate with the “pulse” of the disenfranchised people in the country, (7.15 & 7.16) and highlight his role in giving voice to their experiences and expressing their concerns in the Jordanian public sphere. This portrayal is further reinforced by metaphorical descriptions of AHZ as “the tongue” of the citizens (7.17 & 7.28) and “the pen of the poor and the voice of the needy” (7.18), which all indicate that viewers perceive him not merely as a show presenter, but as an advocate writer and a spokesperson for their collective grievances and shared concerns.

Various comments expressed viewers' appreciation for AHZ and his work. This appreciation is rooted in commenters' belief that AHZ genuinely cares for the Jordanian citizens and endeavours to represent their voice, as exemplified by Extracts 7.19 and 7.20. This sense of gratitude extends to AHZ's ability to express the “feelings” of the citizens (7.21), and “touch the heart of [their] problem” (7.22), which suggests that AHZ's discourse is conceived of as representing the audience on a personal and communal level. The notion that AHZ's satirical show is seen as “the

most realistic show that represents the middle class” (7.23) further consolidates his perceived status as a spokesperson for a broad segment of the Jordanian society that often feels overlooked by political authority and underrepresented in mainstream media narratives.

AHZ’s expression of political and economic issues in his satirical show is widely seen by his viewers as pinpointing “the pain” of the citizens, as exemplified in Extracts 7. 15 and 7.24, with some viewers asserting that AHZ is “the best to express what [they] go through” (7.25). These comments can, on the one hand, reveal viewers’ strong belief in AHZ’s ability to voice the shared experiences and life challenges faced by his audience, and on the other hand, indicate the ability of his discourse to foster a sense of identification and solidarity among its members.

The recurring theme of perceiving AHZ as a conduit for the public’s voice is further encapsulated in postulating him as representing “the nation, north to south and east to west” (7.26). Such a postulation further highlights AHZ’s broad appeal across different segments of Jordanian society and, at the same time, functions as a testament to his role in reifying the collective voice of the public.

Moreover, AHZ’s spokespersonship is celebrated for its authenticity and sincerity of its engagement with societal issues as he is seen as “the sound of the pain of every Jordanian” and “the clear conscience, feeling, and authenticity of Jordan” (7.27). While demonstrating the emotional and moral depth that viewers attribute to AHZ’s work, such enthusiastic endorsement can also indicate the extent to which viewers consider him as an essential figure in navigating the challenges and complexities of the Jordanian society. This sentiment is further echoed in the viewers’ conception of AHZ as a persistent voice of hope and resilience, as articulated in Extract 7.28, where he is described as “the hope for all sincere people”. According to this view, AHZ’s role transcends mere commentary to embody the aspiration of his audience towards positive change and, thus, reinforces their belief that their country will one day be reformed. This dual construction of AHZ as both a mirror to the nation’s struggles and a source of hope for the citizens can be an indicator of his impact on the Jordanian public discourse, where he presumably reinforces self-efficacy and encourages continued engagement and advocacy for the reform of Jordan among his audience.

### **7.2.1.3 AHZ as a Devoted Patriot**

The theme of AHZ being perceived by his audience as a devoted patriot emerged noticeably through their comments on his show (42 instances). Various comments included expressions of respect, pride, and admiration of AHZ's patriotism and reflected a deep acknowledgement of his commitment to his country and its people. In their entirety, these comments highlight a connection between AHZ's public discourse and a collective sense of national pride among his viewers who see him as a sincere, free, and noble man and portray him as a loyal patriot who advocates for social justice in Jordan and for the rights of its citizens.

#### **Extracts 7.29- 7.41**

7.29. You are an honourable patriot.

7.30. Ustad AHZ, you are a great patriot and a sincere person.

7.31. I swear you are a noble man.

7.32. You are a genuine man.

7.33. May God reward you for your sincere patriotism.

7.34. Your criticism is constructive, and you express your patriotism respectfully and effectively. The country needs this kind of political and social thought.

7.35. As long as you speak what happens in real life with a clear conscience, this is a bet that you are a patriot and cannot be sold.

7.36. I pray that you and the likes of you get a well-deserved tribute. You are a genuine son of Jordan. You are a media man who cares for his homeland and its poor citizens.

7.37. Brother Ahmad, you are the free loyal son of this homeland. You are the conscience of the honourable people.

7.38. You are a free Jordanian and descendant of free men. Jordan will be well as long as there are real men like you.

7.39. You are a free genuine nashmi, May God please you!

7.40. I swear you are one of the symbols of this beloved country.

7.41. You are the conscience of all Jordanians [...]. I see Wasfi Tal in you.

As can be seen throughout Extracts 7.29- 7.41, AHZ is portrayed by his viewers as a devoted patriot. He is frequently referred to as an “honourable patriot”, a “great patriot and a sincere person”, a “noble man”, and a “genuine man” with “sincere patriotism” (7.29- 7.33). These descriptions from the audience suggest that AHZ is seen as the embodiment of values that are deeply esteemed by the Jordanian public, such as sincerity, honour, commitment, and sense of duty to the nation, which collectively constitute their ideals of patriotism. According to this view, AHZ is not just a media person who satirically comments on political issues; he is an active contributor to the Jordanian socio-political discourse whose contribution is grounded in what is perceived to be a sincere reflection of the concerns of the Jordanian public.

Viewers commend AHZ for his “constructive” criticism and his ability to express patriotic sentiments in a manner that is both respectful and effective, perceiving his discourse as fostering a culture of sociopolitical thought that is required for the development of the country (7.34). His critical approach to addressing national issues and presenting “real life” experiences with sincerity and “clear conscience” (7.35), in addition to his care for the “poor citizens” and engagement with their concerns (7.36) is regarded by his viewers as acts of devotion and dedication to the country and its people. From his viewers’ perspective, these acts showcase him as a free man with national integrity and a loyal figure who “cannot be sold” (7.35) or tainted by the influence and corruption of political power.

Viewers’ recurring reference to AHZ as a “genuine son of Jordan”, “free loyal son of this homeland”, “the conscience of the honourable people”, and “free Jordanian and descendant of free men (7.36- 7.38) further consolidates the esteemed position ascribed to him within the community, with his perceived sense of patriotism and loyalty to Jordan resonating widely among viewers. Such descriptions emphasise his persona as a bearer of national and ethical standards within the Jordanian community and elevate him to the status of a national symbol of pride. Labelling him as a “genuine nashmi” (7.39) and “one of the symbols” of the country (7.40) is a strong indicator of the connection his audience make between his character and the

Jordanian national identity. The term ‘nashmi’, in particular, is a reference term that holds significant socio-cultural connotations associated with the ideals of the Jordanian identity. The Jordanian football team, for example, is monikered as ‘The Nashama’ by sports commentators and fans across the Arab world (Roya News, 2024). Similarly, the term is often applied to individuals and groups who are in service to the country as an embodiment of their resilience and sense of duty, such as Jordan’s armed forces and civil defence officers who are collectively referred to as ‘Nashama Al-Watan’ (The nations’ Nashama) in recognition of their role as protectors and loyal servants of the country (Al-Mahadin, 2022). By applying this ‘nashmi’ label to AHZ, viewers honour him as a national hero who aligns with the values that define the Jordanian identity. Furthermore, the notion that AHZ is compared to a historical figure such as Wasfi Tal (7.41) – who is a Jordanian politician and statesman widely considered as the most popular figure in Jordan’s history (The Jordan Times, 2023) and annually commemorated by Jordanians as a national symbol for his commitment to Jordan and his anti-corruption legacy (Hamdan & Sayyed, 2022) – underscores the viewers’ recognition of AHZ as a modern symbol of dedication to the nation. The analogy drawn by likening AHZ to the late Wasfi Tal emphasises a strong viewers’ perception of AHZ as a living example of patriotism, whose acts and words resonate deeply with the ideals of loyalty and service to the Jordanian nation.

#### **7.2.1.4 AHZ as a Saviour and Potential Leader**

The analysis of the viewers’ comments revealed a notable audience perception of AHZ as a saviour and protentional leader for the Jordanian nation (44 instances). This theme was derived from comments and segments of comments that indicate viewers’ desire for AHZ to assume a political leadership role and reflect their confidence in his potential to address national issues and his capability of making change and steering the country towards reform and progress, as exemplified throughout Extracts 7.42- 7.54.

#### **Extracts 7.42- 7.54**

7.42. Jordan will be well as long as there are true men like you.

7.43. It should get fixed as long as there are still people like you in this country.

7.44. May God keep you well and healthy and may you live long enough to see the homeland recovered by the efforts of good people like you.

7.45. We want the master of the country<sup>36</sup> to bring together all the honourable people, and I know there are many like you, who can lead the country to safety.

7.46. I swear if you run for election, I will relocate to Ramtha<sup>37</sup> just to vote for you.

7.47. I swear we will build a statue of you at the 4<sup>th</sup> Circle when it gets fixed.

7.48. You are the one who should represent Jordan, not X or Y<sup>38</sup>.

7.49. You deserve a position because you represent the voice of the people.

7.50. Why don't they appoint you as a minister? I swear it's the likes of you who should be in charge.

7.51. You should be the prime minister.

7.52. I wish you Ustad Ahmad would become a prime minister; maybe things would get right in this country.

7.53. I wish they give you the prime minister position and you would be enabled to put the right people in the right positions.

7.54. I wish you, Ustad Ahmad would become the prime minister and that the people gather around you.

The perception of AHZ as a saviour and potential leader is intertwined with the viewers' recognition of challenges that face the country, such as corruption, incompetent governance, social injustice, and economic difficulties. Against the backdrop of these challenges, viewers' comments revealed a strong desire for a transformational leadership that can save the nation, of which AHZ is seen as an embodiment. As can be seen in Extracts 7.42-7.43, the commenters

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<sup>36</sup> Master of the country (Arabic: 'sayyed albilad') is a figurative expression, commonly used in Jordan as a reference to the King.

<sup>37</sup> Ramtha is the name of a Jordanian city which is the hometown and electorate to which AHZ belongs.

<sup>38</sup> The Arabic words 'siin or saad' are used in the original text to generically refer to politicians. These words correspond to the Arabic letters س (siin) and ص (saad) which equivalently correspond to the use of 'X or Y' in English as placeholders for unnamed individuals.

convey a strong belief in the ability of AHZ (and his ilk) to drive change and contribute to the betterment of the country. Assertions such as “Jordan will be well so long as there are true men like you” (7.42) and “It should get fixed as long as there are still people like you” (7.43) indicate a yearning for change. Simultaneously, they instil AHZ (and similar figures) with a messianic quality and portray him as a transformative reformer who is capable of driving the country out of its adversities.

This perceived saviour persona is further emphasised by viewers’ hope for AHZ’s health and longevity to witness the country “recovered by the efforts of good people like [him]” (7.44), and their desire for the King of Jordan, as the highest political power, to unite individuals with honesty and integrity such as that perceived in AHZ and empower them with political authority that enables them “to lead the country to safety” (7.45). The implications of these statements highlight AHZ as a pivotal figure who can partake in the country’s recovery and reform process and portray him as trusted individual with a capability to lead and inflict the change desired by the public. The perceived capability of AHZ to lead and assume a formal political role is further consolidated in Extracts 7.46 and 7.47; wherein viewers accentuate personal commitments to support his political endeavours and transition into formal politics, to the extent of relocating to his electorate and hometown for the sole purpose of voting for him (7.46), or celebrating his contributions to improving the country by building a statue of him in Jordan’s capital city (7.47). The sentiments reflected in these commitments imply the viewers’ deep conviction in AHZ’s leadership potential, and the notion that he deserves celebration with a statue, in particular, is a strong pointer to AHZ as a reification of national leadership in the minds of his viewers.

Extracts 7.48 to 7.54 tend towards presenting a more explicit construction of AHZ by his viewers as meritorious leader who is capable of assuming a formal role in Jordanian governance. With statements indicating endorsement of AHZ as an ideal candidate for a parliamentary representative role (7.48 & 7.49), acknowledgement of his merit for an in-charge ministerial position (7.50), and ultimately recognition of his suitability for the Prime Minister’s office (7.51). These examples convey a consensus among viewers that AHZ embodies the qualities necessary for a political leadership that can navigate the country through its challenges.

The repeated wishes for AHZ to become the Prime Minister of Jordan in Extracts 7.52- 7.54 highlight a desire for a transformative leadership model in Jordan and a strong belief in AHZ as its potential exemplar. These extracts convey viewers' expectations that AHZ's leadership would address and rectify issues in the country (7.52). It would also ensure governance by competent individuals and enhance public trust by placing "the right people in the right positions" (7.53). Furthermore, AHZ is seen as a unifying force capable of coalescing the Jordanian people and rallying them towards a shared vision of progress and unity (7.54). These viewers' expectations signify a strong desire for a new leadership ethos characterised by resolve for reform, integrity in governance, and ability to inspire public cohesion, and they position AHZ as the ideal candidate for implementing this model. Altogether, they emphasise AHZ as a unifying and reformative leader who can save Jordan and guide it into a new era of prosperity and national cohesion.

#### **7.2.1.5 AHZ as a Cherished Figure**

The notion that AHZ is seen as a cherished figure emerged as a salient aspect of the audience perception of him, with a total of 327 instances identified in their comments reflecting this theme. This nuanced perception was embedded in the forms of address used to refer to AHZ and reflected in the language of admiration and explicit expressions of affinity for him in the viewers' comments. Beyond indicating professional respect for AHZ, these expressions highlight a profound social connection with him that blurs the lines between a distant show presenter and a close family or community member. With such display of social connection and personal affection toward him, the viewers place AHZ as a central figure within their social environment and construct him as a well-respected figure and a beloved group member.

Various vocatives and terms of address were used by the audience to refer to AHZ. However, he is prominently addressed with or referred to as "Ustad", "brother", "cousin", "uncle", "Abu Abdullah", "Abu Zoubi" and "Abu Hmeid". According to the norms of Jordanian social interaction, these are considered affectionate terms of address or social honorifics whose use commonly promotes solidarity and indicates intimacy among people (Farghal & Shakir, 1994). The recurrence of these endearment terms in the viewers' comments signifies a close relationship the viewers assume between themselves and AHZ. Moreover, their employment of these terms carries specific cultural connotations that encode their perception of him. The term "Ustad", for

instance, is a title often used to address teachers and university professors (Farghal & Shakir, 1994). Its frequent use by the viewers can be seen as an indication of respect to AHZ and an implicit acknowledgement of his professional role as an educator or mentor through his satiric show. The kin terms “brother”, “cousin”, and “uncle”, however, suggest a bond of kinship and, therefore, transform AHZ from a distant figure into a close member of the viewers’ own families, and thereby emphasise a sense of belonging and familial intimacy with him. By the same token, addressing him with “Abu Abdullah”, “Abu Zoubi” and “Abu Hmeid”, reflects viewers affection and conveys their sense of social bond with him. These terms are culture-specific teknonyms or kunyas that encode endearment and in-groupness (Khalil & Tatiana, 2018). While “Abu Zoubi” refers to AHZ using the formula ‘father + his family name’, “Abu Abdullah” employs ‘father + his son’s name’, whereas “Abu Hmeid” employs ‘father + diminutive of his first name’. Altogether, these formulas of address highlight a sense of fatherhood and parental respect on the one hand, and their employment by the audience is an indicator of their conception of AHZ as an endeared person and a close member of their social group, on the other.

While the above instances reveal implications of affinity and social closeness that are embedded within culture-specific social honorifics, the analysis of the viewers’ comments also highlighted explicit expressions of affinity for AHZ through direct statements of affection and admiration, as exemplified in Extracts 7.55- 7.61.

#### **Extracts 7.55- 7.61**

7.55. I swear I love you, Ahmad.

7.56. Man, I swear I have deep respect for you.

7.57. We love your spirit, and we love your defence of Jordan.

7.58. I wish I could meet you, Ustad Ahmad. That would be my honour.

7.59. You can’t imagine how much I love you.

7.60. I’m one of your biggest fans and followers.

7.61. Respected brother, AHZ, I've been watching your videos for a long time, and I respect your mentality and your feelings.

As can be seen in Extracts 7.55- 7.61, viewers employ direct language that expresses their affinity and intimacy with AHZ. The overtness of these expressions not only reveals, but also intensifies, the affectional bond between themselves and AHZ. For instance, assertions like “I swear I love you” (7.55) and “I swear I have deep respect for you” (7.56) convey a deep and unequivocal emotional connection with and respect to AHZ's persona. However, while demonstrating admiration to AHZ, statements such as “We love your spirit, and we love your defence of Jordan” (7.57) align this admiration with his attitude, enthusiasm, and actions, which are deemed acts of support and dedication to the country. The longing for a personal encounter with AHZ, as seen in Extract 7.58, highlights the viewers' reverence and affection for AHZ and depicts him as a distinguished figure with whom personal interaction would be a social privilege. Expressions of affection such as “You can't imagine how much I love you” (7.59) and “I'm one of your biggest fans and followers” (7.60) reveal genuine fondness and personal liking among the viewers. Furthermore, acknowledgment of long-term engagement with AHZ's content and respect for his “mentality and feelings” (7.61) underscores the viewer's sustained respect and appreciation of AHZ's intellectual perspective and emotional expressions. Such statements emphasise that viewers' respect and affinity for AHZ are driven by his work; mainly the beliefs and emotions he diffuses throughout his video show. These statements can, in other words, be interpreted as viewers' indirect testimony to the value of *Man Saf Baladi* show, recognising it as an intellectual programme that delivers thoughtful, meaningful, and sincere content.

Altogether, viewers implicit and explicit expressions of affection and respect solidify their perception of AHZ as a cherished person and a central figure within his audience's social environment. Along with the other perceptions of AHZ as a truth-teller, a representative of the citizens' voice, a devoted patriot, and a saviour and a potential leader, these viewers' conceptions bring significant insights into the nature and value of AHZ's political satire. From the audience's viewpoint, satire appears to play a valuable role in Jordan, serving as a powerful medium for political commentary that extends beyond mere entertainment. Through satire, AHZ can arguably be said to have represented the collective aspirations and concerns of his audience and

demonstrated an ability to unify, provoke thought and advocate for the change desired by the public in the Jordanian sociopolitical landscape.

Collectively, these positive perceptions of AHZ can be seen as a driving force for the viewers' optimism and hope for change. They suggest that the viewers' faith in his truthfulness, integrity, patriotism and leadership can bolster their belief in a better future for their country.

## **7.2.2 Viewers' Reaction to the Content of *Man Saf Baladi* Show**

The second major category that emerged in the analysis highlighted a pattern of comments that captures the viewers' engagement with the content presented in the show's episodes. These comments and segments of comments were in the form of reactions to particular issues, arguments, ideas, and viewpoints that AHZ presents in the videos. They were composed of two subcategories: agreement with AHZ's opinions and commendation for his work.

### **7.2.2.1 Agreement with AHZ's Opinions**

Agreement with AHZ's opinions and viewpoints was very common in the viewers' comments (117 instances). Throughout the 20 episodes involved in the study, AHZ constantly targeted political actors, actions, and policies, and presented critical opinions and arguments on various issues and topical events. Examination of the viewers' comments revealed a strong alignment with his narratives and an endorsement of viewpoints that surfaced in the show. These included AHZ's critical opinions regarding the lack of substantial government achievement, the failure of the PM to undertake full constitutional authority, ineffective cabinet reshuffles, exorbitant taxation policies, economic and financial corruption, low living standards, poor national infrastructure and government decisions leading to national calamities<sup>39</sup>. Owing to the multiplicity of arguments, opinions, or ideas that viewers revealed agreement with, and for the purpose of brevity, the following section only discusses the more prominent examples of audience agreement with AHZ, in particular, the viewers' consensus with AHZ's viewpoints on government achievement and the PM's lack of full authority.

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<sup>39</sup> Elaborate presentation and discussion of AHZ's critical arguments on these issues was made throughout the show analysis and appeared in various sections in Chapters 4 & 5.

To provide an example of audience agreement, in the various episodes of the show, AHZ's discourse included an incisive critique of the government's failure to make tangible achievements and address pressing societal concerns, such as political and economic reform, as well as a general failure of the respective PMs to undertake their full authority as stipulated by the Jordanian constitution. These criticisms garnered wide agreement among his audience, as evidenced by a multitude of viewers' comments that not only reproduce AHZ's viewpoints but also amplify them through personal endorsement and further critique. Such comments are exemplified by Extracts 7.62- 7.66.

### **Extracts 7.62- 7.66**

7.62. Shallow achievements. If we don't feel them in real life and they don't make a difference in our daily living, they're not achievements. They should stop selling us words and delusions. They say achievements! What achievements?

7.63. Razzaz is just like his predecessor. He can't do anything. He doesn't have power.

7.64. They are lying to us. [...] Razzaz can't do anything. All they can do is nod their heads.

7.65. The PM of Jordan is like a boneless chicken; he doesn't have authority.

7.66. They are just high ranked employees following the orders of the decision makers. It's a shadow government.

As can be seen throughout Extracts 7.62- 7.66, the audience comments echo AHZ's critical evaluation of the government's claimed achievements and the limited authority of the PM within the Jordanian political system. These statements underscore viewers' discontent with what is perceived as the government's "shallow achievements", which, according to one viewer, fail to translate into tangible improvements in Jordanians' daily lives (7.62). By articulating this viewpoint, the commenter reproduces AHZ's critique and further emphasises the gap between the government's official narratives and the lived realities of the Jordanian citizenry.

Furthermore, statements such as "Razzaz is just like his precedent", he "can't do anything", that all that the ministers can do is "nod their heads", and that "the PM of Jordan is like a boneless

chicken” (7.63- 7.65) reflect a shared audience perception of governmental leadership that is constrained by limitations and characterised by lack of genuine autonomy. This collective viewpoint presents an evaluation of the government as a “shadow government”, wherein PMs are merely viewed as powerless senior officials (7.66). Such a critique reiterates AHZ’s contention that the executive power of these positions is significantly hijacked by unseen forces in the country, rendering any claims of substantial cabinet achievement or full authority as illusive “lying” (7.64). Through these reflections, viewers not only align with the critical perspectives presented by AHZ in the show, but also contribute to an online discourse on the lack of an efficient and transparent governance in Jordan.

#### **7.2.2.2 Commendation for AHZ’s Work**

Viewers frequently expressed commendation and praise for AHZ’s work, with a total of 139 instances identified in the dataset. These were mainly short comments giving feedback and acknowledging and admiring of AHZ’s output. Collectively, these comments presented a discourse of recognition for AHZ’s work and indirectly point to the value that *Man Saf Baladi* cultivates among its audience.

Notably, some comments indicated viewers’ enjoyment of the humorous remarks made on the show. However, such comments were limited (19 instances) and did not explicitly reference the show’s humorous function. Instead, the sense of fun and enjoyment was primarily conveyed through the commenters’ use of the interjection “*hehe*”.

#### **Extracts 7.67- 7.69**

7.67. Heheheheheh the fax bit is hilarious.

7.68. Heheheheh this is nice.

7.69. Bikini Infrastructure heheheheh; the description is very indicative, Ustad Ahmad.

As seen in Extracts 7.67- 7.69, the use of the interjection “*hehe*” suggests enjoyment and likely laughter, prompted by specific moments in the show. For instance, the commenter in Extract 7.67 expresses enjoyment of a segment in which AHZ uses a mixture of verbal and non-verbal

humour to criticise one of the government ministries for spending 181,000 Jordanian Dinar on fax machine ink. While Extract 7.68, indicates the commenter's enjoyment of the video as a whole, Extract 7.69 highlights their appreciation of a specific humorous remark in which AHZ employs verbal humour, describing the country's infrastructure as "bikini infrastructure". The repeated use of the interjection "*hehe*" in these comments signals a light-hearted, amused reaction to the content, suggesting that viewers appreciated the show's humorous elements. However, aside from these sparse and implicit references, there was no direct acknowledgement of the show's broader comedic function. Instead, viewers' praise was primarily directed towards other aspects of AHZ's work, including his creativity, communicative skill, and insightful political commentary.

Viewers highlighted the creativity in AHZ's work by praising what they perceived as an original and innovative approach to satire. This was evident in the repeated use of the word "creative" across various expressions of praise, reflecting the value placed on AHZ's ability to present ideas in a novel and engaging way, as illustrated in Extracts 7.70- 7.72.

#### **Extracts 7.70- 7.72**

7.70. Nice episode. Creative as usual.

7.71. Creative, Ustad Ahmad. All respect.

7.72. You are creative in delivering your message.

Viewers also commended AHZ's skill in communicating his critical discourse, often expressing admiration for the eloquence and depth of his delivery. Such comments suggest that his discourse is perceived as professional, thought-provoking, and appealing, which are qualities that make his satirical work particularly praiseworthy, as illustrated in Extracts 7.73–7.75.

#### **Extracts 7.73- 7.75**

7.73. You are wonderful, and your words are amazing.

7.74. Your talk is eloquent and significant.

7.75. This is a very eloquent talk from a very educated man.

The tone and tenor of these statements indicate a positive audience reception of AHZ's show and an appreciation of his discourse, particularly for his eloquence and articulate style. This may suggest that the aesthetic dimension of his satire forms a key part of the viewers' commendation. However, AHZ's work was also significantly praised for its critical dimension and potential social impact, with a more conspicuous indication that he is celebrated not as an entertainer, but as an insightful political critic:

### **Extracts 7.76- 7.78**

7.76. Brother Ahmad, I salute you for your sharp criticism and simple, yet vivid style.

7.77. This is a very strong and constructive criticism.

7.78. I swear this video is a revolution by itself.

As can be seen in Extracts 7.76- 7.78, commendations of AHZ's work indicate its capacity for insightful criticism and potential social impact. Extract 7.76 highlights admiration for AHZ's "sharp criticism" in conjunction with his "simple, yet vivid style", suggesting that he is acknowledged for his ability to present incisive political commentary in an engaging manner that appeals to his audience. Extract 7.77 highlights "constructive criticism" as a defining feature of AHZ's work. This positive appraisal suggests that AHZ's critique is not limited to highlighting problems and pinpointing political flaws, but also extends to offering insights that can enrich public discourse and potentially contribute to positive change. Extract 7.78 takes the commendation of AHZ's work a step further by attributing a revolutionary impact to it. The use of the metaphor in "I swear this video is a revolution by itself" conceptualises *Man Saf Baladi* as a mobilising force that holds the potential to inspire meaningful change.

Altogether, the various comments reflecting this theme illustrate strong audience admiration for AHZ's work, ranging from praise for his originality in creating satirical content and distinctive presentation style to recognition of his critical insights and the potential impact of his discourse. These comments reveal that AHZ is celebrated by his audience not primarily for his ability to

entertain, but for his capacity as a thought-provoking critic with the potential to influence public opinion and contribute to societal change.

### **7.2.3 Viewers' Reflection on the Political Landscape of the Country**

The third major category that emerged from the thematic analysis highlighted a pattern of comments reflecting a range of viewers' reflections on the country's political landscape. These reflections were captured through comments and comment segments that revealed viewers' appraisals of the status quo and their sentiments toward Jordan's political situation. They encompassed attitudes toward politicians, constructions of Jordan as a despoiled country, a sense of the impossibility of change, expressions of optimism and hope, and calls for action.

#### **7.2.3.1. Attitudes Toward Politicians**

Attitudes toward politicians were prevalent in the viewers' comments (320 instances). These attitudes were derived from the various ways in which viewers characterised political actors through the attributes and actions they associated with them. Across their comments, viewers expressed a distinctly negative perspective on Jordanian politicians, revealing a general sense of discontent toward what they commonly perceive as a corrupt, ineffective, disloyal, and morally bankrupt political elite. Given the prominence of corruption within these responses, and for the sake of brevity, the following discussion focuses specifically on this recurring theme and its central role in shaping public disillusionment with political leadership.

In the comments, state officials and political actors are commonly referred to as “thieves,” “gangsters,” “corrupts,” “fraudsters,” and “looters” who “exploit the citizens,” “steal,” and “rob” national wealth for their personal gain. Through these prevalent characterisations, viewers depict a Jordanian political landscape entrenched in systemic corruption and controlled by a self-serving elite, as illustrated in Extracts 7.77–7.88.

#### **Extracts 7.79- 7.82**

7.79. Jordan is run by gangsters.

7.80. Its guardians are its looters.

7.81. A country on the brink of collapse, led by a bunch of thieves.

7.82. The smell of their corruption, looting and theft is noisome.

The collective sentiment in Extracts 7.79- 7.82 underscores viewers' belief that Jordan's politicians are interested in lining their pockets and indulging in acts of embezzlement and appropriation of public wealth, achieving personal gains, rather than undertaking their natural role in serving the public interest, and promoting the country's national welfare. Furthermore, politicians were described as "human wolves", "merchants", "opportunistic mercenaries" who exploit the country's resources, and as "criminals who thrive happily" in Jordan. They were also depicted as "greedy thieves" only concerned about "driving posh cars, travelling abroad, having extravagant villas and palaces in Jordan and other countries, and educating their children in Europe and the United States at the expense of the poor citizens". These viewer descriptions further reinforce a negative image of political actors as disconnected from the citizens they are meant to represent and detached from their role as public servants.

Viewers' attitudes extend to portray a political landscape in which corruption is seen not as the act of isolated individuals, but as a systemic and networked practice. Assertions that politicians are "gangs" and "mafias," and that one "should turn into a thief and fraudster in order to be given a big position in this country," reflect a perception of a closed political circle that enables only those with similarly unethical dispositions to ascend to senior positions. Furthermore, claims that politicians "rob in public", "steal confidently in broad daylight", and are involved in illegal international dealings through "offshore companies and bank accounts registered in their family members' names" not only indicate viewers' frustration with what they perceive as emboldened and collaborative forms of corruption, but also suggest an international dimension to these corrupt practices. Discontent toward politicians was palpable in the viewers' numerous calls to remove them from power, hold them accountable, and put an end to what is perceived as their cyclical and self-perpetuating approach to corruption:

### **Extracts 7.83- 7.84**

7.83. Who is going to change the bloody approach of this country and stop this fraud?

7.84. Whoever brought them to public positions is corrupt; whoever appointed them is corrupt, and because they are corrupt, they get along only with someone corrupt. Names are nominated by a corrupt person and chosen by a corrupt person. Such names get public positions against all odds because every corrupt person is supported by another corrupt person.

As indicated by Extracts 7.83 and 7.84, corruption in Jordan's political landscape, as perceived by viewers, is not seen as a series of isolated incidents. Rather, it is viewed as a collective, self-sustaining, and collaborative practice. This practice forms a network that spans the entire political strata and, as vividly described through one viewer's analogy, resembles a "spiderweb" that entangles the entire governance structure of the country.

#### **7.2.3.2 Construction of Jordan as a Despoiled Country**

The theme of Jordan as a despoiled country emerged as a notably prevalent theme in the dataset (68 instances). Comments reflected viewers' disillusionment with the state of their country, presenting a bleak image of Jordan marked by pervasive corruption, the loss of national assets, and a sense of irrevocable decline. This sentiment is captured through metaphorical expressions and emphatic assertions that emphasise loss, exploitation, and the destruction of the nation by those in power. These culminate in references to the symbolic death of the country.

### **Extracts 7.85- 7.97**

7.85. Our country is already sold.

7.86. The country's resources are completely sold.

7.87. Which homeland? Is there any homeland left? They sold it.

7.88. A failed country floating on a sea of corruption.

7.89. The country is ruined, and corruption has metastasised in it.

- 7.90. This country is looted right from its main door all the way to its chapel.
- 7.91. The country is looted.
- 7.92. This country is ruined.
- 7.93. Jordan is sentenced to death.
- 7.94. They killed you, Jordan.
- 7.95. The Jordan you speak about died 20 years ago. May God have mercy on its soul!
- 7.96. May God have mercy on the soul of this homeland!
- 7.97. Once upon a time, there was a Jordan.

As can be seen in Extracts 7.85- 7.97, the comments present a sombre picture of a country that is perceived to be in a state of terminal decline. Moving from dispossession and loss through corruption, exploitation, and destruction, to the final state of symbolic death, these comments present a poignant reflection on Jordan's political landscape as perceived by viewers of *Man Saf Baladi*. Assertions that the country has been "sold", and that its national resources are "completely sold" (7.85 & 7.86) underscore a perceived betrayal of the nation's interests and create a sense of dispossession, where the wealth and public assets of the nation are seen as being systematically squandered by its political elite. This sense of dispossession extends beyond mere economic deficiency to point at a loss of agency and sovereignty, with rhetorical questions such as "Which homeland?" and "Is there any homeland left?" (7.87) indicating a sense of nonexistence and eroded national identity.

This negative portrayal extends to depict Jordan as suffering from widespread corruption and the exploitation of its resources, both of which contribute to its decline. Metaphorical representations include the image of the country "floating on a sea of corruption" (7.88) and suffering from a malignant disease that "has metastasised" throughout its body (7.89). These metaphors not only underscore the scale of corruption perceived by viewers but also convey its invasive nature and destructive impact on the country's body politic. They suggest that corruption is viewed not

merely as harmful misconduct but as a serious national threat endangering the country's very existence. The strong categorical assertions that Jordan is "looted" (7.90 & 7.91) and "ruined" (7.92) indicate a perceived deepening cycle of decline, wherein corruption (particularly financial corruption) not only erodes the country's wealth but also destroys its entire economic, political, and social structure.

Extracts 7.93- 7.97 take a darker turn and announce the metaphorical death of Jordan. The fatality expressed in statements such as "Jordan is sentenced to death" (7.93), "They killed you, Jordan" (7.94), and "The Jordan you speak about died 20 years ago" (7.95) signifies not just disillusionment but a perceived end to Jordan's era of existence, which declares the symbolic cessation of the nation itself. The prayers invoked in Extracts 7.95 and 7.96 which are commonly reserved for the deceased, coupled with the sense of lamentation implied in a statement such as "Once upon a time there was a Jordan" (7.97) all signify a collective mourning for a country that is perceived as having already declined beyond the threshold for recovery.

This perception of Jordan as a despoiled country, combined with the pervasive corruption and ineffectiveness attributed to its political elite, emerges as a key driver of viewers' sense of hopelessness about change, while also serving as an impetus for their calls for action, which will be discussed in the following sections.

### **7.2.3.3 Impossibility of Change**

The analysis of the comments revealed a pronounced sense of impossibility of change in Jordan's political landscape among viewers (120 instances). Although this sentiment was widespread, it was not unanimous, as some comments also expressed optimism—an aspect that will be discussed in the subsequent section. The sense of the impossibility of change was captured through various expressions of hopelessness regarding the state of the country, particularly in relation to corruption and ineffective governance. Comments expressed the notion that no amount of dialogue or criticism would lead to meaningful reform or improvement in the status quo, as can be seen in Extracts 7.96- 7.99.

#### **Extracts 7.98- 7.101**

7.98. Even if we keep talking for a thousand years, nothing will change.

7.99. We've been talking for 90 years, but nothing happened, and nothing will happen.

7.100. Nothing will ever change, and no corrupt will ever get caught.

7.101. All in vain.

Extracts 7.98–7.101 express a collective sense of despair, reflecting commenters' belief that meaningful change is unlikely in Jordan's political context, and that, despite ongoing public and media criticism, critical discourse is ultimately seen as futile. This perception is further emphasised by other direct assertions in the Facebook comments data that “the country will never be fixed” and the officials' “approach will not change until doomsday”. Moreover, culture-specific idiomatic expressions and adages commonly used by Jordanians to express the lack of faith in any positive outcome, such as “I washed my hands of it” and “You would have been heard if you were calling alive, but there is no life in whom you are calling” were salient in the comments.

While some of the extracts and expressions above may suggest that viewers' hopelessness stems from a belief that satirical or critical political discourse (i.e., “talking,” in their words) is inherently ineffectual, the prevailing sense of futility and despair in their comments is more accurately attributed to their perception of corruption as an inextricable part of the country's political system. This is further illustrated by statements in the Facebook comments, such as “corruption is a spiderweb; all for naught” and “They won't change no matter what you say,” which underscore corruption and corrupt politicians as the underlying reason for the perceived futility of critical political discourse.

The impossibility of change expressed by the viewers was also motivated by a widespread perception of disconnection and chasm between people and their political leadership:

#### **Extracts 7.102- 7.104**

7.102. Our concerns and the government's concerns are totally different. No matter what we say, address, or complain about, nothing will change. Our leaders and officials are putting their fingers in their ears.

7.103. There is no life in whom you are calling. They're turning a deaf ear. They are only concerned about themselves.

7.104. I wish the so-called country's dignitaries listen to you and understand what you're saying, but unfortunately, you're blowing into a pierced bagpipe.

As evidenced in these extracts, the description of political leaders as “putting their fingers in their ears” (7.102) and “turning a deaf ear” (7.103) metaphorically depict their indifference to public voices and underscore a perceived unwillingness to respond to citizens’ needs and interests. The expressed desire for politicians to genuinely “listen to” and “understand” AHZ’s messages (7.104) indicates the potential impact of his critique to effect change, should it be acknowledged by Jordan’s political elite. Nevertheless, politicians’ indifference and disregard for citizens’ concerns (7.103) render AHZ’s critique ineffectual or, as metaphorically expressed by one viewer, like “blowing into a pierced bagpipe” (7.104). Altogether, the 120 instances that capture this theme illustrate an audience view characterised by a strong level of frustration with the country’s political status quo and scepticism towards the prospect of meaningful change. This sentiment is strong to the level of reflecting a broader sense of existential resignation, as ultimately reflected by some viewers’ statements that “the only thing that develops in this homeland is the level of frustration”, “we should raise the white flag” and “Leaving the country is the best solution”. Nevertheless, this sentiment of hopelessness is juxtaposed with a notable strand of optimism and hope for change.

#### **7.2.3.4 Optimism and Hope for Change**

Despite the backdrop of despair and hopelessness illustrated in the previous section, the analysis of the comments revealed a strong sense of optimism and hope for change, with a total of 81 instances reflecting this theme. This optimism, however, often carried an undertone of what could be interpreted as desperation, as viewers clung to the hope for a better future amidst ongoing challenges. The sense of optimism was intertwined with a reliance on faith and the belief in divine intervention, as well as a reliance on figures such as AHZ.

Such optimism was often captured through repeated affirmations that despite the current challenges, Jordan will be “fixed”.

### **Extracts 7.105- 7.107**

7.105. This country will be fixed.

7.106. I swear it will be fixed. I swear it will.

7.107. This country will be fixed sooner or later.

The verb “fixed” (‘yozbot’ in Jordanian Arabic) is metaphorical in this context, and conceptually portrays the country in terms of a broken object or system that can be repaired or restored to its natural state of functioning. While such assertions presuppose that Jordan is broken to begin with, they also reflect an underlying belief in its potential for improvement and suggest that the future holds a promise for reform.

Integral to this shared vision of hope was viewers’ faith in divine will. This was echoed in the prayers and invocations for divine assistance in statements such as “inshallah our Jordan will be fixed” and “Inshallah it will be fixed”. The expression ‘inshallah’ is derived from the *hoy Qura’an*. It is equivalent to the English expression ‘God Willing’, and it is typically used to express hope that a certain future event will come about (Zeidan, 2024). Its association with the betterment of Jordan adds a spiritual dimension to the viewers’ sense of optimism and underscores the belief that, alongside human effort, divine providence is essential for realising their aspirations for the country. However, in conjunction with faith in divine will for realising change, AHZ is seen as a trigger of public hope and optimism in the face of national challenges. He is saliently depicted as a pivotal force in the viewers’ envisioned journey towards the country’s betterment, as can be seen throughout Extracts 7.108- 7.114.

### **Extracts 7.108- 7.114.**

7.108. We are with you, and it will be fixed.

7.109. It will be fixed inshallah by having honest people like you.

7.110. Jordan will be well as long as there are true men like you.

7.111. With your resolution, your pen, and the likes of you, it must be fixed.

7.112. Whenever I hear your words, my morale gets boosted.

7.113. Your last phrase ‘this home will be fixed’ replenishes our hope.

7.114. When I see or listen to what you say, I feel there’s still goodness in the country.

Extracts 7.108–7.114 highlight AHZ’s significant role in shaping viewers’ optimism for change. The notion that “We are with you, and it will be fixed” (7.108) conveys a sense of unity and solidarity, implying a collective belief that positive change is possible if spearheaded by AHZ. This sentiment is further echoed in the assertions that Jordan will improve through the presence of “honest people” (7.109) and “true men” (7.110) like AHZ.

These assertions highlight AHZ as an honest and principled figure capable of driving social transformation, while simultaneously reflecting deep trust in his character as essential to the country’s development. The emphasis on his “resolution” and his “pen” alongside others like him in bringing about inevitable change (7.111), underscores a belief in the power of his discourse to inspire, mobilise, and initiate reform. Furthermore, AHZ’s discourse is perceived to have a profound impact on the national psyche. This is reflected in viewers’ statements that his words boost morale (7.112), replenish hope (7.113), and evoke a sense of “goodness in the country” (7.114). These expressions highlight the uplifting power of his discourse and its capacity to instil hope and a sense of renewal among his audience, demonstrating his significant role in shaping public sentiment and fostering a shared vision for a brighter future. Altogether, the 81 instances that capture this theme demonstrate a shared vision of hope, faith, and resilience for a better Jordan, positioning AHZ’s satire as a powerful force that can channel public frustration into a constructive vision for the future and establish him as a central figure in the collective venture towards national reform.

#### **7.2.3.5 Call for Action**

The analysis also revealed a notable thread of comments calling for action (41 instances) against corruption, governmental ineptitude, or societal injustice. Viewers expressed the need to “take a move to stop corruption” and “find other solutions” beyond political criticism (or ‘talking’, as described by the commenters), along with a desire for “the country to uprising against corruption”

and “get rid of the corrupt officials”. These statements demonstrate a chorus of dissent and an appeal for unity and collective action. Furthermore, in their call for direct action, viewers advocated a range of civil acts, including the formal signing of a “petition addressed to the Royal Court” to express disapproval of the current government, demanding amendments to “articles in the constitution” to enable systemic reform, initiating a targeted “boycott” to exert economic pressure, and collectively rejecting and “standing against” the use of political money by “representatives to be elected” in order to foster a culture of integrity and accountability in parliamentary elections.

Some viewers, however, revealed a tendency to advocate more extreme forms of political action, as reflected in calls for protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and general strikes. Yet, given the ambivalence of hope and despair observed in the previous sections, these calls for action may also be interpreted as forms of symbolic posturing or attempts to foster group solidarity, rather than expressions of genuine belief in the feasibility of such measures.

#### **Extracts 7.115- 7.119**

7.115. Returning to the fourth circle<sup>40</sup> is now imperative.

7.116. Nothing will change unless people take to the streets.

7.117. The entire public should protest.

7.118. Don’t go to work for 10 days, People! Let’s engage in civil disobedience! Let the streets be empty and let the municipality workers take a break.

7.119. The only thing that would benefit the country is a general strike that paralyses all state sectors, until our government becomes honest.

As seen in Extracts 7.115- 7.119, the viewers express explicit calls for collective action through physical participation in protests, strikes and acts of civil disobedience aimed at exerting pressure on political power and catalyse change. The notion of “Returning to the fourth circle” (7.115) is

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<sup>40</sup> The Fourth Circle is a roundabout in Jordan’s capital city, Amman, located near the Prime Minister’s Office. It is the place where demonstrations usually occur, and its name has traditionally been used by Jordanians as a metonymy for public demonstration.

a direct appeal to mobilise around a historically significant site for demonstrations in Jordan, using it as a focal point for rallying against political power. This appeal is further amplified by the assertion that change cannot be realised “unless people take to the streets” (7.116) and the need for “the entire public [to] protest” (7.17), which highlight massive street protests as a possible strategy for the citizens’ demand for reform. The explicit call for “civil disobedience” and a “general strike” (7.18 & 7.19) indicates viewers’ desire for a strategic form of dissent aimed at disrupting the nation’s daily operations as a means of pressuring the government to adopt greater transparency and integrity in its policies and practices. Collectively, these extracts illustrate viewers’ belief in, and desire for, public action to bring about political change. Whether these calls for action reflect genuine intent remains an open question. Nevertheless, insights from the interview with AHZ suggest that *Man Saf Baladi* has the potential to motivate its audience members to engage in acts such as street protests and activist campaigns<sup>41</sup>.

#### **7.2.4 Viewers’ Reflection on the Nature of Satire and AHZ’s Satirist Role**

The fourth major category that emerged in the analysis revealed a pattern of comments reflecting viewers thoughts on the nature of satire and AHZ’s role. These reflections included the identification of satire as a mechanism for venting, critiquing AHZ for highlighting issues without offering solutions, acknowledging AHZ’s role in exposing political deficiencies, clarifying political issues, and raising public awareness.

##### **7.2.4.1 Satire as Venting**

Viewers’ identification of satire as a mechanism for emotional release was noteworthy in the dataset (26 instances). Some commenters characterised satire as a form of “venting” or a release valve for their frustration with Jordan’s political climate and their “fury” against its politicians.

##### **Extracts 7.120- 7.125**

7.120. This is called venting<sup>42</sup> so that people don’t blow up.

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<sup>41</sup> See Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.3, where AHZ emphasises the role of the show in encouraging political participation in the form of engaging in street protests and boycott campaigns.

<sup>42</sup> The original Arabic word was ‘tanfees’, which literally means ‘venting’ or ‘releasing’.

7.121. This show is a venting outlet<sup>43</sup> for all Jordanians.

7.122. May God please your heart! You quenched our fury<sup>44</sup>.

7.123. Regardless of all the problems we have, you quench our fury. May God grant you happiness!

7.124. May God protect you Zoubi [...]; you quenched our fury against them.

7.125. How great quenching fury is! I wish we get to quench our fury on the thieves soon.

As seen in extracts 7.120-7.125, commenters acknowledge the role of AHZ's satire in mediating their psychological state amid a perceived atmosphere of political unease. Their explicit descriptions of AHZ's discourse as an act of "venting" (7.120) and *Man Saf Baladi* as a "venting outlet" (7.121), reflect a perception of satire as a cathartic medium that helps release the negative emotions stemming from the social, economic, and political challenges they face. This sense of venting offers valuable insights into how viewers perceive their political landscape. In particular, it reflects the viewers' frustration with what is seen as a despoiled country run by an ineffectual and corrupt political elite. It also reveals an emotional undercurrent that may be fuelling their desire for change. As such, the sense of release provided by AHS's satire can be seen as a precursor to more active expression of dissent and calls for action.

The mention of viewers' "fury" being "quenched" (7.122-7.125) suggests the capacity of AHZ's satirical show to transform negative emotions, and potentially negative energy, into a more manageable form. These expressions highlight the emotional impact of his satire and simultaneously indicate its perceived value in providing a sense of relief or resolution to viewers' frustrations. In this way, AHZ is positioned as a pivotal figure in the emotional and social processing of public discontent with politics and politicians in Jordan.

Furthermore, the acknowledgement of AHZ's role in "quenching fury", paired with expressions of gratitude and wishes for his happiness and wellbeing (7.122-7.125), reveals that viewers hold

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<sup>43</sup> The description used in the original Arabic phrase was 'adat tanfees', which means 'venting outlet'.

<sup>44</sup> The original Arabic clause was 'Fashet ghelna', which literally means 'You quenched our fury.'

his show in high regard, especially for its emotional impact. This suggests a relationship between AHZ and his audience grounded in solidarity and a shared sense of dissatisfaction with the political status quo. Through *Man Saf Baladi*, AHZ's discourse not only reflects the challenging realities faced by his audience but also offers a psychological mechanism for coping with these realities, serving both as a mirror and moderator of public sentiment. Satire helps viewers express and manage their frustration with the sociopolitical landscape of their country, potentially acting as a first step toward demanding change and calling for political action. In other words, the 'venting' enabled by AHZ's satire can fuel viewers' critical engagement with the Jordanian political context, prompting a shift from emotional expression to calls for concrete action.

#### **7.2.4.2 Criticism of AHZ**

While the majority of comments reflected positively on AHZ's work, the analysis revealed a relatively small number of critical comments (22 instances). These viewers' critiques revolved around the notion that AHZ provides political critique without yielding tangible outcomes. He was occasionally targeted for presenting "talk with no action", or "mere rhetoric" without achieving "any benefit", as illustrated by Extracts 7.126- 7129.

#### **Extracts 7.126- 7129**

7.126. This is all talk with no action.

7.127. This is mere rhetoric, and it will always be.

7.128. What benefit has such a critical programme achieved for the citizens?

7.129. You've been criticising for a million years. What have you done?  
Speaking doesn't fry eggs.

In particular, the extracts highlight a perceived tension between "talk" (or "mere rhetoric") and meaningful "action" (7.126 & 7.127). Some question the societal "benefit" of *Man Saf Baladi* (7.128) and suggest that AHZ is engaged in relentless political critique without producing tangible outcomes. This sentiment is encapsulated in the Jordanian colloquial expression

“Speaking doesn’t fry eggs” (7.129), which conveys the belief that talk alone is ineffective in bringing about real change.

AHZ was further criticised by viewers for predominantly focusing on negative aspects of the country, with some accusing him of not addressing positive developments at all.

### **Extracts 7.130- 7.131**

7.130. Not even once do you speak of something positive in this country [...] Why do you always belittle or ignore positive things and keep talking about and exaggerating negative things?

7.131. Your purpose is to make an episode full of negativity and pessimism. Brother, have some positivity [...] Hope for the best and you shall find it.

In the extracts, AHZ is not only seen as belittling or ignoring the positive but also as persistently emphasising and exaggerating the negative, creating a narrative that is overly pessimistic (7.130). He is urged to adopt a more optimistic outlook and to highlight the positive (7.131), which is seen as a more hopeful path toward achieving constructive outcomes, as encapsulated in the comment’s advice, “Hope for the best and you shall find it”.

While these comments highlight a degree of dissatisfaction with AHZ’s political satire, it is important to note that they represent a relatively small portion of the dataset (22 instances). Moreover, the expectations in these critiques may not align with the traditional function of political satire, which typically aims to critique and expose social and political flaws rather than offer direct solutions or focus on positive aspects. Despite these criticisms, acknowledgements of the constructive nature of AHZ’s satire were also notable and will be discussed in the following section.

### **7.2.4.3. Satire as Exposing Deficiencies, Clarifying Political Issues and Raising Public Awareness**

The analysis of the comments occasionally revealed viewers’ reflections that highlight the nature of satire itself as a constructive form of political criticism (11 instances). Although limited in number, these reflections underscore a noteworthy understanding of AHZ’s role as a satirist and the nature of his satire within the Jordanian context. They suggest that AHZ’s satire is seen as a

vital tool for political expression, which is valued for its ability to highlight deficiencies in politics and politicians, clarify issues, expose truths, and encourage a broader societal and political engagement through raising public awareness.

### **Extracts 7.132- 137**

7.132. He summed up the problem. His role is to spotlight problems, not solve them.

7.133. Thank you for joining the dots<sup>45</sup>.

7.134. Ustad Ahmad, the entire media, Facebook pages and almost all opposition figures have not addressed the hidden part of the tax law [...]. Thank you for exposing the hidden part of the law to the public.

7.135. You are our weapon through which we fight all corruption.

7.136. AHZ's style adopts sharp criticism, and although it involves some irony and sarcasm, you can't say that he presents a cathartic art. Cathartic art in Jordan is through slapstick comedy, not sarcasm and irony. Everything in the video reflects the state of distrust in the government and their ineffective methods. Criticism eventually aims to serve the public good and political opposition has different forms of expression, and one of which is the satirical video you've seen.

7.137. These shows raise people's awareness and revive the spirit of renaissance and justice in them.

Extracts 7.132-7.137 reflect a nuanced perception of AHZ's role and the nature of his satire. In response to a comment that acknowledges AHZ's ability to identify problems in Jordan while demanding that he also provide solutions, Extract 7.132, demonstrates the viewer's perception of AHZ's role as aligned with the traditional view of the satirist as 'spotlighting problems', rather than 'solving them'. AHZ is also appreciated for "connecting the dots" (7.33). This expression indicates implicit recognition of AHZ's role in making sense of complex political issues and offering his audience a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of the political context in Jordan. This is further reinforced by the acknowledgement of his role in "exposing the hidden

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<sup>45</sup> The original Arabic text was 'Shukran laka lewadh'a elneqat ala alhorouf' (Literal: Thank you for putting the dots on the letters), which is equivalent to the English 'Thank you for connecting the dots.'

part of the law to the public” (7.134), reflecting a perception of AHZ as a truth-revealer who deliberately unveils concealed insights often obscured by mainstream media and national political narratives. Furthermore, AHZ is seen as the citizens’ “weapon” against corruption (7.135). This metaphor indicates recognition of his role as an active tool in the public’s fight against corruption and implies perception of his satire as a form of resistance that can empower the citizens in their struggle against corrupt politicians and practices.

Extract 7.136 offers a deeper reflection on the nature of satire in Jordan. In response to a comment that confines AHZ’s role to providing emotional release, the commenter articulates a culturally specific understanding of satire in Jordan by distinguishing it from “slapstick comedy,” which is described as a “cathartic art”. This distinction suggests that while comedy may serve as a medium for emotional expression in Jordan, AHZ’s satire, which is characterised by “sharp criticism”, “irony” and “sarcasm”, represents a different form of political engagement. It functions as a vehicle for engaging with Jordan’s political affairs and encouraging reflection on its sociopolitical status. This viewer’s perception reflects a broader understanding of the potential of Jordanian satire to critique and challenge political power, rather than merely entertain or provide emotional release. Within this context, AHZ’s satirical show is seen as an illuminating tool—one that can “raise people’s awareness and revive the spirit of renaissance and justice in them” (7.137). *Man Saf Baladi* does not only criticise politics and politicians and highlight their flaws but also inspires people’s vision of a better future and plays an important role in mobilising them, revitalising their aspiration for social justice and catalysing their collective desire for political reform. Together, the perceptions exhibited in this theme reflect a multifaceted understanding of AHZ’s role and the nature of his satire, highlighting the value that his audience places on satire as a means of education, inspiration, resistance, and political engagement.

### **7.3 Concluding Discussion**

The thematic analysis presented in this chapter aimed to explore how viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* engage with the show, by examining their comments on its Facebook page, with the broader goal

of drawing insights into the nature of political satire and its potential impact within the context of Jordan. The findings unveiled a variety of engagement patterns and audience discourses that not only challenge existing assumptions about satire in Jordan but also speak to its multifaceted role within the Jordanian sociopolitical landscape.

The majority of viewer commentary analysed in this chapter highlights *Man Saf Baladi* as a vibrant forum for genuine public engagement and political discourse. While the emotional function of the show cannot be denied, it is evident that its role extends beyond providing cathartic relief for the frustrations experienced by its audience. Amid a prevailing sense of despair driven by perceived sociopolitical decline, *Man Saf Baladi* emerges as a discourse that not only critiques political flaws but also informs, inspires, and mobilises viewers toward social justice and reform.

Viewers' engagement with the show revealed a variety of critical discourses that reflect the complex sociopolitical life experienced by the audience. Rather than passively consuming AHZ's satirical content, many actively participate in constructing a public narrative that critiques the country's political landscape and challenges its official discourse. They express their opinions about politicians, governance inefficiency, and corruption and its detrimental impact on the country. They also articulate their perspectives on the relationship between citizens and their political leadership, their discontent with living standards and despair with current political elite to enact reform. Above all, they voice a strong desire for a comprehensive sociopolitical change and call for exercising civic duties and taking public action that can contribute to ensuing the desired change.

Ultimately, this engagement with *Man Saf Baladi* indicates the important role political satire plays in Jordan. It aligns with Jones's (2005) findings that satire extends beyond the screen to foster active political participation, functioning as an "instigator" of political talk, and a "connector" of citizens' concerns about their public and private lives (p. 185). Similarly, Lee and Jang (2017) argue that satire provokes discussion and encourages public engagement, while Doona (2012) suggests that satire prompts political talk, which is essential for creating a culture of political discourse and public debate among ordinary citizens, and thus serves as a "source for

citizenship” (p. 21). Satire in Jordan, as exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*, not only fulfils this role, but also demonstrates a heightened impact given the country’s sociopolitical context.

In contrast to democratic contexts, where political satire often complements an existing culture of public discourse, the Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi* show serves as a unique outlet for dissenting voices that are often suppressed. It provides a platform for discussion and political expression that breaks through the dominant political discourse in a context characterised by political autocracy and limited civil rights (Freedom House, 2023), encouraging its audience to claim their rights, perform their civic duty and engage in public life. This positions the show as a vital platform for political engagement and social influence in ways that are not typically seen in democratic countries, where avenues for political engagement are readily accessible through other means.

The findings presented in this chapter serve as an audience testimony to the important role satire plays in the context of Jordan. They highlight its unique capacity to “speak truth to power” (Boler, 2006, p. 2), and to function as a “representative” of public views and concerns that are often overlooked by mainstream media and political elites (Jones, 2005, p. 185). This perception consolidates the transformative potential of satire noted by Tesnohlikova (2021), who argues that satire carries a moral value that distinguishes it from mere comedy. AHZ’s role as articulated by his audience aligns with this view, positioning him as a moral figure who genuinely advocates for the citizens and amplifies their grievances and shared concerns. He is perceived as a patriotic leader and a potential agent of social and political reform who can participate in reforming the country and inflicting the change desired by its public.

This duality of perception supports the view of satire as counter-public progressive practice (Day, 2011), wherein satire not only critiques dominant political narratives and expresses perspectives often excluded from the mainstream, but also fosters a sense of community among viewers who engage with and identify through its discourse. Satire, according to this view, unifies people through deploying a counter-discourse that reflects their worldviews and political opinions within the wider public sphere. The viewers’ overwhelming coalescence around AHZ and his satirical show, as evident in their perceptions of him, agreement with his opinions,

commendation of his work, and the value they place on his satire as a source of inspiration, education and resistance , illustrates the applicability of this view to Jordanian satire.

While this chapter explored audience reception through online responses and patterns of engagement with *Man Saf Baladi* on its Facebook page, the subsequent chapter will present the results of the online survey and offer a quantitative evaluation of viewers' perceptions of the show and its impact on their attitudes, interests, and participation in political life in Jordan.

# Chapter 8: Audience Reception: Responses to the Online Survey

## 8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the quantitative analysis of the audience survey<sup>46</sup>. The survey examined the subjects' opinions about *Man Saf Baladi* with the aim of exploring audience reception by gauging viewers' perceptions of the show and its impact on the Jordanian context. The survey explored viewers' frequency of watching the show, their reasons for watching it, their online engagement with it, and their assessments of its effects on their attitudes, interests, and political participation. The chapter discusses the insights that this quantitative analysis provides for understanding of the role of political satire represented by *Man Saf Baladi* and its potential impact on political engagement in the Jordanian context.

## 8.2 Findings of the Audience Survey

As indicated in Chapter 3, (Section 3.5.1.4), a quantitative survey of audience perceptions of *Man Saf Baladi* was carried out using the Qualtrics online survey platform. The survey was completed by 2,066 respondents (See Figure 8.1), who constituted a self-selecting sample of the wider population of the *Man Saf Baladi* show's audience.

**Figure 8.1**

*Screenshot from Qualtrics Platform Showing the Number of Responses to the Survey*

Project name <sup>1</sup>	Status	Responses	Type
☆  Satire in Man Saf Baladi	Active	2066	Survey
☆  السخرية في من سف بلدي: دراسة تأثير البرنامج الساخر الأ	Active	2066	Survey

<sup>46</sup> Although primarily quantitative, the survey included a question that facilitated a qualitative open-ended response and required thematic analysis.

The participants represented a demographically diverse sample of the show’s audience, albeit with some prominent characteristics. Table 8.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the survey participants.

**Table 8.1**

*Demographic Characteristics of the Survey Participants*

<b>Demographic Characteristic</b>	<b>Options</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	1610	77.93%
	Female	456	22.07%
<b>Age Group</b>	18- 29	310	15%
	30- 49	1399	67.72%
	50- 59	294	14.23%
	60- Over	63	3.05%
<b>Education</b>	High School	295	14.28%
	University Degree	1343	65%
	Postgraduate Degree	428	20.72%

As shown in Table 8.1, there were 1,610 male participants, who comprised 77.93% of the 2,066 respondents. Females numbered 456 and comprised 22.07% of the respondents. Regarding their age range, the majority of respondents (67.72%, n = 1399) were aged 30-49, suggesting this age group is the primary audience of *Man Saf Baladi*. Jordan’s population is relatively young, with 44% aged 18-49 (Jordan Department of Statistics, 2024), so it is not surprising that many viewers come from this demographic. This alignment suggests that the show resonates with the largest demographic group in Jordan and highlights its broad appeal to a significant portion of the population. A large portion of the respondents were well-educated, with 65% (n = 1343 respondents) holding a graduate university degree and 20.72% (n = 428) holding a postgraduate degree. This is not unexpected in a country that has 30 public and private universities, which accommodate around 344,000 students (Alnaimat, 2022) and graduate approximately 70,000 annually (Jordan News, 2022). It may also suggest that individuals with tertiary education are

more likely to take an interest in current affairs and to engage with satirical or political content more generally.

The survey was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. A reliability test to assess the internal consistency of the survey items was conducted using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (See Table 8.2). Results of the reliability test showed an acceptable level of internal consistency, with a high Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.830 for all constructs in the model.<sup>47</sup>

**Table 8.2**

*Results of the Reliability Test Using Cronbach’s Coefficient*

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	Number of Items
.830	.838	19

The 19 items included in the survey measured various aspects related to the respondents’ frequency of watching the show, their reasons for watching, their online engagement with the show, and their perceptions of its impact. The subsequent sections present the results of these measurements.

### **8.2.1 Frequency of Watching**

The frequency of watching *Man Saf Baladi* was measured using a 4-point frequency scale anchored at 1 (rarely), 2 (sometimes), 3 (often), and 4 (always). The results are presented in Table 8.3 and Figure 8.2.

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<sup>47</sup> The generally accepted minimum Cronbach’s alpha value that indicates a reliable level of construct and internal consistency in Social Sciences research is 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1978; Kline, 2013).

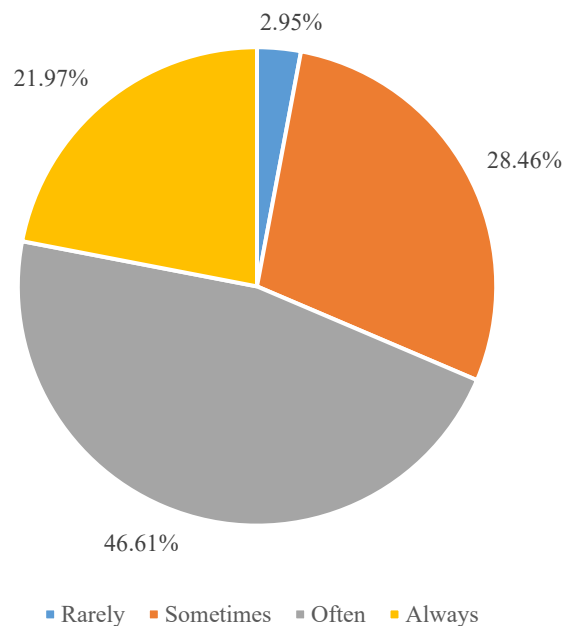
**Table 8.3**

*Frequency of Watching the Man Saf Baladi Show*

#	Answer	Count	%
1	Rarely	61	2.95%
2	Sometimes	588	28.46%
3	Often	963	46.61%
4	Always	454	21.97%
	Total	2066	100%

**Figure 8.2**

*Frequency of Watching the Man Saf Baladi Show (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.3 and Figure 8.2, 46.61% of the respondents (n = 963) *often* watch the show, indicating a relatively regular viewership habit. Additionally, 28.46% of the respondents (n = 588) reported that they *sometimes* watch, reflecting a moderate level of viewership of the show. A smaller proportion of the respondents (21.97%, n = 454) were avid viewers who reported they *always* watch the show. Notably, only 2.95% of the respondents (n = 61) indicated

a minimal exposure to the *Man Saf Baladi* show, reporting they *rarely* watch it. The overall responses to the question measuring the frequency of watching the show recorded a mean score of 2.88 on the 4-point frequency scale (see Table 8.4). This suggests that those who completed the survey watch the show with relative regularity allowing them to be familiar with its content, style and topics and can therefore provide insightful judgements about its role and potential impact.

**Table 8.4**

*Mean Score of the responses to the Question about Frequency of Watching the Show*

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Count
How often do you watch the show?	1.00	4.00	2.88	0.78	2066

### 8.2.2 Reasons for Watching the Show

Viewers' reasons for watching *Man Saf Baladi* were measured by a multiple-choice question, where participants selected as many of the options that applied to them from the following: 1 *having fun/getting entertained*, 2 *getting informed/updated about political issues*, 3 *liking the producer*, 4 *agreeing with the producer's opinions*, and 5 *other* reasons provided by the respondents. The options were chosen for the survey because they were determined as appropriate options for capturing reasons for watching (Masta, 2010; ElGabry, 2014). The numbers and percentages of participants' responses are presented in Table 8.5 and Figure 8.3.

**Table 8.5**

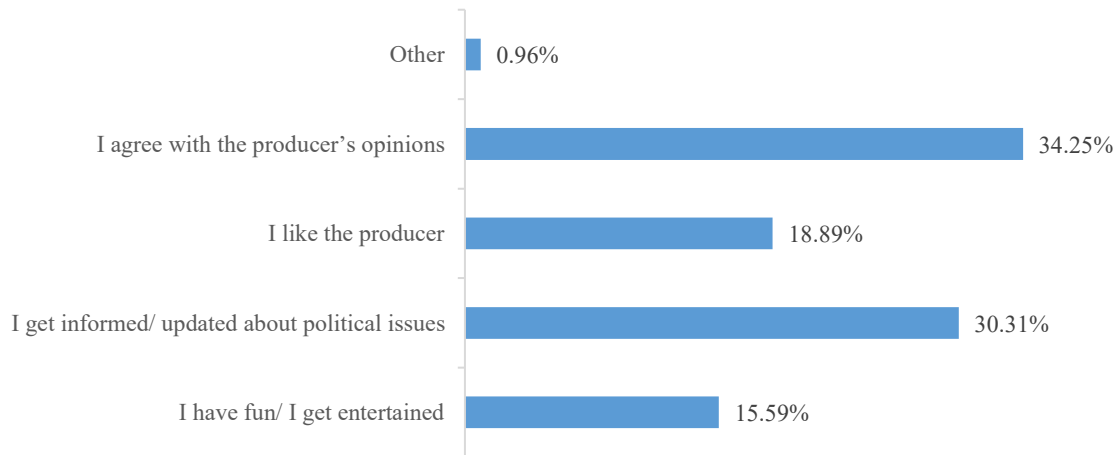
*Respondents' Reasons for Watching the Man Saf Baladi Show*

#	Answer	Count	Percentage of respondents
1	I have fun/ I get entertained	598	15.59%
2	I get informed/ updated about political issues	1163	30.31%
3	I like the producer	725	18.89%
4	I agree with the producer's opinions	1314	34.25%
5	Other, please specify	37	0.96%
	Total	3837*	

\* Total is higher than the number of respondents as the question allowed multiple answers.

**Figure 8.3**

*Respondents' Reasons for Watching the Man Saf Baladi Show (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.5 and Figure 8.3, results from the audience survey highlighted agreement with AHZ's opinions and obtaining political information as the major driving motives

for watching the *Man Saf Baladi* show. Specifically, 34.25% of the respondents (n = 1314) reported agreement with the satirist’s opinions and 30.31% of the respondents (n = 1163) reported becoming informed/updated about political issues as their reasons for watching the show.

These were followed by affinity for AHZ, with a sizable number of respondents (18.89 % of the sample) reporting that they watch *Man Saf Baladi* because they like its producer (n = 725). Notably, among the close-ended responses, entertainment received the lowest score as a reason for watching the show, with only 15.59% of the respondents citing having fun/being entertained (n = 598) as a driving motive for watching *Man Saf Baladi*. A small portion of the respondents (0.96%) chose to provide additional information and express their reasons for watching the show in writing (n = 37). Despite their relatively small number, these responses were considered crucial for understanding the reasons for watching the show, as they were articulated by the respondents themselves. Therefore, their responses were thematically analysed using NVivo data analysis software. The reasons provided by the respondents centered around 4 major themes (See Figure 8.4). These are:

**Figure 8.4**

*Screenshot from Nvivo Showing Themes Emerging from Respondents’ Reasons for Watching the Show*

File	Home	Import	Create	Explore	Share	Modules
<b>Codes</b>						
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Name					Files    References
<input type="radio"/>	Representation of Reality					1        18
<input type="radio"/>	Source for Information and Citizenship					1        9
<input type="radio"/>	Political Engagement & Critique					1        7
<input type="radio"/>	Emotional Release					1        3

**1. Representation of reality** (18 references). Respondents watch the *Man Saf Baladi* show mainly because they feel it aligns with their thoughts and feelings about their societal and political realities. They believe it is a credible programme that “expresses the concerns of the

Jordanian people” and represents “the views of the majority of the public about political issues in the country”.

It raises topics that affect the life of the citizens and speaks honestly about what’s on the mind of every person in Jordan. It is an outlet for expressing the feelings of many people who fear to express their opinion due to political pressure. It’s a unique and a highly professional way for expressing their opinion. (Extract 8.1)

It’s an honest programme that expresses the real situation. (Extract 8.2)

Because it expresses our painful reality. (Extract 8.3)

**2. Source for information and citizenship** (9 references). Some respondents watch the show to become informed about “the latest crucial political events” and “learn about social and political issues from a different perspective”. They believe it is distinct from the mainstream media and official news channels that echo the voice of political power; hence they watch it for being a “reliable source” for information that plays a “role in raising public awareness”.

I get to know what’s happening in the country in a satiric way. (Extract 8.4)

To be updated on events and news. (Extract 8.5)

I believe in the role of political satire in raising awareness and resisting corrupt authority. (Extract 8.6).

**3. Political engagement and critique** (7 references). Some respondents watch the show because of its engagement with public affairs and critique of political authority. They believe it is a platform for opposing political power and expressing suppressed public opinion.

For its opposition to unjust government decisions against the public. (Extract 8.7)

Because it lashes the government. (Extract 8.8)

Because it presents political and economic issues in a satiric way, in addition to its credibility in the presentation. (Extract 8.9)

**4. Emotional release** (3 references). A smaller number of respondents watch the show because they see it as a means of emotional release, believing that watching political satire that highlights the collective grievance of the society can be therapeutic.

Sharing the pain relieves it. (Extract 8.10)

For relieving, even a little bit, the brunt of injustice, oppression, and corruption.  
(Extract 8.11)

In addition to the first choice, we find a person who quenches the citizens' fury in a satiric way and releases us a little bit from the injustice we live in. (Extract 8.12)

Overall, the results from the audience survey suggest that viewers primarily watch the show for the congruence between the views presented in its content and their own, the information, and political insights it provides, and the admired personality of its producer/presenter. Although the element of entertainment exists, it is not a primary motive for tuning in, as viewers are more deeply invested in the show's political critique and its role in political representation.

### **8.2.3 Online Engagement with the Show**

Viewers' online engagement with the show was measured by a series of four items that asked whether the subjects 'post, share or reshare episodes of the show on their social media accounts'; 'comment on the content/ discussions prompted by show online'; 'search for further information about the issues addressed in the show'; and 'discuss the topics addressed in the show with their family, friends, or colleagues'. The response options for each item were in the form of a 5-point frequency scale, ranging from 1 *never*, 2 *rarely*, 3 *sometimes*, 4 *often* and 5 *always*. A fifth item measured the extent to which respondents consider these acts as 'an act of political participation', using a 5-point scale, anchored at 1 *strongly disagree*, 2 *disagree*, 3 *neutral*, 4 *agree*, and 5 *strongly agree*. The results of these measures will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

#### **8.2.3.1 Perception of Online Engagement as Political Participation**

Table 8.6 and Figure 8.5 below show the results of the subjects' responses to the question asking them to what extent they consider online engagement with the *Man Saf Baladi* show (in the form

of sharing, resharing or commenting on its content and engaging in discussions its content prompts online) an act of political participation.

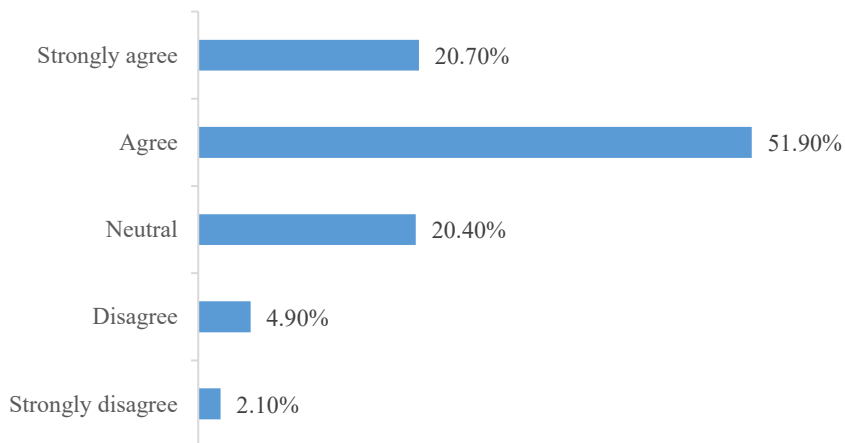
**Table 8.6**

*Responses to the Question of Whether Online Engagement is an Act of Political Participation*

#	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	43	2.1%
2	Disagree	102	4.9%
3	Neutral	422	20.4%
4	Agree	1072	51.9%
5	Strongly agree	427	20.7%
	Total	2066	100%

**Figure 8.5**

*Responses to the Question of Whether Online Engagement is an Act of Political Participation (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.6 and Figure 8.5, the majority of respondents view online interactions with the show as a significant form of political engagement, with 51.9% (n = 1072) showing

*agreement* and 20.7% (n = 427) showing *strong agreement*, hence collectively making up over 72% of the total responses. Conversely, only a small minority, comprising 2.1% (n = 43) who *strongly disagree* and 4.9% (n = 102) who *disagree*, view their online activities prompted by the show as unrelated to political participation. Meanwhile, 20.4% (n = 422) of the respondents remain *neutral*. These figures demonstrate a strong perception among viewers that their engagement with *Man Saf Baladi* in the social media spaces is a form of political engagement and an active contribution to political discourse.

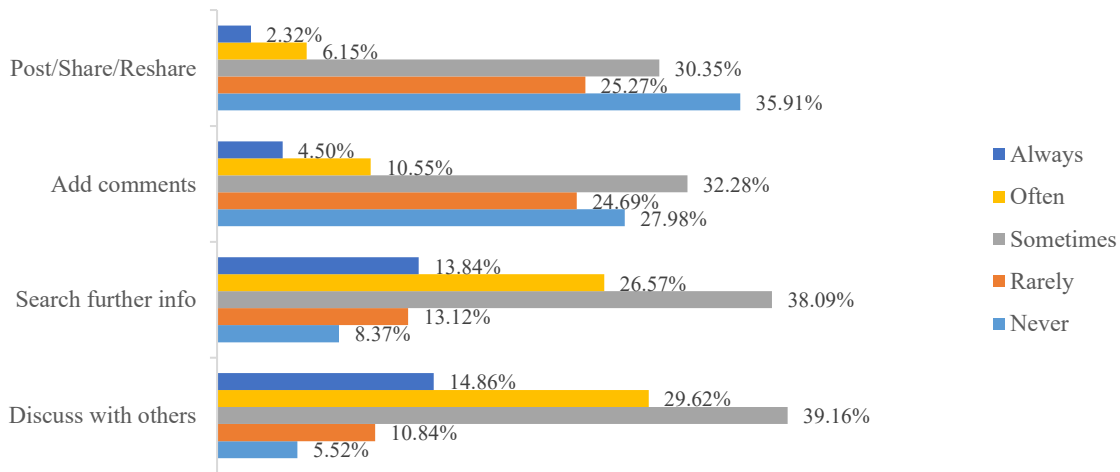
### **8.2.3.2 Viewers' Online Engagement with the *Man Saf Baladi* Show**

The engagement patterns among viewers of the *Man Saf Baladi* show demonstrated diverse levels of interaction with its content. However, while the majority of respondents revealed low levels of engagement in relation to posting, sharing, and resharing videos of the show on their social media accounts (mean = 2.14) and adding comments online (mean = 2.39), higher levels of interaction were observed in relation to searching for further information about political issues addressed in the show (mean = 3.24) and discussing topics of the show with family, friends or colleagues (mean = 3.37).

Table 8.7 and Figure 8.6 below detail the results of the respondents' engagement across four types of interaction. As illustrated by the table and the figure, searching for further information, and discussing topics with others generally stand out as the most common types of engagement.

**Table 8.7***Viewers' Engagement with the Man Saf Baladi Show*

Engagement Type	Response					Total (%)
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
Post/Share/Reshare	724 (35.91%)	522 (25.27%)	627 (30.35%)	127 (6.15%)	48 (2.32%)	2066 (100%)
Add comments	578 (27.98%)	510 (24.69%)	667 (32.28%)	218 (10.55%)	93 (4.50%)	2066 (100%)
Search further info	173 (8.37%)	271 (13.12%)	787 (38.09%)	549 (26.57%)	286 (13.84%)	2066 (100%)
Discuss with others	114 (5.52%)	224 (10.84%)	809 (39.16%)	612 (29.62%)	307 (14.86%)	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.6***Viewers' Engagement with the Man Saf Baladi Show (%)*

A considerable number of respondents actively search for additional information about the political issues discussed in the show, with 38.09% (n = 787) reporting they do so sometimes, 26.57% (n = 549) do so often, and 13.84% (n = 286) always engage in additional search for further information. Similarly, discussions about the show's topics with family, friends, or colleagues are also frequent, with 39.16% (n = 809) of the respondents reporting they sometimes

engage in discussions, 29.62% (n = 612) do so often, and 14.86% (n = 307) always engage in discussions.

Conversely, engagement through posting the show on their social media profiles and adding comments on its content online is markedly lower among the respondents. The results show that 35.91% (n = 742) of respondents never engage by posting, sharing, or resharing content of the show, and 25.27% (n = 522) do so rarely. Adding comments on the content of the show or on discussions prompted by the show online also exhibited lower engagement, with 27.98% (n = 578) of the respondents never do so and 24.69% (n = 510) do so rarely.

Overall, these findings suggest a selective engagement pattern among viewers of *Man Saf Baladi*, who appear to prefer personal discussions and targeted searches for further information over more public forms of online interaction. This pattern of engagement can be understood within the sociopolitical context of Jordan and similar non-democratic settings, where social media spaces are often monitored by state authorities. Engaging in publicly visible activities, such as commenting on, posting, and sharing content that criticises political power, could be perceived as riskier, whereas searching for information and having private discussions within personal circles are considered safer and less likely to attract negative attention from authorities. This environment could have influenced the behaviours and choices of *Man Saf Baladi* viewers, leading them to resort to more contained and more private forms of engagement that carry lower risks of state surveillance and its repercussions.

#### **8.2.4 Viewers' Perceptions about the Impact of the Show**

Viewers' perceptions about the impact of *Man Saf Baladi* show were measured by a series of thirteen items using a 5-point agreement scale, anchored at 1 *strongly disagree*, 2 *disagree*, 3 *neutral*, 4 *agree*, and 5 *strongly agree*. The items centred on the impact of the show on political views and interests, attitudes toward political entities, political cynicism, political participation, political awareness, emotional release, and virtual community. These items collectively explored the show's broad dimensions of influence on the survey subjects, based on their personal judgments. Results for these dimensions will be discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

### 8.2.4.1 Political Views and Interests

Viewers perceptions about the impact of the show on their political views and interests were measured by two questions. The results of the subjects' responses to these questions are presented in Table 8.8 and Figure 8.7.

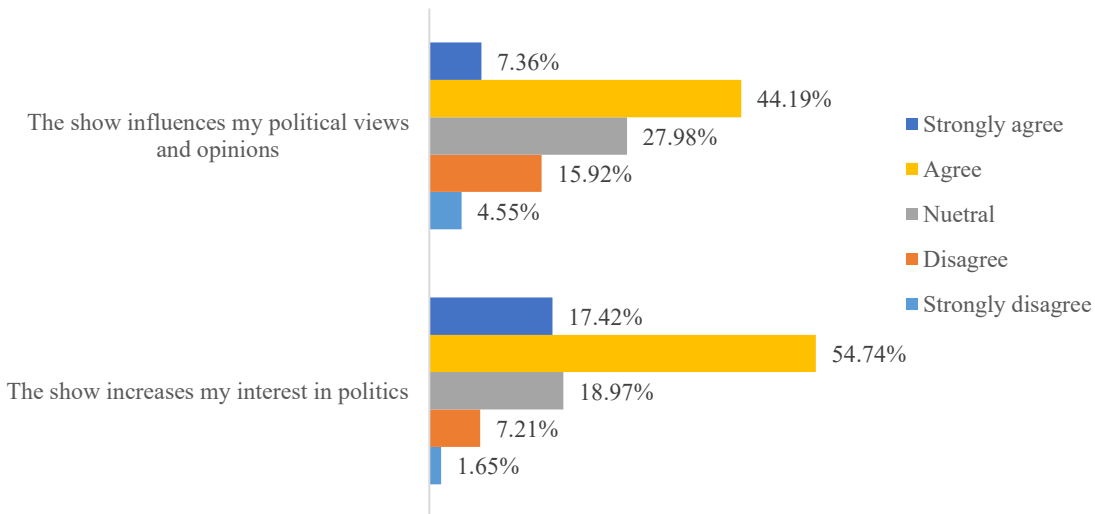
**Table 8.8**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Impact on Political Views and Interests*

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total (%)
The show influences my political views and opinions	94 (4.55%)	329 (15.92%)	578 (27.98%)	913 (44.19%)	152 (7.36%)	2066 (100%)
The show increases my interest in politics	34 (1.65%)	149 (7.21%)	392 (18.97%)	1131 (54.74%)	360 (17.42%)	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.7**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Impact on Political Views and Interests (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.8 and Figure 8.7, the *Man Saf Baladi* show impacts its viewers' political views and interests according to the majority of respondents. More than half of the respondents believe the show can impact political views and opinions of its audience, with 44.19% (n = 913) agreeing and 7.36% (n = 152) strongly agreeing that it impacts their own political views and opinions. However, only around 20% (n = 423) of the total number of subjects believe otherwise. Similarly, the majority of respondents assert the show's capacity to prompt political interest, with 54.74% (n = 1131) agreeing and 17.42% (360) strongly agreeing that the show increases their personal interests in politics. Around 9% (n = 183) only disagree it does so. These predominant trends in the subjects' responses showcase *Man Saf Baladi* as an impactful show and highlight the substantial role of its satire in enhancing political interests and shaping political views of its audience.

#### 8.2.4.2 Attitudes Toward Political Entities

Perceptions about the impact of *Man Saf Baladi* on viewers' attitudes toward political entities were measured by three questions that included influencing *attitudes toward politicians and statesmen*, *level of trust in political institutions* and *level of trust in national media outlets*. Table 8.9 and Figure 8.8 show the detailed results of the subjects' responses to these questions.

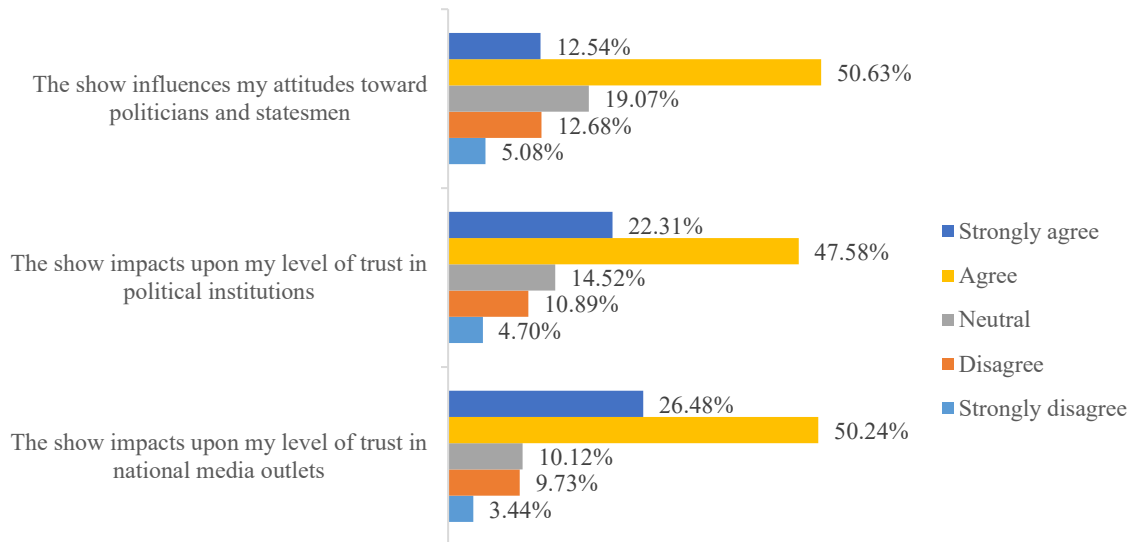
**Table 8.9**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Show's Impact on Attitudes Toward Political Entities*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
The show influences my attitudes toward politicians and statesmen	105 (5.08%)	262 (12.68%)	394 (19.07%)	1046 (50.63%)	259 (12.54%)	2066 (100%)
The show impacts upon my level of trust in political institutions	97 (4.70%)	225 (10.89%)	300 (14.52%)	983 (47.58%)	461 (22.31%)	2066 (100%)
The show impacts upon my level of trust in national media outlets	71 (3.44%)	201 (9.73%)	209 (10.12%)	1038 (50.24%)	547 (26.48%)	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.8**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Impact on Attitudes Toward Political Entities (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.9 and Figure 8.8, the *Man Saf Baladi* show impacts viewers' attitudes (either positively or negatively) towards political entities, including politicians, political institutions, and national media outlets according to the majority of the respondents. The results show that 63.17 % (n = 1305) of the respondents agree that the show influences their attitudes toward politicians and statesmen, in contrast to only 17.76% (n = 367) who disagree on this influence. Additionally, the show affects the level of trust in political institutions for 69.89% of the respondents (n =1444), and the level of trust in national media outlets for 76.72% (n = 1585), in contrast to 15.59% (n = 322) and 13.17 % (n = 272) who disagree on its impact on their trust in political institutions and national media outlets respectively. Overall, these results underscore a general tendency toward agreement among the participants on the influence of the show in shaping perceptions and trust levels regarding politicians, institutions (such as government and parliament), and media outlets (such as national TV and traditional newspapers). These audience assessments of the *Man Saf Baladi* show highlight the role of satire as a significant influencer of public opinion within the Jordanian political domain.

### 8.2.4.3 Political Cynicism

Viewers' perceptions of the show's role in fostering political cynicism and discouraging engagement in political life were measured by two questions. The detailed results of the participant's responses to these questions are presented in Table 8.10 and Figure 8.9.

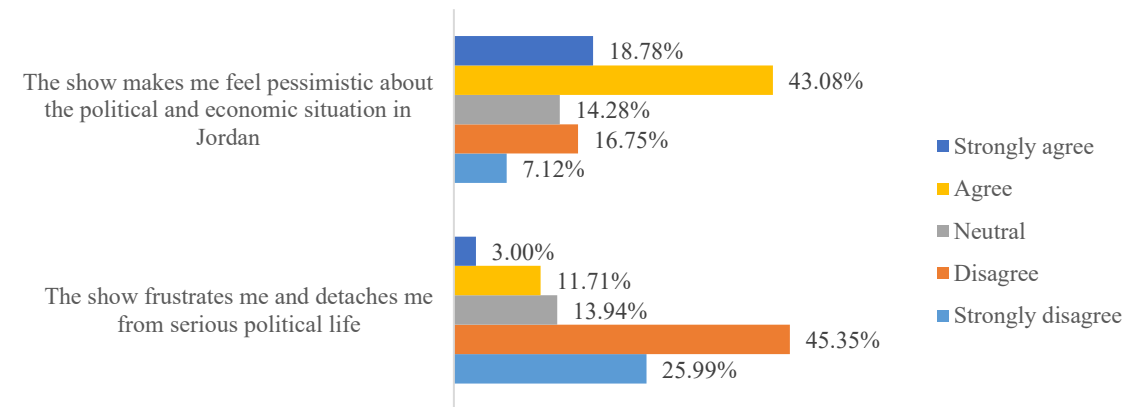
**Table 8.10**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Effect in fostering Political Cynicism*

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total (%)
The show makes me feel pessimistic about the political and economic situation in Jordan	147 (7.12%)	346 (16.75%)	295 (14.28%)	890 (43.08%)	388 (18.78%)	2066 (100%)
The show frustrates me and detaches me from serious political life	537 (25.99%)	937 (45.35%)	288 (13.94%)	242 (11.71%)	62 (3.00%)	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.9**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Effect in fostering Political Cynicism (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.10 and Figure 8.9, results from the audience survey revealed that 43.08% of the respondents (n = 890) agree and 18.78% (n = 388) strongly agree that the show makes them feel pessimistic about the political and economic situation in Jordan. However, a

much lesser portion of subjects, making up 23.87% (n = 493) of the total number of respondents disagree to varying degrees on this effect. These statistics indicate a tendency among viewers to develop negative feelings about the political and economic status of their country as a result of watching the *Man Saf Baladi* show. This is perhaps not surprising, given that satirical programmes often highlight political and economic flaws. *Man Saf Baladi*, in particular, as indicated in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.3.1, emphasises serious issues that provoke strong emotions such as sadness and anger, often over humorous content. This strategy encourages the audience to critically evaluate these topics and adopt a serious political stance.<sup>48</sup>

The subjects' tendencies to feel negative as a result of watching the *Man Saf Baladi* show serves as a strong indication of the show's role in connecting its audience to their sociopolitical context. However, rather than discouraging political participation, the critical content of political satire programmes can actually mobilise political participation through emotional provocation (Chen et al., 2017) and encourage viewers towards political engagement "by triggering anxiety about the current political situation and future political outcomes" (Cao & Brewer, 2008, p. 91). This effect is supported by the results of the second question which, as shown in Table 8.10 and Figure 8.9, reveal that the majority of respondents do not detach themselves from political life. Together, the results from these two questions indicate that, while the *Man Saf Baladi* show may heighten a sense of pessimism about current issues among its viewers, it does not necessarily alienate them from politics or political participation. Instead, it appears to play a constructive role in stimulating—rather than discouraging—political discourse and political behaviour, as will be seen in the subsequent section.

#### **8.2.4.4 Political Participation**

Viewers' perceptions of the show's impact on encouraging political participation were further evaluated by two questions. These questions asked whether participants agree that the show encourages them to: *talk about politics*, and *engage in serious political acts, such as attending public discussions, joining activist campaigns, or street protests*. Table 8.11 and Figure 8.10 show the detailed results of the subjects' responses to these questions.

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<sup>48</sup> Elaborate discussion of emotions and their discursive function in the *Man Saf Baladi* show was made in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.3.

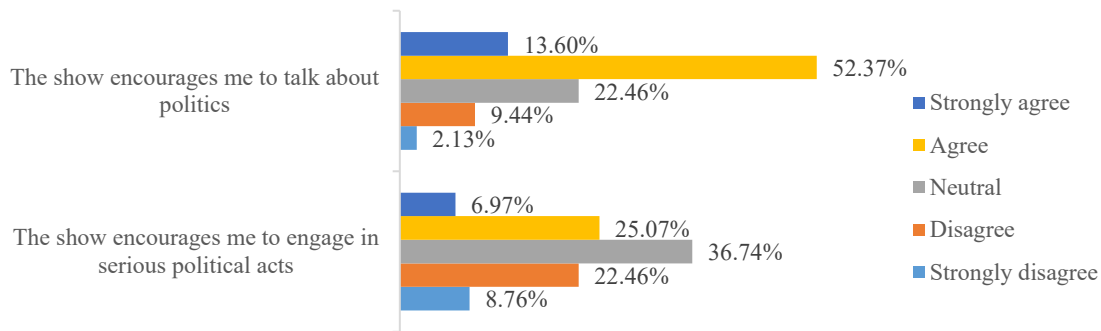
**Table 8.11**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Effect in Encouraging Political Participation*

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total (%)
The show encourages me to talk about politics	44 (2.13%)	195 (9.44%)	464 (22.46%)	1082 (52.37%)	281 (13.60%)	2066 (100%)
The show encourages me to engage in serious political acts <sup>49</sup>	181 (8.76%)	464 (22.46%)	759 (36.74%)	518 (25.07%)	144 (6.97%)	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.10**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Effect in Encouraging Political Participation (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.11 and Figure 8.10, the *Man Saf Baladi* show was reported by survey respondents to influence viewers' political behaviour. The results indicate that a majority of respondents are prompted by the show to engage in political discussions, with around 66% (n = 1363) either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the show encourages them to talk about politics. This tendency aligns with the comments in Chapter 7, Section 7.2.3 which reveal a range of audience reflections on their country's political landscape and highlight the show's role in fostering political dialogue among viewers. However, when it comes to encouraging more active

<sup>49</sup> The complete statement in the survey was: The satirical show *Man Saf Baladi* encourages me to engage in serious political acts, such as attending public discussions, joining activist campaigns, or street protests.

forms of political participation, such as attending public discussions, joining activist campaigns, or participating in street protests, the show's influence appears less pronounced among respondents, though still noteworthy. While 36.74% (n = 759) of the respondents remain neutral, a moderate portion, approximately 32% (n = 662), agree, to varying degrees, that the show encourages them to engage in serious political acts.

This number is potentially of interest, because it suggests that many respondents are motivated toward political action. However, a combined 31.22% of respondents (n = 645) disagree or strongly disagree with this notion, indicating some reservations about taking more direct political action inspired by the show. In brief, the results from the two questions suggest that while *Man Saf Baladi* provides a platform that encourages its audience to engage intellectually in political discourse, fewer members of the audience translate this form of engagement into direct political action. This differentiation highlights the show as enhancing political dialogue without necessarily driving viewers towards political activism. One possible reason for this pattern is that the descriptive statistics combine the responses of viewers who watch the show with differing levels of regularity. Those who watch less frequently may be less influenced by the show, which could dilute the overall effect seen in the data. To better understand whether the show actively encourages viewers to engage in serious political action, a correlational test was conducted. The test revealed a positive relationship between the frequency of watching and viewers' perception of this impact, indicating that the more viewers watch the show, the more they believe it encourages them to engage in political acts. The detailed results of this correlation test will be presented in Section 8.3.

#### **8.2.4.5 Political Awareness**

Perceptions about the role of the show in increasing viewers' political awareness was measured by a question that asked whether respondents agree that the show *informs them about the political situation of the country*. The results of the subjects' responses to this question are shown Table 8.12 and Figure 8.11.

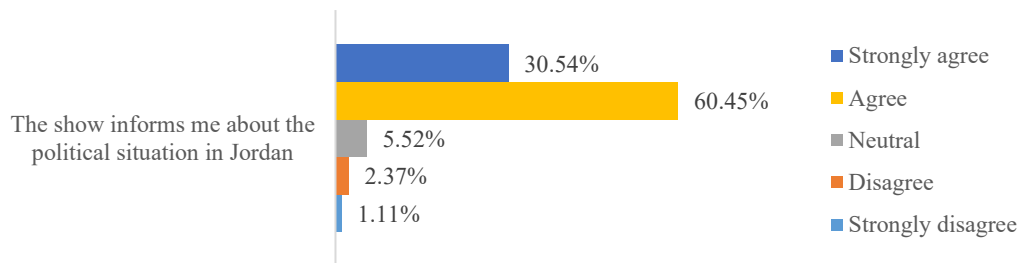
**Table 8.12**

*Responses to the Question Measuring the Shows' Effect in Informing Viewers (%)*

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total (%)
The show informs me about the political situation in Jordan	23 1.11%	49 2.37%	114 5.52%	1249 60.45%	631 30.54%	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.11**

*Responses to the Question Measuring the Shows' Effect in Informing Viewers (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.12 and Figure 8.11, *Man Saf Baladi* enhances viewers awareness of the political situation in Jordan. The results indicate that a substantial majority of respondents, making up 90.99% of the sample are informed about the political situation in Jordan due to watching the show, with 60.45% agreeing (n = 1249) and 30.54% strongly agreeing (n = 631). In contrast, disagreement among respondents is minimal, with only 2.37% (n = 49) and 1.11% (n = 23) disagreeing and strongly disagreeing respectively. Neutral responses are also scarce at 5.52% (n = 114), emphasising the broad consensus among viewers regarding the show's substantial value in providing political information. This result highlights the show as a notable source for disseminating political information and increasing audience awareness.

### 8.2.4.6 Emotional Release

Perceptions about the show’s effect in providing emotional or ‘psychological release’<sup>50</sup> for its audience was measured by a question that asked whether respondents agree that the show *vents their frustration about the political and economic situation in Jordan*. Table 8.13 and Figure 8.12 show the results of the subjects’ responses to this question.

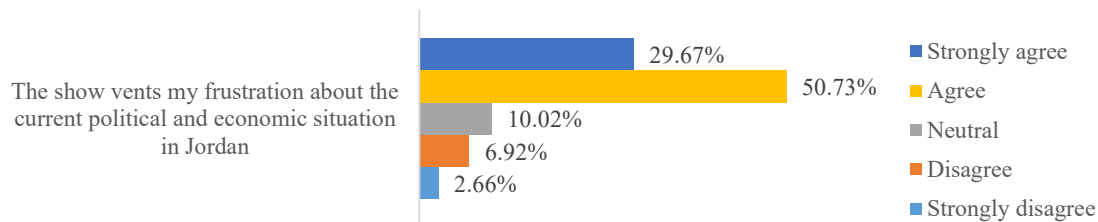
**Table 8.13**

*Responses to the Question Measuring the Shows’ Effect in Providing Emotional Release*

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total (%)
The show vents my frustration about the current political and economic situation in Jordan	55 2.66%	143 6.92%	207 10.02%	1048 50.73%	613 29.67%	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.12**

*Responses to the Question Measuring the Shows’ Effect in Providing Emotional Release (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.13 and Figure 8.12, *Man Saf Baladi* show plays a significant role in providing emotional release for its viewers, according to the subjects’ responses. A substantial portion of respondents, making approximately 80% of the sample, feel that the show vents their

<sup>50</sup> Originating from Freudian relief theory of humour, the term ‘psychological release’ is often used by scholars to denote a psychological function of satire. Zekavat, (2014, p. 14), for example states that “satire can serve to provide psychological release and/or resistance from patriarchy”. It is, therefore, a therapeutic function or “a healing quality” that allows “built-up tension and energy to be released” (Lynch, 2002, p. 427).

frustration about the current political and economic situation in Jordan, with 50.73% (n = 1048) agreeing and 29.67% (n = 613) strongly agreeing with this statement. In contrast, the percentages of respondents who disagree (6.92%, n = 143) or strongly disagree (2.66%, n = 55) are very low, and neutral responses account for 10.02% (n = 207), indicating that only a small minority of viewers do not perceive the show as providing emotional release. These results underscore the show's impact in offering a psychological outlet for its audience amidst the political and economic challenges they experience in their country. This finding aligns with a smaller, yet noteworthy, pattern in the analysis of the viewers' Facebook comments, where a limited number of viewers describe the show as a "venting outlet" that helps them release their frustration (Chapter 7, Section 7.2.4.1). While the qualitative theme was less prevalent, it complements the broader trend in the survey, and both findings suggest that *Man Saf Baladi* plays a role in mediating viewers' psychological states and transforming their negative emotions into a more manageable form.

#### **8.2.4.7 Virtual Community**

A show's encouragement of communication among its viewers, in the form of facilitating interactions and discussions, as seen, for example, on the *Man Saf Baladi* Facebook page, can contribute to the formation of a like-minded "imagined community" (Cao & Brewer, 2008, p. 91). Such communication plays a key role in building and maintaining community bonds, as it allows members to share ideas, opinions, and experiences. Taking this into account, viewers' perceptions of the show's role in creating a virtual community, characterised by shared attitudes and views among its members, were measured using two questions. The first asked whether participants agreed that the show *encourages communication about its content among its viewers*, while the second asked directly whether participants agree the show *creates an online community among its viewers based on their attitudes and opinions*. Results for the two questions are shown in Table 8.14 and Figure 8.13.

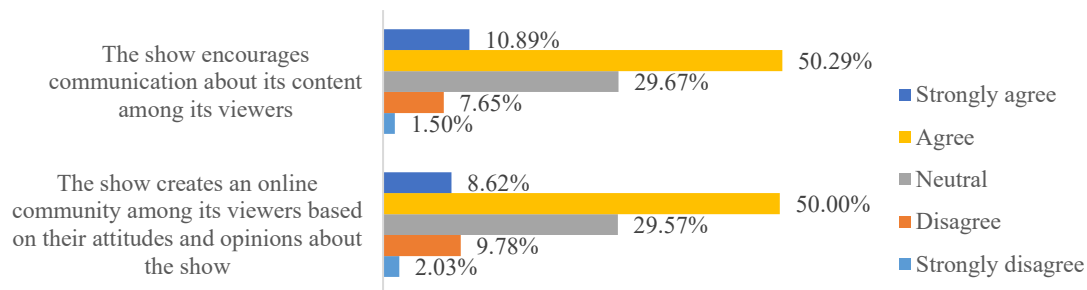
**Table 8.14**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Effect in Creating Virtual Community*

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total (%)
The show encourages communication about its content among its viewers	31 1.50%	158 7.65%	613 29.67%	1039 50.29%	225 10.89%	2066 (100%)
The show creates an online community among its viewers based on their attitudes and opinions about the show	42 2.03%	202 9.78%	611 29.57%	1033 50.00%	178 8.62%	2066 (100%)

**Figure 8.13**

*Responses to the Questions Measuring the Shows' Effect in Creating Virtual Community (%)*



As illustrated in Table 8.14 and Figure 8.13, the *Man Saf Baladi* show fosters a virtual community among its viewers, according to the majority of the respondents. The results indicate that around 61% of respondents perceive the show as encouraging communication among its audience, with 50.29% (n = 1039) agreeing and 10.89% (n = 225) strongly agreeing to this effect. Similarly, around 59% of the respondents believe that the show creates an online community among its viewers based on shared attitudes and opinions, with 50% (n = 1033) agreeing and 8.62% (n = 178) strongly agreeing to this view. In contrast, disagreement among respondents is minimal, with only 9.15% (n = 189) expressing varying levels of disagreement

with the notion that the show encourages communication among its viewers, and only 11.81% (n = 244) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that the show creates an online community. Neutral responses are moderate, with 29.67% (n = 613) remaining neutral on the show's encouragement of communication, and 29.57% (n = 611) on its role in creating an online community.

Altogether, these results highlight audience perceptions of *Man Saf Baladi* as a platform that promotes interaction and fosters a sense of community among its viewers, underscoring the perceived impact of online political satire in cultivating a connected and engaged audience within the context of Jordan.

Overall, the results presented in Section 8.2.4, which analyse participants' judgments about the impact of *Man Saf Baladi*, suggest that the show's political satire influences multiple aspects of viewers' perceptions and behaviour. It influences political views and increases interest in politics for the majority of viewers. It also affects their attitudes toward political entities, including politicians, political institutions, and national media outlets. While it may engender some pessimism about the political and economic situation in Jordan, it does not dissuade viewers from engaging in political life. Rather, it appears to encourage political participation, particularly through interpersonal discussions and conversations about politics. The show also informs and enhances its viewers' political awareness, while providing emotional release that helps them cope with difficult realities. Moreover, it is perceived to foster a virtual community characterised by interaction and shared perspectives: a community that forms around the consumption of and engagement with its satire. This community collectively contributes to public discourse in Jordan by offering a critical voice in social media spaces, as reflected in viewers' critical reflections on the country's political landscape, evidenced in their Facebook comments discussed in the previous chapter.

### **8.3 Correlation Tests**

The descriptive statistical analysis presented in the previous sections reveals valuable insights into how viewers engage with *Man Saf Baladi* online and how they perceive its impact. However, because these findings are based on descriptive statistics derived from respondents with varying levels of exposure to the show, further statistical analysis was conducted to better understand the relationship between viewing frequency and key viewer behaviours. Specifically,

two correlation tests were carried out. The first correlation test examined the relationship between the frequency of watching the show and viewers' online engagement across the four types of interaction: posting/sharing, adding comments online, seeking further information, and discussing topics with others. The second test explored the relationship between viewing frequency and viewers' perceptions of the show's impact across several dimensions, including political views and interests, attitudes toward political entities, political cynicism, political participation, political awareness, emotional release, and the sense of virtual community. The findings from the first correlational test were statistically significant, revealing positive correlations between frequency of viewing and all types of online engagement, at a significance level of  $\alpha \leq 0.01$ . These results suggest that higher viewership of *Man Saf Baladi* is associated with greater online engagement, including posting, sharing, and resharing episodes; adding comments on the content; and seeking further information about the issues discussed. Additionally, frequent viewers are more likely to engage in conversations about the show with family and friends.

However, while all correlations were statistically significant, they displayed notable variations across the different types of engagement activities, with *discussing topics of the show with family and friends* yielding the highest correlation coefficient. This is followed by *posting/sharing/resharing its content*, then *searching further information* and lastly *adding comments on its content online*, which marks the lowest correlation score. This gradient of engagement suggests a continuum where viewers appear more inclined toward personal and expansive discussions than direct public commentary. This may indicate a preference among viewers for more reflective or less public forms of engagement. Table 8.15 presents the detailed results of the correlation test, offering a quantitative perspective on the relationship between viewing *Man Saf Baladi* and levels of viewers' engagement.

**Table 8.15***Correlations between Watching the Man Saf Baladi Show and Online Engagement*

<b>Question</b>		<b>Watching</b>
Do you post, share, or reshare episodes of the show on your social media accounts?	Pearson Correlation	.326**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Do you comment on the satirical content or discussions prompted by show online?	Pearson Correlation	.257**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Do you search for further information about political issues that are critiqued in the show?	Pearson Correlation	.269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Do you discuss the topics that you watch in the show with family, friends, or colleagues?	Pearson Correlation	.332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Table 8.15, a weak to moderate positive correlation was found between the frequency of watching *Man Saf Baladi* and all forms of engagement. Notably, the highest correlation emerged between viewership and discussing the show's topics with family, friends, or colleagues,  $r(2064) = .332$ ,  $p < .001$ . This suggests the shows' capacity to prompt interpersonal discussions and encourage viewers to share their opinions and insights on the politics of their country. Similarly, a positive correlation was found between viewership and posting, sharing, or resharing episodes on social media,  $r(2064) = .326$ ,  $p < .001$ . Additionally, the test revealed positive correlations between watching the show and searching for further information on the political issues addressed,  $r(2064) = .269$ ,  $p < .001$ , as well as commenting on its content online,  $r(2064) = .257$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Overall, the significant positive correlations observed between viewership of *Man Saf Baladi* and participants' engagement activities suggest a potential impact of regular viewing on viewers' behaviour. Specifically, viewers who watch the show more frequently appear more likely to engage in discussions about the events and issues it addresses, as well as in activities that help

disseminate its content online. In doing so, they play an important role in expanding the show's reach and circle of impact. This form of engagement may not only enhance the visibility of *Man Saf Baladi* within social media spaces but may also contribute to the cultivation of a communal critical discourse around its themes. It also suggests that increased viewership can lead to the search for additional information, thereby deepening viewers understanding and engagement with political issues and events in their country. Together, these correlational results reinforce the findings in Section 8.2.3.2, suggesting that watching the show may extend beyond passive consumption or emotional release, fostering a more active, informed, and communicative viewer base. This insight is crucial for understanding the role of political satire in Jordan, as exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*, in stimulating political discussion within the community. Such engagement can be a precursor to active citizenship and broader political participation.

The second correlation test examined the relationship between viewers' frequency of watching *Man Saf Baladi* and their perceptions of the show's impact across various dimensions. The detailed results of this test are presented in Table 8.16.

**Table 8. 16***Correlations between Watching the Man Saf Baladi show and Perceptions about its Impact*

<b>Area of Impact</b>		<b>Watching</b>
Political Views and Interests	Pearson Correlation	.298**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Attitudes Toward Political Entities	Pearson Correlation	.136**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Political Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	-.107**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Political Participation	Pearson Correlation	.258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Political Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.219**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Emotional Release	Pearson Correlation	.136**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066
Virtual Community	Pearson Correlation	.193**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001
	N	2066

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As illustrated in Table 8.16, the test revealed significant correlations between watching the *Man Saf Baladi* show and all dimensions of viewers' perceptions of its impact (significant at  $\alpha \leq 0.01$ ). Specifically, there was a moderate positive correlation between watching the show and viewers' perception of its impact on their political views and interests,  $r(2064) = .298, p < .001$ .

Political participation also showed a moderate positive correlation with watching the show,  $r(2064) = .258, p < .001$ . Additionally, political awareness correlated positively with watching *Man Saf Baladi*, showing a weak to moderate correlation,  $r(2064) = .219, p < .001$ . Viewers' perception of the show's ability to create a virtual community also correlated positively with watching, showing a weak to moderate correlation,  $r(2064) = .193, p < .001$ . Attitudes toward political entities correlated positively with watching the show, albeit weakly,  $r(2064) = .136, p < .001$ . Similarly, there was a weak positive correlation between emotional release and watching  $r(2064) = .136, p < .001$ . Political cynicism, however, showed a weak negative correlation with watching,  $r(2064) = -.107, p < .001$ , suggesting that increased viewership is associated with reduced feelings of frustration and detachment from political life.

Despite their weak to moderate effect sizes, the significant correlations between viewing *Man Saf Baladi* and various dimensions of perceived impact reinforce earlier descriptive findings and contribute to a deeper understanding of the show's influence. While these correlational findings present no surprises in showing that regular viewership influences viewers, they also reveal no anomalies, thereby supporting broader arguments about the role and impact of satire in the Jordanian context.

## **8.4 Concluding Discussion**

This chapter examined the impact of Jordanian political satire by analysing audience perceptions of the *Man Saf Baladi* show through a quantitative survey. As evidenced by the large number of survey respondents, the findings indicate that *Man Saf Baladi* enjoys a broad viewership within the Jordanian online space. Viewers are primarily drawn to the show for its alignment with their political views, the perceived credibility of its producer-presenter, and the insight it offers. Entertainment (and by extension, humour) plays a less significant role, suggesting that the show's appeal lies more in its political substance and perspective than in amusement.

The responses highlight viewers' recognition of the show as a platform for political engagement, critique of authority, civic education, and representation of diverse public voices, alongside its role as a source of emotional release. While previous scholarship has largely framed Jordanian

political satire as offering little more than catharsis (Barahmeh, 2020, 2022, 2023), the findings in this chapter suggest otherwise—a point that will be explored further in Chapter 9. Echoing research from democratic contexts (e.g., Baranowski, 2020; Ferre-Pavia et al., 2016; Young, 2013), *Man Saf Baladi* also serves informative and educative functions. It not only motivates viewers to seek political information elsewhere but also acts as a direct source of political knowledge, contributing to the political awareness and civic understanding of its audience.

Survey results also suggest that increased exposure to *Man Saf Baladi* is linked to higher levels of engagement, such as commenting, sharing, discussing, and seeking additional information, supporting the idea that political satire can foster political expression and online participation. Furthermore, as Cao and Brewer (2008) note, satire can build an “imagined community” by making politics accessible and encouraging shared experiences. The show appears to play this role, with its audience forming a virtual community that may translate online interaction into real-world political involvement (Delli Carpini, 2000; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

In addition to shaping engagement and community-building, political satire has also been shown to influence political attitudes (Boukes & Hameleers, 2020; Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019; Lee, 2014), and *Man Saf Baladi* viewers report similar effects. The show shapes their political views, increases interest in politics, and affects their trust in political and media institutions.

In this context, survey responses also offer insight into the ongoing debate in communication research regarding the relationship between political satire and political cynicism. While some scholars argue that satire promotes cynicism and political apathy (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Baranowski, 2020), others have found it does not increase, and may even reduce, political cynicism (Rill & Cardiel, 2013; Boukes & Hameleers, 2020). The findings from the *Man Saf Baladi* audience survey support this more optimistic view. Although the show may foster a sense of pessimism about the political and economic situation in Jordan, it does not appear to promote cynicism or disengagement. Rather, it encourages constructive political engagement through discussion and participation in civic activities such as public forums, activist campaigns, and street protests. These findings suggest that the positive functions of satire identified in democratic contexts, which include encouraging political participation, stimulating discussion,

and fostering a culture of political debate (e.g., Becker et al., 2010; Cao & Brewer, 2008; Lee & Jang, 2017), are also evident in the Jordanian context, as exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*.

Together with findings from previous chapters, these results provide the foundation for the following chapter, which offers a comprehensive discussion by synthesising insights from the various analyses into key conclusions and exploring what they reveal about the nature and impact of Jordanian political satire, as exemplified by the *Man Saf Baladi* show.

## **Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This study set out to explore the Jordanian satirical online video show *Man Saf Baladi*, with the aim of answering the overarching question: “How does *Man Saf Baladi* employ satire to engage with political culture in Jordan, and what insights do the perceptions of its satirist and audience offer for a broader understanding of its role and impact on public discourse?”. The study employed a QUAL-dominant mixed-methods approach (De Lisle, 2011; Hendren et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), which included a qualitative analysis of 20 episodes from the show, a semi-structured interview with the show’s satirist, and a collection of viewers’ responses posted on the show’s Facebook page, as well as a quantitative analysis of an audience questionnaire that surveyed viewers’ perceptions of the show and its impact. With this approach, the study attempted to provide answers to the four research sub-questions, which centred on exploring the satirical features of *Man Saf Baladi*, identifying the key discursive strategies it employs, understanding the satirist’s perceptions of his role and impact of his work, and examining how audiences respond to the show and perceive its influence on their attitudes, interests and political engagement.

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the main findings from the five results chapters and then discusses the key conclusions derived from the findings and the broader implications they offer for a holistic understanding of the nature of political satire and its potential for sociopolitical impact in the context of Jordan. The chapter proceeds to reflect on the methodology used in the study and outline a number of key implications for theory and further research. It then discusses the limitations of the study and ends with the final conclusion.

### **9.2 Summary of Findings from the Results Chapters**

In Chapters 4 and 5, the analysis of the *Man Saf Baladi* videos revealed that the show functions as a vibrant platform for political discourse in Jordan. It critiques political power through a combination of humour and serious political commentary, addressing crucial issues such as

corruption, governance, and the economic struggles of citizens. The show targets a range of political entities, from individual politicians to institutional structures, and provides incisive critiques of Jordan's political landscape. To achieve these critical aims, and to engage and influence the attitudes and opinions of its audience, the show employs humour through a range of key discursive strategies, including episode titles, metaphors, anecdotes, and emotional shifts. Through its blend of humour and serious critique, the show is able to navigate the restrictions of Jordan's nondemocratic environment, engage in public affairs, and offer an alternative perspective to the country's mainstream political discourse.

In Chapter 6, the interview with AHZ, the *Man Saf Baladi* satirist, highlighted his perspective on both his own role as a satirist and the broader function of satire in the Jordanian context. Findings show that he perceives himself as a journalist, educator, activist, and technological innovator, viewing satire primarily as a tool for informing and inspiring the public. In Chapters 7 and 8, audience reception—examined through analyses of Facebook comments and an audience survey—revealed that viewers strongly connect with the show. They see the *Man Saf Baladi* show as reflecting their sociopolitical reality, and perceive its satirist as a truth-teller, a devoted patriot, and potential political leader capable of driving reform and progress in Jordan. Interestingly, the show's entertainment component is viewed by viewers as secondary to its informative and thought-provoking nature, its ability to foster political engagement and dialogue, enhance political awareness and shape public attitudes. Despite their frustration with Jordan's political status quo, viewers of *Man Saf Baladi* believe that the show encourages them to engage in political life, informs them about the political situation in their country, and influences their interests, views, and attitudes toward political entities.

The subsequent sections synthesise the findings from the various analyses into a set of key conclusions derived from the study. These sections also discuss the broader implications and offer new insights into the nature and impact of political satire in Jordan, and possibly to countries with similar political conditions.

## 9.3 Key Conclusions

The findings of this study provide five key conclusions that deepen our understanding of the nature and function of Jordanian political satire, as exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*. These conclusions highlight how satire adapts and operates within a politically restrictive context, demonstrating a powerful mode of political communication that has the potential to influence audiences and impact public discourse. The following list outlines these key conclusions, and the subsequent sections will discuss them in detail:

- *Man Saf Baladi* transcends the role of symbolic resistance and psychological release, positioning itself as a dynamic platform for fostering political awareness and engagement.
- *Man Saf Baladi* adapts established forms of satirical critique to navigate the constraints of Jordan's political environment.
- The alignment between the satirist's aims and the audience's perceptions plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of *Man Saf Baladi* as a tool for political critique.
- A vital dimension to the success of *Man Saf Baladi* lies in its use of digital platforms and social media to disseminate political critique and reach a broader audience.
- *Man Saf Baladi* functions as a form of quiet encroachment on the country's dominant political discourse and political structures, with the potential to achieve gradual sociopolitical progress and drive long-term change.

### 9.3.1 *Man Saf Baladi* Transcends the Role of Symbolic Resistance and Psychological Release

The first key conclusion to emerge from the findings of this study is that *Man Saf Baladi* provides an example of how satire can transcend the role of symbolic resistance and emotional catharsis, a role attributed to political satire in the Jordanian context by Barahmeh (2020, 2022, 2023). According to Barahmeh's view, Jordanian satire in the social media spaces is a non-potent form of symbolic resistance with no real sociopolitical role beyond psychological release. While the psychological role remains relevant to *Man Saf Baladi*, findings from across the various

perspectives explored in this study demonstrate that the show functions as a powerful platform for genuine political engagement and public discourse. The show presents a form of political communication that challenges political power and its dominant discourses, provides viewers with a source for political awareness and tiggers them to seek out further political information. It opens up a new public space for viewers to reflect on the politics of their country and express their critical opinions in a context where dissenting voices are usually absent from the country's mainstream media and public discourse. Furthermore, it provides them with the medium for political discourse that can shape their attitudes, prompt their interests and impact their participation in political life.

In contrast, Barahmeh's research on Jordanian online satire, which incorporates a variety of data, including videos from *Man Saf Baladi* show, positions satire as a form of symbolic resistance with limited capacity to have tangible sociopolitical effects. Informed by Freudian psychological relief theory and Bakhtinian concepts of the carnivalesque, Barahmeh's research characterises Jordanian satire in social media spaces as a cathartic outlet. According to this view, satire serves as a "safety valve" for releasing tension at both individual and group levels, offering a "subversive tool that challenges government rhetoric" but ultimately lacks substantial impact "on everyday realities" (Barahmeh, 2020, p. 320). Barahmeh's assumptions are based on the premise that Jordanian satire targets political authority vested in the government, whereas the Jordanian political system, anchored in the monarchy and reified by the king, remains beyond criticism. As a result, satire is seen as "a form of licenced disruption" (Barahmeh, 2020, p. 241) that lacks potential for sociopolitical influence.

Findings from the analysis of the content of the *Man Saf Baladi* show provide insights that challenge these assumptions and demonstrate that satire can go beyond symbolic resistance to actively engage in political reality and foster critical public discourse. Unlike the view that Jordanian online satire attacks only the government and thus functions as a licenced online carnival with no potential for real-world impact, *Man Saf Baladi*, as reported in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2) targets a broader spectrum of political authority, ranging from individual politicians and policies to institutions and the entire political system.

The show critiques specific political actors such as prime ministers and ministers, but it extends beyond individual actors to target positions of authority in general. It satirises the state's policies related to taxation, cabinet appointments, public expenditure, privatisation, and superficial anti-corruption efforts. It also satirises institutions such as parliament, the government, the national media, and the broader political system itself, highlighting issues often absent from the mainstream media such as autocracy, power monopoly, elitism, lack of government authority, suppressed freedom of expression, and selective law enforcement. In doing so, the show offers new perspectives on the country's politics, prompting the viewers to reflect on the political status quo of their country and evaluate the functioning of its system. Through engaging with these various levels of political power, *Man Saf Baladi* presents a critique that reaches beyond the government, touching on the structural issues that underpin the political system in Jordan and its dominant nondemocratic characteristics.

Indeed, in a monarchy like Jordan where the monarch's position is beyond reproach (Kuttab, 2021b) and explicit criticism of the king is subject to prosecution under the *lèse-majesté* law, it is unexpected for satire, or even other forms of political critique, to directly target the king. However, *Man Saf Baladi*'s recurrent targeting of the Jordanian 'mas'ul' (official) as a position of authority, which by virtue of its Arabic meaning and normative use can loosely include any state official, ranging from the lowest-ranking to the head of the state (Chapter 4, Section, 4.2.2.2) and the 'nahi' (approach) of the political system, (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2.5) can be seen as strategies through which the satirist implicitly criticises all components of the political system without jeopardising himself. This broader critique demonstrates that the show transcends the common view of satire as symbolic form of resistance that challenges the government rhetoric to serve as a powerful medium for critical discourse that resists and questions political authority, including implicit criticism of the monarchy and its influence on Jordanian politics.

The satirist's perception of his role, as expressed in the interview findings (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.1.3), further reinforces this view. AHZ positions himself as an activist and advocate for comprehensive political reform who envisions a paradigm shift toward true democracy in Jordan. He critiques what he calls a "failing political approach" and characterises the current autocratic system as an outdated form of "guardianship" that no longer fits contemporary Jordan. He views

his satire as a tool to “create public opinion that demands change in the existing approach” and aligns his work with movements such as the Jordanian Hirak. His goal is clear: to mobilise the public toward the establishment of a representative democracy, where power is restored to the people and governance is conducted by “elected governments under public oversight.” He states:

“The deficit is quite clear. There is a failing political approach that has been running the country for years [...] We are still ruling in the same way that existed two thousand years ago [...] The show thus wants to reach its goal, which eventually pours into the efforts of political parties, political activists, and political Hirak until we reach a state ruled by the people and restore power to the people.”

While the satirist’s activist spirit and political agenda are more equivocal in the interview, they are echoed and strategically embedded in the design of the content of his show. The show focuses on the deficiencies of political power and its failure to create political and economic conditions conducive to decent living standards for Jordanian citizens. It does so, not by providing frivolous mockery of politics and politicians, but rather (as will be indicated in the following section) through a critical discourse that balances humour and seriousness and employs a set of strategies capable of impacting the viewers’ perspectives, shaping their attitudes, and ultimately fostering their collective sentiment toward the desired change and triggering their action. The show, in other words, invites the public to critically analyse their country’s political landscape and implicitly attempts to mobilise them to take a stance and challenge political power. Indeed, the satirist evaluates the impact of his satire on the audience in terms of illuminating their constitutional rights, emboldening them to express their opinions without fear, and encouraging them to participate in dissenting political behaviours such as boycotting elections and participating in activist campaigns and street protests (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.3). These evaluations resonate broadly with the findings of the survey and with viewers’ comments on the show’s Facebook page.

This kind of critically oriented activist satire strongly contrasts with satire as a symbolic form of resistance and a carnivalesque form of licensed catharsis with limited effect on the ground. Satirists who produce these latter forms of satire often assume the role of a “court jester” and provide “comic relief” to their audiences, while functioning as a cogwheel in the system’s

machinery that perpetuates its operation and supports its resilience (Alvarez Fuentes, 2019, p. 253). Their satirical work is often viewed as promoting cohesion and conformity with the political status quo, rendering them insiders or allies to political power (Mifdal, 2015). Consequently, these satirists typically reap the economic and political perks and privileges offered by the political systems they indirectly support (Paletz, 1990). Contrary to this pattern, the experience of the *Man Saf Baladi* satirist resembles the experience of any political activist or critic who opposes political power in Jordan. It is characterised by continuous struggle with state authorities and marked by various efforts to obstruct his work, disrupt his income, and suppress his voice. This experience highlights the power of his satirical discourse and its effectiveness as a mode of communication that influences the public and challenges the political establishment. His ongoing conflict with state authorities, which recently culminated in his imprisonment (Euro-Med Monitor, 2024; Amnesty International, 2024), underscores the active and consequential role his satire plays in confronting political power, rather than simply providing an outlet for releasing public tension and maintaining the status quo. This antagonistic relationship with state authorities may also explain why other Jordanian satirists may hesitate to go as far as AHZ does, fearing similar consequences.

The audience perceptions and patterns of commentary on the *Man Saf Baladi* Facebook page further demonstrate the influence of Jordanian online satire, showing that it extends beyond mere tension release and has a tangible impact on public discourse and political engagement. As demonstrated in the findings reported throughout Chapter 7, *Man Saf Baladi*'s satire is acknowledged by the majority of viewers as a space for public engagement and political discourse. The audience survey findings further reinforce this view, indicating that satire is not merely a mechanism for emotional relief in coping with challenging sociopolitical realities but also a platform for active participation in public affairs, critique of political authority, education, and the fostering of citizenship. According to the perspectives of the audience, *Man Saf Baladi* extends far beyond the psychological role emphasised by Barahmeh (2020, 2022, 2023) as providing cathartic release to frustrated citizens. Instead, they view it as a means of clarifying issues, exposing concealed truths, raising public awareness, and encouraging societal reflection. These findings reinforce the argument that the influential role of satirical programmes, well-

documented in democratic contexts (e.g., Young, 2013; Ferre-Pavia et al., 2016; Feldman & Borum Chattoo, 2019), is equally relevant in Jordan despite political constraints.

In light of these discussions, it becomes evident that the Jordanian satire presented in *Man Saf Baladi* plays a pivotal role in encouraging political engagement, fostering a collective sense of agency among its audience, and shaping public consciousness in ways that transcend mere symbolic resistance and psychological release.

### **9.3.2 *Man Saf Baladi* Adapts Established Forms of Satirical Critique to Navigate the Constraints of Jordan’s Political Environment**

Another key conclusion arising from the findings of this study is that *Man Saf Baladi* adapts established forms of satirical critique to navigate the constraints of the environment in which it operates. While the show exhibits many of the characteristic features of political satire typically found in democratic contexts, its primary function and style are uniquely shaped by the restricted political environment of Jordan. Unlike Western political satire programmes, which often prioritise the entertainment function, *Man Saf Baladi* employs satirical humour strategically to facilitate serious political critique in a context where direct criticism of political authority is a risky endeavour.

Political satire focuses on public affairs, critiques political power, and uses humour (Baym, 2005; Cao & Brewer, 2008; Edson et al., 2018). Western satirical shows such as *The Daily Show* exemplify this approach by capitalising on humour, often using jokes to critique politicians and policies while entertaining viewers. Making people laugh is central to these shows (Baym, 2005; Burgers & Brugman, 2022), with entertainment often promoted by their satirists as their “first and foremost” function (Edson et al., 2018, p. 141). In Jordan, where freedom of expression is restricted (Freedom House, 2023), *Man Saf Baladi* is not primarily viewed as an entertainment show by its satirist and viewers, but rather as a serious platform for political critique. The show navigates the limitations of Jordan’s political context by embedding earnest political commentary within layers of humour to subtly communicate its political agenda. This approach makes serious political messages more palatable and safer to disseminate within the Jordanian public sphere.

Findings from the analysis of the show indicate that *Man Saf Baladi* draws its strength from a focus on serious content, evident in its tendency to prioritise meaningful engagement in public affairs over entertainment. This is evident in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.3), where the analysis indicates that 10 out of the 20 episodes exhibited a largely serious tone, with only 3 being predominantly humorous and the remaining 7 displaying a mixed tone. To this extent, the show addresses a range of critical political and economic issues relevant to the Jordanian public, such as corruption, crisis management, taxation policies, and government mismanagement. By blending serious commentary with humour to present these issues, the show engages the audience through accessible and thought-provoking content that critiques power. The audience perspective, as reflected in the results of the Facebook comments and survey responses, further supports this argument, indicating that viewers often perceive *Man Saf Baladi* as an outlet for political engagement, valuing its role in providing constructive criticism and raising political awareness. Indeed, of the 1,850 viewer comments analysed, only 19 expressed appreciation for the show's entertaining and humorous function (Chapter 7, Section 7.2.2.2). In contrast, the majority of the comments reflected a deep connection with the show as a source of serious political messages, highlighting the audience's perception of *Man Saf Baladi* as a medium for political engagement rather than merely a source of entertainment.

As such, *Man Saf Baladi* exemplifies the strategic use of humour to balance audience engagement with a serious treatment of politics. It operates within a cultural landscape in which people are naturally disposed toward seriousness (Barahmeh, 2023; Hijawi, 2015; Nunez Ledesma, 2016) and, given the restricted political atmosphere in their country, tend to avoid dissenting politics (Al-Azzam, 2012). To achieve success in this context, the show uses humour not primarily for entertainment, but to draw audiences into deeper, more substantive political discourse. As demonstrated in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.3), the show relies on a mix of verbal, physical, and multimodal humour, carefully calibrated to engage the audience while delivering incisive critiques of the country's political landscape.

Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2) also revealed that the show critiques a broad range of targets, including political actors, positions of power, policies, and political institutions. Given the diversity of these targets and the critical focus on autocracy, weak government and parliamentary authority,

fake political reform, and selective law enforcement, the show presents a dissenting perspective and delivers a strident critique of the country's political system. It depicts this system as one that monopolises power, fosters elitism, biases the law, and suppresses freedom of expression, while characterising it as incompetent, unjust, and corrupt. Its use of satirical critique enables it to do so while maintaining an overall tone that is critical yet not overtly confrontational toward political authority. As Mifdal (2015) argues, political satire in restrictive environments is conditioned by the constraints it seeks to challenge; it must, in other words, navigate within the boundaries set by political authority. In a country like Jordan, where dissenting voices are often suppressed under the draconian charge of undermining the political regime, satire strategically disguises its strongest and most sensitive critiques. This is evident in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.2.1), where *Man Saf Baladi* uses anecdotal humour to address sensitive issues such as weak government authority and the monopolisation of power in the system in order to convey its messages without provoking outright suppression.

A key strategy in this covert critique is the show's salient use of metaphors, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.2.2.4). *Man Saf Baladi* draws from war, animal, sanitation, and health domains to metaphorically frame political issues in ways that shape public opinion and subtly encourage dissent. It portrays politicians as enemies, dirt, or predatory animals, framing the political elite as entities that must be eradicated or treated, thereby implicitly urging the audience to adopt corrective measures. Through these metaphors, the show covertly calls for challenging political power and taking action to restore justice and order. Given Jordan's restrictive political climate, such bold messages could not be openly broadcast to the public without severe consequences. However, by infusing them within a satirical discourse, the show delivers these messages without overtly sounding as if it is inciting the public against political power.

Thus, while *Man Saf Baladi* shares universal features of political satire, such as its engagement in public affairs, critique of power, and use of humour, its style is distinctively shaped by Jordan's political culture. The show maintains a careful balance between humour and earnest political commentary, delivering its most sensitive messages covertly through mechanisms such as metaphors and anecdotes. This style enables satire to simultaneously attract its audience and effectively evade the scrutiny of authorities, allowing it to present a dissenting political critique

without direct confrontation. In doing so, *Man Saf Baladi* represents a local variety of effective political satire. This Jordanian adaptation demonstrates the ability of satire to evolve and serve as a significant tool for political communication in diverse political environments (Kumar & Combe, 2015).

### **9.3.3 The Satirist-Audience Alignment and its Role in the Effectiveness of *Man Saf Baladi***

This study further concludes that a significant part of *Man Saf Baladi*'s impact lies in the strong alignment between the satirist's aims and the audience's views and perceptions of satire and their political context. This alignment is central to the effectiveness of satire as a tool of political communication, especially in a politically restrictive environment like Jordan.

In the case of *Man Saf Baladi*, the satirist-audience alignment is particularly evident. The findings of this study reveal a strong congruence between the satirist's intentions and perceptions of his work and the audience's reception of his satire. As reported in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3.1.1), the satirist sees his role less as that of an entertainer and more as a journalist, educator, and political activist engaged in the country's public affairs and advocating for political reform. His goal is to represent the interests of the public, raise their awareness, and inspire them to demand change. This perception is mirrored by the audience, who, in turn, regard the satirist as a credible and trustworthy figure whose satire reveals truths often concealed from Jordanian public discourse (Chapter 7, Section 7.2.1.1). His satire resonates with the audience because it taps into shared frustrations and desires for change, with many viewers considering him a voice for the marginalised and a representative of the common public, as highlighted in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2.1.2).

A significant aspect of this alignment is reflected in the viewers' reactions to the content of the *Man Saf Baladi* show, as seen in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2.2) where viewers express a strong agreement with the satirist's opinions and appreciation for his satirical discourse. Their various perceptions of AHZ, whether as a truth-teller, a representative of the public, a cherished patriot, or a potential leader, coupled with their endorsement of his views and commendation of his work, not only reflect a deep connection between the satirist and his audience at a personal level,

but also a belief in the sincerity of his intentions and the validity of his satirical critique. This connection is further evidenced by the audience's active engagement with *Man Saf Baladi*, as shown through the survey results in Chapter 8 (Section 8.2.3.2) and, more clearly, through the viewers' comments and patterns of interaction on the show's Facebook page in general.

Gray et al. (2009) argue that it is the ability to criticise power and make judgments about the powerful in an engaging way that renders satire "a particularly potent form of political communication" (p. 12). The effectiveness of satire, however, depends heavily on the connection between the satirist and the audience. As Colletta (2009) points out, satire thrives on a shared set of values between satirists and audiences, as well as their mutual belief in the possibility of change. Without this connection, satire loses its critical edge, breaks faith in its efficacy, and ultimately serves "only to perpetuate itself" (Colletta, 2009, p. 859). In the case of *Man Saf Baladi*, the satirist-audience connection is key to its success as a powerful form of political communication that fosters public discourse and mobilise political engagement.

Simpson's (2003) view of satire as a triadic discourse offers a useful perspective for understanding how this connection functions. According to this view, the satirist, the satiree (the audience or recipient of the satire), and the satirised (the target of the satire) form the three subject positions involved in the production and reception of any satirical discourse. The relationship between these three positions is context-dependent, with the success of satire typically drawing the satirist and the audience closer together. In contrast, unsuccessful satire can disrupt this relationship, distancing the satirist from the audience and inadvertently aligning the audience with the satirised target. This dynamic interaction underscores the importance of congruence between the satirist's aims and the audience's perceptions in determining the effectiveness of a satirical event—a relationship that this chapter later revisits and expands through a more context-sensitive model of satirical discourse.

In light of the dynamics of this relationship, the satire in *Man Saf Baladi*, which is widely recognised by both the satirist and his audience as a valid and truthful representation of Jordanian political reality, has brought them together, allowing them to unite in a collective voice that critiques the satirised target, which is in this case, the Jordanian political establishment. In a politically restricted context like Jordan, this satirist-audience alliance is a key indicator of

satire's ability to function effectively as a catalyst not only for political awareness but also social action. Indeed, insights from the satirist's interview suggest that *Man Saf Baladi*'s satire has played a role in sparking street protests and boycott campaigns that took place in the country, while some viewers' comments on the show's Facebook video's reflect similar calls for action and mobilisation in response to the issues highlighted in the show. This mobilising capacity underscores the impact that a well-aligned satirist-audience relationship can have in challenging political power and fostering political participation—one that holds the potential to herald meaningful change.

The satirist-audience connection observed in this study also highlights the methodological significance of gauging the satirist-audience relationship in evaluating political satire. A thorough understanding of the effectiveness of political satire requires a careful examination of both the satirist's intentions and the audience's perceptions. The interplay between these two perspectives is crucial, as the alignment (or lack thereof) between the satirist's aims and the audience's interpretation significantly shapes the impact of the satirical event. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for evaluating the impact of satire more generally, particularly in contexts where satire is intended not for entertainment, but as a vehicle for social and political critique.

The alignment between the satirist's objectives and the audience's perceptions speaks to validity, sincerity, and truth of the satirical discourse, and thus plays a pivotal role in sharpening its critical edge and fuelling its effectiveness in challenging the political status quo and triggering engagement. While Simpson's (2003) triadic discourse model offers a valuable conceptual framework for understanding the dynamics of this alignment and its role in the success of satire, this study further demonstrates that this alignment is not only theoretical but also a measurable factor, which can be gauged through the analysis of empirical data collected from interviews, audience feedback, and survey responses.

### **9.3.4 The Role of Social Media in the Success of *Man Saf Baladi***

A further key conclusion drawn from this study is that a vital factor in the success of *Man Saf Baladi* and its satirist's experience lies in its use of digital platforms and social media to disseminate political critique. In a politically restrictive environment like Jordan, platforms such as Facebook and YouTube provide a veritable host and an alternative medium where satire can

thrive and engage audiences in meaningful political discourse. By using social media platforms as its primary medium of distribution, Jordanian satire aligns with the broader shift in audience media consumption behaviour, which increasingly favours interactive and visually engaging media over traditional formats (Bolin, 2023). This alignment enhances the reach of satire and builds a large audience base, as evidenced by *Man Saf Baladi*'s ability to attract hundreds of thousands of viewers, with some video posts reaching more than 250,000 views on Facebook. More importantly, broadcasting on digital platforms offers the satirist the flexibility to set their own level of critique and bypass institutional constraints, which would have been unattainable if a political satire such as *Man Saf Baladi* were aired on traditional television channels in Jordan. Thus, social media platforms not only serve as a host for political satire, but also empower it to deliver critiques that are both bolder and more incisive than what is typically allowed in the country's mainstream media.

Moreover, in line with Cao and Brewer's (2008) argument that satire encourages political participation by building an imagined community, insights from *Man Saf Baladi*'s audience comments and survey indicate how social media can foster a virtual community of viewers, unified through the dynamics of consumption and interaction with the satirical discourse. Bertram (2016) argues that political satire, when particularly oriented towards internet-users, plays a powerful role in reinvigorating the public sphere by fostering online communities, building solidarity, and mobilising collective consciousness across geographical boundaries. This aligns with the observed interactions in the *Man Saf Baladi* community, where viewers engage with the satirical discourse through various levels of online interactivity.

For example, viewers often like and rate the content, which represents a basic level of interaction. Liking a post on social media is not only a form of quick, surface-level engagement that signals agreement or appreciation, but it also plays a crucial role in increasing the visibility of content. Social media algorithms prioritise content with higher engagement, including likes, making it more likely to appear in other users' feeds and therefore reaching a broader viewership, which could potentially increase the number of people coalescing around satire.

However, more importantly, as indicated in the survey findings reported in Chapter 8 (Section 8.2.3.2), the audience engages in higher-level interactions, such as searching for information,

discussing with others, and adding comments online. This level of interaction requires deeper engagement as it involves reflecting on the content or message and then articulating that reflection in writing. Such participatory activities not only enhance the personal engagement of the audience but also have the potential to influence the viewing experience of later audiences, as subsequent viewers may read comments and be influenced by the discourse they encounter (Moller & Boukes, 2021). This interactive dynamic suggests that social media serves as an important tool in the dissemination and amplification of satirical messages, enabling satire to reach a broader audience, foster public discourse, and exert a greater influence on people's opinions.

Research on digital media and political participation provides growing evidence that online engagement can spill over into offline political activity. Crittenden et al. (2011), for example, show that digital media has revolutionised engagement in political life and created new ways for individuals to engage in civic discourse. Furthermore, Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) highlight the mobilising potential of digital platforms, particularly among younger populations. Their meta-analysis of 106 survey-based studies demonstrates that digital media use not only fosters online engagement but can also translate into offline civic and political actions, such as “talking politics, volunteering, and protesting” (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020, p. 111).

These studies align with the analysis of *Man Saf Baladi*, where, as revealed in Chapter 8 (Section 8.2.3.1), the majority of audience members perceive their online interactions with the show, such as sharing, resharing, commenting on its content, or engaging in discussions it prompts, as forms of political participation. Furthermore, the critical reflections of *Man Saf Baladi* viewers on the political landscape of their country, as expressed in their online commentary (Chapter 7, Section 7.2.3) is marked by negative attitudes toward politicians, the view of Jordan as a despoiled country, mixed sentiments of hope and despair about the possibility of change, as well as calls for action.

These reflections further suggest that online satire may play a role in triggering offline behaviour and contribute to broader political participation on the ground. Indeed, the correlation analysis of the audience survey results, reported in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3), suggests that the more viewers watch the show online, the more likely they are to report being encouraged to engage in serious

political acts, such as attending public discussions, joining activist campaigns, or participating in street protests.

Matthew Hodgart, author of *Satire: Origins and Principles* (2009), outlines four conditions necessary for the powerful emergence of political satire: a public ready to engage in political affairs, confidence on the part of the satirist in their ability to influence public discourse, a wide audience that appreciates satire and its application to serious topics, and a relative degree of freedom of speech. In the context of Jordanian satire, represented by *Man Saf Baladi*, these conditions are arguably being met precisely because of the show's use of social media. Social media in Jordan provides a relative degree of freedom that traditional media lacks. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube allow satirists like AHZ to express their critiques without the stringent censorship typical of televised channels. This relative freedom is crucial for the flourishing of satire, as it enables satirists to push boundaries and address sensitive topics that would otherwise be off-limits. Moreover, the widespread adoption of social media also creates a vast and engaged audience for satire.

Viewers of *Man Saf Baladi*, as revealed in this study, are not only consuming content but also actively participating in political discussions and contributing to public discourse on digital platforms such as Facebook. This active audience engagement, coupled with their perception that their online engagement is a form of political participation, reflects a public that is ready and willing to be involved in public affairs. Finally, AHZ's own confidence in the effectiveness of his satire, as demonstrated through his perceptions of his work and his persistent efforts to critique the political system and inspire change, completes the set of conditions outlined by Hodgart (2009). This satirist's strong belief in the power of satire, combined with a supportive and engaged audience, highlights the potential for Jordanian satire to play a significant role in political discourse and social change.

While Hodgart's conditions were framed within the context of Western satire, where a certain degree of freedom of speech is often taken for granted, politically restrictive environments like Jordan do not inherently provide this freedom. Instead, social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube create a space for expression, offering the freedom necessary for satire to function effectively. Therefore, while Hodgart's conditions remain largely relevant, this study highlights

the distinct role of social media in enabling satire to emerge and flourish within politically and socially restrictive environments.

### **9.3.5. *Man Saf Balai* Functions as a Quiet Encroachment toward Change**

In the context of Jordan, the satirist behind *Man Saf Baladi* adopts a clear political agenda and advocates for a progressive shift towards true democracy (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.1.3). He conceptualises his satirical experience in terms of a “battle” with political authority, and more specifically, a “battle of awareness” aimed at cultivating an engaged and empowered citizenry. While the satirist’s battle may not immediately lead to revolutionary results and breakthrough triumphs, its potential to drive the desired sociopolitical change lies in its ability to coalesce individuals, encourage reflective thought, foster public discourse, and subtly shift the political landscape over time.

The satire engages audiences in critical dialogue about governance and public policy, and thus contributes to a gradual but meaningful transformation in how ordinary citizens perceive and interact with the political structures that govern their lives. AHZ believes the show has played a pivotal role in raising awareness of civic rights, fundamentally through altering the way Jordanian youth perceive civic rights. He notes that many young people previously saw these rights as “a favour from the state, the regime, or the king”, but “through the show, they were made aware they have constitutional right to express their opinions; [...] to work and employment; [...] to education and healthcare”. As the satirist aptly suggests, when people reach this level of awareness, “they themselves can speak out for themselves”, “rally against authority” and “demand change”.

This incremental, bottom-up approach to change embodies Asef Bayat’s (1997, 2010) notion of “quiet encroachment”. Asef Bayat, a prominent Iranian sociologist and scholar of social movements, provides a useful lens through which the potential impact of *Man Saf Baladi* can be understood. In his book, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, Bayat (2010) sets out to explain how ordinary people in the Middle East engender social change. He argues that they establish their presence and political agency not through mass protests or organised social movements, but primarily through social nonmovement, or what he conceptualises as the “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (p. 43). This phrase refers to a long-

term mechanism through which the common people create new avenues for voicing dissent in pursuit of social change.

Bayat (2010) describes the notion of quiet encroachment as “the silent protracted, but pervasive advancement of the ordinary people”, which is marked by “quiet, largely atomised and prolonged mobilisation with collective action” (p. 56). Exemplifying this notion with everyday practices, such as street trading, occupying public spaces, unlicensed building, and tapping of utilities, Bayat argues that gradual, often unobserved practices of disenfranchised people challenge and encroach upon the power structures that govern their lives and eventually lead to societal gains. He further extends the dynamics of these practices to other social issues, such as women’s rights, where he suggests that women’s collective and progressive encroaching acts enable them to “capture trenches” from the power structures and “move forward so that each gain acts as a stepping stone for further claims” (p. 109).

Although individual practices of encroachment may seem insignificant on their own, Bayat (1997) also argues that their collective and cumulative effect in countries that restrict effective civil society organisations and meaningful political participation, such as those in the Middle East, can potentially be meaningful and, therefore, “significantly engender social change” (p. 56). In a politically restrictive environment like Jordan, satire can be understood as one such subtle encroachment on the country’s dominant political discourse and power structures. Through its satirical critique, it shapes new perceptions, stimulates public discourse and empowers ordinary citizens to voice their frustrations and aspirations, challenge the political status quo, and gradually build a collective consciousness that questions the entrenched political system.

A similar perspective is offered by Iraqi writer, satirist, and broadcaster, Khalid Kishtainy (2009), who views satire in the Middle East as a form of nonviolent resistance. He conceptualises Middle Eastern satire as a “civilian Jihad” (p. 62); that is, a non-violent means of political struggle that utilises satirical critique to oppose injustice and authoritarianism. In regions where opposition and direct confrontation with political authorities can be risky, satire emerges as a safer, yet potent, channel for dissent. This characterisation of satire aligns with the role that *Man Saf Baladi* plays in Jordan, where the use of satire and humour allows the show to

penetrate the public sphere, disseminate its dissenting critique of power, and stimulate a resisting public discourse under restrictive conditions. Kishtainy's belief in satire's long-term effectiveness complements Bayat's idea of quiet encroachment. Both suggest that while satire's immediate effects may not lead to direct civic action, its strength lies in its ability to gradually shape public opinion and foster a spirit of resistance that can gradually lead to societal gains. This idea also resonates with Griffin's (1994) argument that satire possesses an intellectual force that, over time, can contribute to significant sociopolitical shifts.

In his reflections on the impact of *Man Saf Baladi*, AHZ the satirist speaks of fostering a "newfound boldness" and a "critical dimension among people", that encourages them to critique authority and voice their critique without fear (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1.3). He believes the show has played a significant role in raising awareness of constitutional rights and cultivating a mindset that challenges official narratives and engages more deeply with political discourse. This resonates with the viewers' reflections on the political landscape of the country, as captured in the analysis of audience comments on Facebook (Chapter 7, Section 7.2.3), where viewers express their discontent with the political status quo and critique its political power, thereby demonstrating a way of exercising their right to free expression.

Over time, as individuals continue to internalise this critical approach and push the boundaries of free expression, such engagement could lead to further societal and democratic gains, as citizens may be empowered to negotiate for a truly representative and deliberative form of governance, where citizens actively participate in shaping their political future. In this way, Jordanian satire, represented by *Man Saf Baladi*, not only serves as a platform for immediate political knowledge and engagement, but also as a means of fostering a deeper, more sustained form of resistance that can create a foundation for incremental shifts in Jordan's political landscape and lead to long-term sociopolitical change.

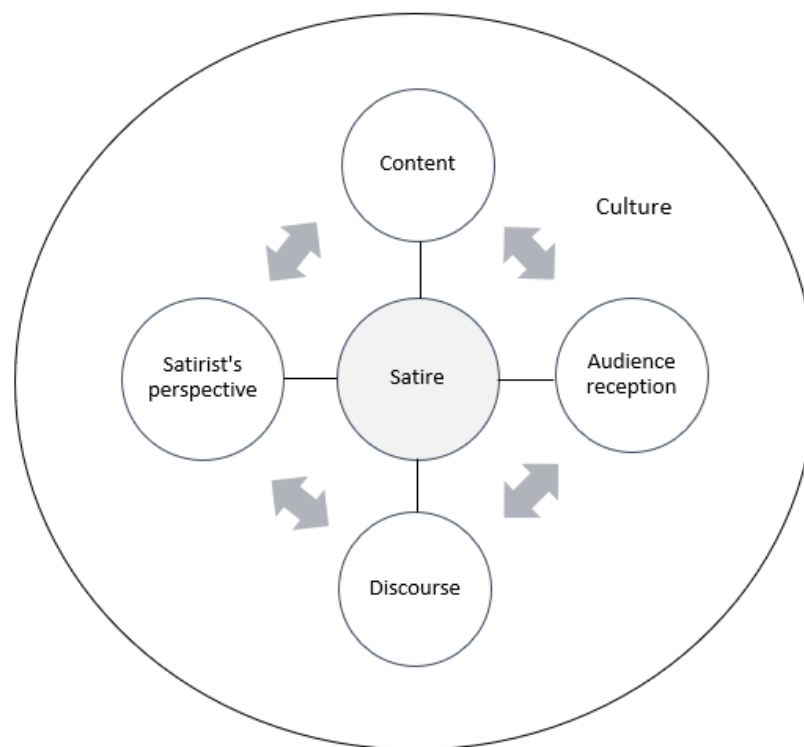
## **9.4 Reflection on the Methodology**

This study employed an integrative approach to explore the Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi* show. It combined various dimensions involved in the production and consumption of political satire: the

satirical artifact, the satirist who produces it and the audience who receives it. Embracing a pragmatic worldview, the research design of the study brought these dimensions together within a cohesive framework that used various methods and data sources to explore the complex nature of satire as a mode of political communication. As represented by the research model in Figure 9.1, this design acknowledges the importance of satire's content, its discourse (at both the micro and macro levels), the satirist's perspective, and audience reception as focal areas and key research components that provide insights into its role and impact. The model emphasises the interconnected nature of these elements with satire and their capacity to provide meaning that contributes to an overall understanding of the subject of the study. These elements work together to provide a multi-perspectival view of satire's role and impact within the specific location and sociopolitical culture of Jordan.

**Figure 9. 1**

*The Research Model Employed in the Study*



The *content* component in the model focuses on the substance of satire and involves such elements as topics and themes of what is being critiqued, as well as the features and functions

that the satirical critique reflects. The *discourse* component highlights the linguistic means used to construct and communicate satire's messages at the micro level, such as irony, metaphor, intertextuality, and wordplay, while also encompassing the macro level, where satire engages with broader ideological structures, power dynamics, and sociopolitical discourses that shape and influence public consciousness (e.g., Fairclough, 1992; Pennycook, 2001; van Dijk, 1997). The *satirist's perspective* encompasses the satirist's own reflections on his role and the ways in which he perceives his work and goals behind the satire, while the *audience reception* component captures the ways in which viewers interpret, engage with, and respond to satirical content.

This model provided a strong foundation for the research process, offering a structured conceptual framework that focused the study on clear focal areas and served as a roadmap for exploring satire's multifaceted nature. It also guided the methodological choices and facilitated the synthesis of diverse datasets and analytical methods, enabling the study to integrate qualitative analyses of *Man Saf Baladi*'s content and key discursive strategies, a semi-structured interview with its satirist, audience comments on Facebook, and a quantitative analysis of audience responses to an online survey.

This integrative approach effectively addressed the research topic, which was inherently too complex to be fully captured by any single method. As Ussher (1999) suggests, a complex research subject is akin to a "jigsaw puzzle" (p. 43) and it is only by assembling its various pieces that deeper insights can be gained, and a broader picture can emerge. This broader picture is precisely what the methodological approach of this study aimed to achieve by combining multiple data sources and research methods. These methods were instrumental in providing a comprehensive understanding of satire's nature and role in the Jordanian sociopolitical context. Each method contributed unique insights that, when integrated, resulted in a more robust and nuanced analysis of *Man Saf Baladi* and a deeper understanding of its satire.

The analysis of the show's videos, with its dual focus on content and discourse, was crucial to revealing its satirical nature. It enabled an in-depth examination of structural features and discursive techniques while considering ideological frameworks, power relations, and sociopolitical narratives. This analysis demonstrated how *Man Saf Baladi* strategically critiques politics and politicians while persuading its audience of the legitimacy of its messages. By

dissecting topics, critique targets, humour types, and discursive strategies, the methods showed how satire challenges dominant narratives, introduces new perspectives, and engages audiences in accessible political discourse. Becker and Waisanen (2013) argue that studying satire's features provides a basis for assessing its effects. In *Man Saf Baladi*, this foundation was crucial for understanding satire's communicative mechanisms and its role as a persuasive and influential form of critical discourse.

The interview provided an insider's perspective on the satirist's views, including his role, intentions, topic selection, and the balance between entertainment and serious political commentary, offering crucial context for understanding the motivations shaping the show's satire. More importantly, it highlighted the challenges and complexities of producing satire in Jordan's restrictive environment and challenged the notion that Jordanian satire is merely a form of inconsequential, licensed catharsis that sustains the status quo. This method enriched the study by incorporating the satirist's perspectives and practical considerations, which may not be evident through textual analysis alone. It also enabled a direct comparison between AHZ's aims and role perceptions and those of his audience, underscoring the importance of the satirist-audience dynamic in evaluating satire's effectiveness and impact.

Online comments from viewers added authenticity to the understanding of audience engagement with the satire of *Man Saf Baladi*. The analysis of these spontaneous and unstructured comments highlighted how *Man Saf Baladi* stimulates audience reflection on the country's public affairs, providing a vibrant forum for public engagement and political discourse. This method underscored the interactive nature of the medium through which satire is communicated, and the potential of online satirical discourse to mobilise public opinion and encourage collective reflection on the country's politics.

The audience survey provided quantitative data on viewers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours toward satire. It assessed *Man Saf Baladi*'s effectiveness in raising political awareness, shaping opinions, and encouraging engagement. By measuring variables such as political information, cynicism, participation, virtual community, emotional release, and attitudes toward political entities, the survey offered empirical evidence of the show's impact. This quantitative approach was crucial not only for evaluating the show's sociopolitical influence but

also for validating findings from video, interview, and comment analyses, highlighting the show's role as a catalyst for public discourse and political engagement.

Together, these methods offered a holistic view of *Man Saf Baladi* as a vehicle for political communication in Jordan. Their triangulation enhanced the reliability and depth of the findings, demonstrating how methodological diversity can lead to a more convincing and comprehensive exploration of political satire.

Research on satire as a mode of political communication has been dominated by inquiries into its *features* and *effects* (Becker & Waisanen, 2013; Leicht, 2023; Peifer & Lee, 2019). Scholars have noted that while research that examines the *features* of satire has primarily employed qualitative analyses of satire's content and explored exploring aspects such as rhetorical strategies, stylistic elements, and ethical dimensions, *effects* research, on the other hand, primarily employs quantitative methods, such as surveys, statistical measures, and experimental designs, to assess how satire influences viewers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours (Becker & Waisanen, 2013; Lichtenstein & Nitsch, 2023; Peifer & Lee, 2019). Approaches that focus on the producers or satirist's perceptions are relatively scarce, with only a few studies in the literature employing qualitative interviews with satirists (e.g., Alvarez Fuentes, 2019; Koivukoski & Odmark, 2020; Lichtenstein et al., 2021; Odmark & Harvard, 2021). However, these lines of inquiry are often pursued independently, with less research addressing multiple aspects of satire simultaneously or combining diverse methods within a single, integrative framework. There is an increasing call in the literature for new research directions that blend multiple methodologies and bring together different areas of inquiry to provide a more comprehensive understanding of satire's multifaceted nature and impact (Becker et al., 2010; Leicht, 2023; Lichtenstein & Nitsch, 2023; Peifer & Lee, 2019).

This study's integrative approach responds to this call, with the model outlined in Figure 9.1 providing a flexible blueprint for analysing different forms of online satire, including memes, cartoons, animations, and reels. Given the global rise of online satire and the blurring boundaries between politics and satire (Lichtenstein & Nitsch, 2023), this model could also be developed to suit studies exploring 'televised' satire in similar political contexts. One such development could involve incorporating an institutional dimension, which can be explored through interviews with

producers, directors, or other stakeholders involved in the production process, to address elements such as the commercialisation of satire, production dynamics, and their impact on satirical work and its reception.

## 9.5 Implications of the Study

This study offers a number of implications for theory and future research on political satire. These are outlined in the following subsection.

### 9.5.1 Implications for Theory

The findings of this study highlight satire in Jordan as a powerful form of political communication with the potential to impact audiences and drive sociopolitical change. The capacity of satire to inform, influence public opinions and attitudes, and encourage engagement in public life, which is often acknowledged by scholars and social commentators in the Western academic tradition, is also relevant in the context of the Jordanian *Man Saf Baladi* show. However, research on Jordanian satire and the academic discourse surrounding it, though limited, has often framed the phenomenon as a purely cathartic mechanism and inconsequential modern social media carnival, viewing it mainly through the lens of classical theories such as Bakhtin's carnivalesque and Freudian psychological relief theories of humour (Barahmeh, 2020, 2022, 2023). This theoretical orientation extends to many Arab scholars who, as Egyptian anthropologist Chehab El Khachab (2017) argues, tend to adopt a "folklorist narrative" and support "unwarranted generalisations" about political humour as a "safety valve" (p. 337) in the Arab world. Research adopting such theoretical views has often fallen short of capturing the dynamics of political satire as a means of communication. Viewing the phenomenon in terms of a safety valve designed to vent the public's psychological pressure, as El Khachab (2017) suggests, implies that political satire is a spontaneous product and obscures the conditions in which it is created, disseminated, and consumed.

This view of satire as merely a form of psychological release and symbolic resistance tends to underestimate the sociopolitical potential and tangible effects of satirical shows such as *Man Saf Baladi* and may limit future research on the subject to the confines of Bakhtinian and Freudian

classical theoretical frameworks. In contrast, this study shifts the academic discourse on Jordanian political satire toward a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon as a mode of political communication with the potential for sociopolitical impact. It establishes an academic foundation that recognises the capacity of satire—often associated with democratic contexts—as a force capable of influencing public attitudes, engaging people in political discourse, and ultimately shaping sociopolitical behaviour, even in the context of Jordan. This foundation can guide future theoretical work on Jordanian political satire, or political satire in similar Arab contexts, opening new avenues for exploring satire as an active force in shaping political consciousness and fostering public engagement in societies with restricted political freedoms.

### **9.5.2. Implications for Further Research**

While this study focused on the *Man Saf Baladi* show, future research could broaden its scope to explore a wider range of shows or satirical formats in Jordan. Insights from the satirist interview suggest that other forms of humour and political commentary exist, including formats referred to by AHZ as “pure entertainment”. Researchers seeking more generalisable findings might analyse multiple artifacts to offer a comparative view of the phenomenon in Jordan. Such comparisons could help delineate the differences between various types of shows that use political humour in terms of their features, roles, and realms of impact. They could also be extended to satirical shows from different Middle Eastern or Arab countries, offering insights into how political satire operates across various subcultural and political contexts.

Additionally, while this study explored perceptions of *Man Saf Baladi*'s impact, it did not measure its direct effects on audience political attitudes or behaviours. Future research could employ experimental designs to assess these effects by exposing participants to the show and measuring changes in political attitudes and knowledge both before and after viewing. This approach would provide more concrete data on how satire influences its audience, and offer a more precise evaluation of its role in shaping political discourse and public engagement.

Furthermore, the satirical videos and audience comments analysed in this study were produced during a period of significant sociopolitical unrest in Jordan, marked by street protests and demands for political and economic reform. This political climate may have affected the show's

satirical output and audience engagement at the time. Future studies could employ longitudinal research designs to explore how evolving political conditions influence the role and impact of satire over time.

Moreover, the risks associated with satire, both for satirists and audiences, present an interesting area for further research. Ranging from legal repercussions to public backlash, such risks are particularly significant in restrictive political climates, but remain relevant even in democratic contexts. Examining how these risks shape the production, distribution, and reception of satire could provide deeper insights into the challenges and limitations of political satire in Jordan and beyond.

Finally, while audience comments suggest that Jordanian political elites are often perceived as unapproachable and disconnected from the public, some individuals—particularly those with academic backgrounds—may be open to participating in research. Their perspectives could provide valuable insights into how satire is understood within political circles, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of its role in the Jordanian context. Engaging these voices would enrich the study of political satire by incorporating the perspectives of all key participants in satirical discourse: the satirist, the satiree, and the satirised (Simpson, 2003). This, in turn, would offer a more comprehensive view of the dynamics of political satire in Jordan.

## **9.6 Limitations of the Study**

While this study provides a comprehensive examination of *Man Saf Baladi* and its role as Jordanian political satire, two limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on AHZ as the central figure behind the show's production and delivery. In his role as satirist, scriptwriter, and presenter of *Man Saf Baladi*, AHZ provided a perspective that significantly enriched the study by revealing his views on his role, as well as the intent, challenges, and motivations behind the satire. However, interviewing other individuals involved within the show's production could have offered additional insights into how the satirical content is shaped, further contributing to the understanding of satire in the show.

Secondly, the audience sample for this study was recruited through the satirist's social media platforms as the survey was advertised on his Facebook page, satirical news website (*Sawaleif*), and the *Man Saf Baladi* website's Facebook page. This targeted method ensured that participants had sufficient experience and familiarity with *Man Saf Baladi*. However, while effective in reaching this audience, it may not capture viewers who have encountered the show but do not actively follow the satirist's social media accounts or regularly view the website. The perspectives of this latter group on the show's content and impact could have provided additional insights into its broader audience reception.

## 9.7 Conclusion

Online satire in Jordan, as realised through *Man Saf Baladi*, is more than just a platform for symbolic resistance and cathartic release; it is a medium for vibrant political discourse and public reflection. This study's findings highlight *Man Saf Baladi*, not only as satirical discourse that offers a critical perspective on Jordanian politics and resonates deeply with its viewers, but also as a means of political communication that serves to inform, engage, and mobilise its audience. The show's use of humour, alongside other key discursive strategies such as metaphor, emotional shifts, and anecdotes—combined with the satirist's strong confidence in his role and influence—has enabled it to present a persuasive critical discourse that challenges dominant political narratives and encourages audience reflection. Moreover, the audience's active engagement, as revealed through online comments and survey responses, indicates that *Man Saf Baladi* fosters a space for political participation, positioning satire as an influential tool in shaping political attitudes and interests in Jordan.

Overall, this study contributes to a new understanding of the potential of Jordanian online political satire. It demonstrates that political satire, exemplified by *Man Saf Baladi*, serves as a dynamic forum for political communication with the potential to educate, shape attitudes, inspire political participation, and ultimately drive momentum for real sociopolitical change in Jordan.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Copyright for Research Permission Form- Man Saf Baladi Videos Show



### Copyright for Research Permission- Man Saf Baladi Video Show

23 Scout Avenue, Mt. Roskill

1041 Auckland, New Zealand

Rami Alalawneh

25 July 2021

Sawaleif Website Chief Editor, Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi

Alweibdeh, Sharea St.

Abu Khader Centre 8

Amman, Jordan

Dear Mr. Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi,

I am a doctoral student at Auckland University of Technology, and I am writing a thesis on satire in the Man Saf Baladi show for my PhD degree.

I am writing to request permission for extracts from the following episodes from your Man Saf Baladi show, for which I believe you hold the copyright, to be included in my thesis. These may include transcripts of some of the spoken content and still images of some of the visual content.

Episode #	Episode Title	Date of Broadcast	Source
1	Aakh Ya Balad	March 3, 2019	Sawaleif News Website
2	Nahdhat Alsalahef	January 21, 2019	Sawaleif News Website
3	Sahra Ma'a Alrazzaz	January 6, 2019	Sawaleif News Website
4	Elli Ba'adoh?	December 23, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
5	Ehna Meen wento Meen	December 9, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
6	Meen Kbar Elbalad?	December 2, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
7	Lazim Te'raf	November 25, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
8	Ma Fi Gheir Elnashmi	November 11, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
9	Meen Yhasib Meen?	November 4, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
10	Endama Yzdao elbahro <a href="#">mawtan</a>	October 27, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
11	Ta'deel Wazari	October 14, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
12	Elmakhfi min Eldharibah	October 7, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
13	Al' ordon elana	September 30, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
14	Almatarid	September 24, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
15	Wein Eia'daleh	September 16, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
16	Laish sayer fina haik?	September 10, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
17	Hajer Ya Qutaibah	September 2, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
18	Sho Anjazna?	August 26, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
19	Nahno Laha	August 16, 2018	Sawaleif News Website

20	Panorama Elfasad	August 5, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
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A digital copy of the final thesis will be made available online via the University's digital repository [Tuwhera](#). This is an open access research repository for scholarly work, intended to make research accessible to as wide an audience as possible.

I am seeking from you a non-exclusive licence to include these materials in my thesis. The materials will be fully and correctly referenced.

If you agree, I should be very grateful if you would reply to me via email, or alternatively sign the form below and return a copy to me.

If you do not agree, or if you do not hold the copyright in this work, would you please let me know.

I can most quickly be reached by email at [rami.alalawneh@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:rami.alalawneh@autuni.ac.nz). Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Rami Alalawneh

---

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to grant you a non-exclusive licence for an indefinite period to include the above materials, for which I am the copyright owner, in the print and digital copies of your thesis.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Interview Invitation Letter



### Invitation Letter- Interview

Dear Mr. Ahmad Hasan Alzoubi,

I am a PhD student at Auckland University of Technology, and I am studying satire in Man Saf Baladi satirical video show. The study aims to explore the role of satire in the show and its impacts on the audience attitudes and participation in political life as perceived by the producers and the consumers of the show. I am writing to invite you to participate in the study. Kindly, see attached participant information sheet for further information.

Best regards,

Rami Alalawneh

PhD student, School of Language & Culture

Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

rami.alalawneh@autuni.ac.nz

## Appendix C: Interview Participant Information Sheet

The logo for Auckland University of Technology (AUT) is displayed in a white, stylized font on a dark grey rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

### ► Participant Information Sheet- Interview

#### Date Information Sheet Produced:

1/07/2021

#### Project Title

Satire in *Man Saf Baladi*: Exploring the Perceived impact of Jordan's Most Popular Satirical Video Show.

#### An Invitation

I am Rami Alalawneh, a PhD student at Auckland University of Technology. I would like to invite you to participate in my research which focuses on the impact of satire in the Man Saf Baladi video Show. The research will contribute to my doctoral degree qualification.

#### What is the purpose of this research?

The objective of this research is to provide a greater understanding of the nature of satire as a relatively new mode of communication in the Jordanian media sphere. Drawing upon an analysis of the satirical video show Man Saf Baladi, this study investigates the role of satire and the ways in which it impacts upon its followers' interest in politics, their opinions, and their attitudes toward politicians. The research is part of a doctoral qualification at Auckland University of Technology. The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

#### How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You are being identified and invited to participate in this research as you are the producer and presenter of the Man Saf Baladi satirical video Show. Your email address was obtained from Sawaleif website- 'Contact Us' section.

#### How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will be sent a consent form by email, which you will need to complete, sign and send back to the researcher by email. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

#### What will happen in this research?

The research project involves analysis of 20 episodes from Man Saf Baladi video show and viewers online responses to the show that appear on its Facebook page. It also involves interviewing the show producer and surveying the audience of the show using an anonymous online questionnaire. As a producer of the show, you will take part in the interview, which will be carried out using a video conferencing application such as Zoom, Skype or any other platform convenient for you. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interview will focus on your motives for using satire as a form of critique and your opinions about the impact of the satirical Show Man Saf Baladi on its audience.

#### What are the discomforts and risks?

A possible discomfort may be the time that you will spend for the interview. The research also involves the collection of data related to your organisational practice and this may pose potential risks to Man Saf Baladi and to participants.

#### How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

You can choose when the interview takes place, as well as the video conferencing application that is convenient for you. You can also decide to end the interview at any time. To alleviate potential risks to you and to the organisation, you will be given a transcript of the interview and asked to delete anything you are not comfortable regarding your organisational practice. Deleted information will not appear in any publications related to the research. In addition, you will be sent a summary of the main research findings and asked to confirm if you are comfortable with the publication of findings related to your organisation. As a further mitigation of risks to you, the interview questions will be sent to you beforehand, and you can refuse to answer any question you are not comfortable with.

**What are the benefits?**

This research is carried out as a requirement for an academic qualification. It will enable me to obtain my PhD degree.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

As you are the producer and presenter of the show and your identity is already known to the public, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. When reporting the interview result, reference to you will be made using your name or as the show creator/ producer/ presenter.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

You will be interviewed for about 40- 60 minutes.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You can respond to this invitation within four weeks.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Upon completion of the research project, I will send you a summary of the findings by email.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Darryl Hocking, [darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz](mailto:darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz), (+649) 9 921 9999 ext. 6802. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of ATEC, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:** Rami Alalawneh, [rami.alalawneh@aut.ac.nz](mailto:rami.alalawneh@aut.ac.nz)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:** Dr. Darryl Hocking, [darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz](mailto:darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz), (+649) 9 921 9999 ext. 6802

## Appendix D: Interview Guiding Questions- English



### Interview Indicative Questions- English

1. What is the purpose of Man Saf Baladi show? Does it aim to educate, entertain, or influence the viewers?
2. What political and social role does the show play in Jordan? What political shortcomings of the government does the show try to cover?
3. Why do you choose the online video as a medium? What differentiates Man Saf Baladi from other forms of political satire?
4. What topics do you criticize in the show, and how are they selected?
5. Do you think that the show has any effect on the viewers' opinions about political and social issues in Jordan? In what ways?
6. Do you think that the show encourages people to engage in political life? In what ways?
7. Do you think the show has any effect on the viewers' attitudes toward politicians and political institutions? In what ways?
8. Some people believe that political satire shows incite people and mobilize them against governments. What do you think? Is this true for the Man Saf Baladi Show?
9. In what ways do viewers' comments on the show on social media platforms like Facebook impact on your satirical work?
10. Some people believe that political satire shows spread negativity and pessimism about the political situation and detaches people from serious politics, what do you think?

### Interview Indicative Questions- Arabic

1. ما الهدف من برنامج من سف بلدي؟ هل يهدف الى تثقيف المشاهدين، ترفيههم أم التأثير عليهم؟
2. ما هو الدور السياسي والاجتماعي الذي يلعبه البرنامج في الأردن؟ ما هي العيوب السياسية للحكومة التي يحاول البرنامج تغطيتها؟
3. لماذا تختار الفيديو على الإنترنت كوسيط؟ ما الذي يميز البرنامج عن الأشكال الأخرى للسخرية السياسية؟
4. ما هي المواضيع التي تنتقدونها في البرنامج وكيف يتم اختيارها؟
5. هل تعتقد أن للبرنامج أي تأثير على آراء المشاهدين حول القضايا السياسية والاجتماعية في الأردن؟ ما هي مظاهر هذا التأثير؟
6. هل تعتقد أن البرنامج يشجع الناس على الانخراط في الحياة السياسية؟ بأي طرق؟
7. هل تعتقد أن للبرنامج أي تأثير على مواقف المشاهدين تجاه السياسيين والمؤسسات السياسية؟ ما هي مظاهر هذا التأثير؟
8. يعتقد البعض أن برامج السخرية السياسية تُحرّض الناس ضد الحكومات، ما رأيك؟ هل ينطبق هذا على برنامج من سف بلدي؟
9. كيف تؤثر تعليقات المشاهدين على البرنامج على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي كالفيس بوك على عملكم الساخر؟
10. يعتقد البعض أن برامج السخرية السياسية تنشر السلبية والتشاؤم حول الأوضاع السياسية وتعزل الناس عن السياسة الجادة، ما رأيك؟

## Appendix F: Permission Form for Use of Facebook Comments



### Permission for Use of Comments on Man Saf Baladi Facebook Page

23 Scout Avenue, Mt. Roskill

1041 Auckland, New Zealand

Rami Alalawneh

25 July 2021

[Sawaleif](#) Website Chief Editor, Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi

[Alweibdeh](#), Sharea St.

Abu Khader Centre 8

Amman, Jordan

Dear Mr. Ahmad Hassan Alzoubi,

I am a doctoral student at Auckland University of Technology, and I am writing a thesis on satire in the Man Saf Baladi show for my PhD degree.

I am writing to request permission for using online comments on episodes from your Man Saf Baladi show in my research. These comments appear on the public Facebook page that carries the name 'Man Saf Baladi', which I believe you own. The comments will be manually extracted from the Facebook page, translated from Arabic into English, and analysed thematically. Some extractions may appear in my thesis in their paraphrased English translated version.

Episode #	Episode Title	Date of Broadcast	Source
1	Aakh Ya Balad	March 3, 2019	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
2	<a href="#">Nahdat Alsalah</a>	January 21, 2019	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
3	Sahra <a href="#">Ma'a Alrazzaz</a>	January 6, 2019	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
4	Elli <a href="#">Ba'adoh?</a>	December 23, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
5	<a href="#">Ehna Meen wento Meen</a>	December 9, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
6	Meen Kbar <a href="#">Elbalad?</a>	December 2, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
7	Lazim <a href="#">Te'raf</a>	November 25, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
8	Ma Fi <a href="#">Gheir Elnashmi</a>	November 11, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
9	Meen <a href="#">Yhasib Meen?</a>	November 4, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
10	<a href="#">Endama Yzdao elbahro mawtan</a>	October 27, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
11	<a href="#">Ta'deel Wazari</a>	October 14, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
12	<a href="#">Elmakhfi min Eldharibah</a>	October 7, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
13	<a href="#">Al' ordon elana</a>	September 30, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
14	<a href="#">Almatarid</a>	September 24, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
15	Wein <a href="#">Ela'daleh</a>	September 16, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
16	Laish sayer <a href="#">fina haik?</a>	September 10, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>
17	Hajer Ya Qutaibah	September 2, 2018	<a href="#">Sawaleif News Website</a>

18	Sho Anjazna?	August 26, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
19	Nahno Laha	August 16, 2018	Sawaleif News Website
20	Panorama Elfasad	August 5, 2018	Sawaleif News Website

If you agree, I should be very grateful if you would reply to me via email, or alternatively sign the form below and return a copy to me.

I can most quickly be reached by email at rami.alalawneh@autuni.ac.nz. Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Rami Alalawneh

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I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to grant you permission to include the above materials from my public Facebook page Man Saf Baladi in your thesis.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G: Survey Questions- English

### Section One:

1. Do you watch the satirical video show Man Saf Baladi?
  - Yes
  - No
2. How often do you watch the show?
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always
3. Why do you watch the show? Please choose all that apply.
  - I have fun/ I get entertained
  - I get informed/ updated about political issues
  - I like the producer
  - I agree with the producer's opinions
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Do you post, share, or reshare episodes of the show on your social media accounts?
  - Never
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always
5. Do you comment on the satirical content, or discussions prompted by show online?
  - Never
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always

6. Do you search for further information about political issues that are critiqued in the show?
- Never
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always
7. Do you discuss the topics that you watch in the show with family, friends, or colleagues?
- Never
  - Rarely
  - Sometimes
  - Often
  - Always
8. To what extent you agree that sharing, resharing, or commenting on satirical content and engaging in discussions prompted by the show's satirical content online is an act of political participation?
- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree

**Section Two:**

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?
- A. The satirical show Man Saf Balad influences my political views and opinions.
- Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- B. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi influences my attitudes toward politicians and statesmen.
- Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree

- C. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi show makes me feel pessimistic about the political and economic situation in Jordan.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- D. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi show frustrates me and detaches me from serious political life.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- E. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi show informs me about the political situation in Jordan.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- F. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi increases my interest in politics.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- G. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi encourages me to talk about politics.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- H. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi vents my frustration about the current political and economic situation in Jordan.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- I. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi encourages me to engage in serious political acts, such as attending public discussions, joining activist campaigns, or street protests.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- J. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi show impacts upon my level of trust in political institutions (e. g. the government and the Parliament).  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- K. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi show impacts upon my level of trust in national media outlets (TV and traditional newspapers).  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- L. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi encourages communication about its contents among its viewers.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree
- M. The satirical show Man Saf Baladi creates an online community amongst its viewers based on their attitudes and opinions about the show.  
 Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly agree

### Section 3:

10. Gender \_\_\_\_\_

11. Age group

A. 18-29

B. 30- 39

C. 40- 49

D. 50- 59

E. 60- over

12. Educational Level

A. High school

B. University degree

C. Post graduate degree

## Appendix H: Survey Questions- Arabic

الجزء الأول:

1. هل تشاهد البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي؟  
 نعم  
 لا
2. ما مدى متابعتك لحلقات البرنامج؟  
 نادرا  
 أحيانا  
 غالبا  
 دائما
3. لماذا تتابع برنامج من سف بلدي؟ (يرجى اختيار كل ما ينطبق)  
 للمتعة / الترفيه  
 الحصول على المعلومة/ معرفة الجديد من القضايا السياسية  
 لإعجابي بمقدم البرنامج  
 اتفق مع آراء مقدم البرنامج  
 سبب آخر، يرجى التحديد \_\_\_\_\_
4. هل تنشر أو تعيد مشاركة حلقات البرنامج على حساباتك في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟  
 أبدا  
 نادرا  
 أحيانا  
 غالبا  
 دائما
5. هل تعلق على المحتوى الساخر أو النقاشات التي يحفزها البرنامج على الانترنت؟  
 أبدا  
 نادرا

أحيانا

غالبا

دائما

6. هل تبحث عن معلومات اضافية حول الموضوعات السياسية التي ينتقدها البرنامج؟

أبدا

نادرا

أحيانا

غالبا

دائما

7. هل تناقش الموضوعات التي تشاهدها في البرنامج مع الأهل والأصدقاء أو الزملاء؟

أبدا

نادرا

أحيانا

غالبا

دائما

8. الى أي حد تتفق أن مشاركة وإعادة نشر المحتوى الساخر أو التعليق عليه و المشاركة في النقاشات التي يحفزها البرنامج على الانترنت تشكل نوعا من المشاركة السياسية؟

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

الجزء الثاني:

9. الى أي حد تتفق مع العبارات التالية:

أ. يؤثر البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على آرائي وتوجهاتي السياسية.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ب. يؤثر البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على موافقي تجاه السياسيين ورجال الدولة.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ج. يشعري البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي بالتشاؤم حول الوضع السياسي والاقتصادي في الأردن.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

د. يحبطني البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي ويعزلني عن الحياة السياسية الجادة.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

هـ. يطلعني البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على الوضع السياسي في الأردن.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

و. يزيد البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي من اهتمامي في السياسة.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ز. يشجعني البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على الحديث في الأمور السياسية.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ح. يُنقّس البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي عن مشاعر الإخباط لديّ تجاه الأوضاع السياسية والاقتصادية في الأردن.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ط. يشجّعني البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على المشاركة في مظاهر الحياة السياسية الجادة كحضور الندوات العامة والمشاركة في حملات الناشطين والاعتصامات في الشوارع.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ي. يؤثر البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على مستوى ثقتي بالمؤسسات السياسية (كالبرلمان والحكومة مثلا).

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ك. يؤثر البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي على مستوى ثقتي بوسائل الإعلام الوطنية (كالتلفزيون والصحف التقليدية).

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

ل. يحفّز البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي التواصل بين مشاهديه وتبادل آرائهم حول محتوى البرنامج.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

م. يساهم البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي في خلق مجتمع افتراضي بين مشاهديه بناء على توجهاتهم و آرائهم

حول البرنامج.

لا أوافق بشدة

لا أوافق

محايد

أوافق

أوافق بشدة

### الجزء الثالث:

8. الجنس \_\_\_\_\_

9. الفئة العمرية

أ. 18-29 سنة

ب. 30-49 سنة

ج. 50-59 سنة

د. 60 سنة فأكثر

12. المستوى التعليمي

أ. تعليم مدرسي (أساسي- ثانوي)

ب. شهادة جامعية (دبلوم - بكالوريوس)

ج. دراسات عليا (ماجستير - دكتوراه)

## Appendix I: Survey Advert- English



### Survey Advertisement- English

Do you watch Man Saf Baladi satirical video show?

If so, you are invited to participate in a brief survey.

The survey is part of a doctoral research project conducted by researcher Rami Alalawneh at Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. The research aims to explore the role of satire in Man Saf Baladi video show and its impact on the audience.

If you would like to participate, please follow the link below.

[https://aut.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bEFT0LxZ9aERdc](https://aut.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bEFT0LxZ9aERdc)

## Appendix J: Survey Advert- Arabic



### Survey Advertisement- Arabic

هل تتابع البرنامج الساخر من سف بلدي؟

إذا كنت من متابعي البرنامج، أنت مدعو للمشاركة في استبيان قصير.

الاستبيان جزء من دراسة للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه يقوم بها الباحث رامي العلونه في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا، نيوزلندا. تهدف الدراسة إلى إستكشاف دور السخرية في برنامج من سف بلدي وأثرها على الجمهور.  
إذا كنت ترغب بالمشاركة، يرجى الضغط على الرابط التالي.

[https://aut.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bEFfT0LxZ9aERdc](https://aut.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bEFfT0LxZ9aERdc)

## **Appendix K: Survey Information Page- English**

### **Satire in Man Saf Baladi: Exploring the Impact of Jordan's Most Popular Satirical Video Show**

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The overall purpose of this research is to explore the role of satire in Man Saf Baladi video show and the ways in which it impacts upon its audience attitudes, interests, and participation in political life in Jordan.

#### **How was Identified and invited to participate?**

This survey is open to all viewers of the satirical video show Man Saf Baladi, provided that they are 18 years old or over.

#### **What will I do in this survey?**

You will read a group of statements about Man Saf Baladi satirical video show and respond to those statements by choosing answers that represent your opinions and views.

#### **How can I participate in this survey?**

Your participation in the survey is voluntary. You can withdraw from the survey at any point before submitting your responses. However, once you have finished and submitted the survey it is not possible to identify your responses and withdraw them from the data.

#### **How do I consent to participate?**

Completion of the survey will be taken as indicating your implicit consent to participate in the research.

#### **How do you ensure my confidentiality?**

Your responses to the survey will be anonymous, and no identifying information will be asked in the survey.

**How long will the survey take?**

The survey will take about 10 minutes to complete.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr. Darryl Hocking, [darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz](mailto:darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz), (+649) 9 921 9999 ext. 6802. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), (+649) 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**This research was Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 6 July 2021, AUTEK Reference 21/106.**

Before proceeding to the survey, please indicate whether you agree to participate in the survey.

Yes, I agree and I will continue with the survey.

No, I do not agree and I do not wish to complete the survey.

## Appendix L: Survey Information Page- Arabic

السخرية في من سفّ بلدي: دراسة تأثير البرنامج الساخر الأكثر شهرة في الأردن

ما الهدف من هذا البحث؟

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف دور السخرية في برنامج من سفّ بلدي الساخر والطرق التي يؤثر بها البرنامج على مواقف الجمهور واهتماماته ومشاركته في الحياة السياسية في الأردن.

كيف تم اختياري ودعوتي للمشاركة؟

هذا الاستبيان متاح لجميع مشاهدي برنامج من سفّ بلدي الساخر، على أن يكون عمر المشارك 18 سنة فأكثر.

ماذا سأفعل في هذا الاستبيان؟

سوف تقرأ مجموعة من العبارات والأسئلة حول برنامج من سفّ بلدي الساخر وتجيب عليها عن طريق اختيار الإجابة التي تعبر عن رأيك ووجهة نظرك.

كيف يمكنني المشاركة في هذا الاستبيان؟

المشاركة في هذا الاستبيان طوعية ويمكنك التوقف عن الإجابة والانسحاب من الاستبيان في أية لحظة قبل رصد الإجابات، ولكن بمجرد الانتهاء من الإجابات ورصد الاستبيان لن يكون بالإمكان تحديد إجاباتك وحذفها من البيانات.

كيف أقر بموافقتي على المشاركة؟

سيؤخذ استكمالك للاستبيان على أنه إقرار ضمنني بموافقتك على المشاركة في هذا البحث.

كيف تحافظ على سرّيتي؟

ستكون إجاباتك على الاستبيان مجهولة المصدر ولن يطلب في الاستبيان أية معلومات من شأنها التعريف بهويتك.

كم من الوقت تستغرق الإجابة على الاستبيان؟

يتطلب استكمال هذا الاستبيان حوالي 10 دقائق.

ماذا أفعل إذا كان لدي مخاوف حول هذا البحث؟

إذا كان لديك أية مخاوف تتعلق بطبيعة هذا البحث يمكنك في المقام الأول إخطار المشرف على البحث الدكتور داريل هوكنج،  
بريد الكتروني darryl.hocking@aut.ac.nz هاتف: 6802 ext. 9 921 9999 (+649)

ويمكنك إخطار السكرتير التنفيذي للجنة أخلاقيات البحث في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا في حال لديك أية مخاوف متعلقة  
بإجراءات هذا البحث، بريد الكتروني ethics@aut.ac.nz هاتف: 6038 ext. 921 9999 (+649)

تمت الموافقة على هذا البحث من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث في جامعة أوكلاند للتكنولوجيا بتاريخ 6 تموز 2021 و أعطيت  
الرقم المرجعي 106/21

قبل الانتقال الى الاستبيان، يرجى بيان موافقتك على المشاركة في هذا الاستبيان:

نعم، أوافق وأرغب باستكمال الاستبيان.

لا، لا أوافق ولا أرغب باستكمال الاستبيان.

## Appendix M: Ethics Approval



### Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

5 July 2021

Darryl Hocking  
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Darryl

Re Ethics Application: **21/106 Satire in Man Saf Baladi: Exploring the Perceived Impact of Jordan's Most Popular Satirical Video Show**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 6 July 2024.

#### Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any [enquiries](#) please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz). The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

cc: [rami\\_gemny@yahoo.com](mailto:rami_gemny@yahoo.com); [philippa.smith@aut.ac.nz](mailto:philippa.smith@aut.ac.nz)

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee  
(AUTEC)

19 February 2024

Darryl Hocking  
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Darryl

Ethics Application: **21/106 Satire in Man Saf Baladi: Exploring the Perceived Impact of Jordan's Most Popular Satirical Video Show**

At their meeting of 12 February 2024, the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) received the report on your ethics application. AUTEC noted your report and asked us to thank you.

On behalf of AUTEC, we congratulate the researchers on the project and look forward to reading more about it in future reports.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact me by email at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 6038.

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: [rami\\_gemny@yahoo.com](mailto:rami_gemny@yahoo.com); [philippa.smith@aut.ac.nz](mailto:philippa.smith@aut.ac.nz)

## Appendix N: Verification of Translation Letter

Dr. Mohammad Dagamseh  
Embassy of the State of Kuwait- Wellington  
7/10 Customhouse Quay  
Wellington Central, 6011  
E: dagamsehkuwaitembassy@outlook.co.nz  
Ph: +642108810673

5 January 2022

### Verification of Translation

I, Mohammad Dagamseh, certify that I am a native speaker of Arabic, and fluent in English. I have BA and MA degrees in English Language from a Jordanian university, and I have PhD degree in Linguistics from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. I am a professional translator working as Translator and Political Analyst at the State of Kuwait Embassy in Wellington. I confirm that I have verified random samples of the translation of Mr. Rami Alalawneh's doctoral research data, including transcripts of Man Saf Baladi show videos, audience Facebook comments and interview with the show presenter. I can unequivocally confirm that the English versions are accurate translations of the original Arabic texts.

Signature: 

Name: Mohammad Dagamseh

Title: Translator & Political Analyst

Organization: Embassy of State of Kuwait- New Zealand

## Appendix O: Episodes and Links to Man Şaf Baladī on Sawaleif

Episode Title	Link
Panorama of Corruption	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85-374761/">https://sawaleif.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%84%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84%D9%89-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D9%85-374761/</a>
We Are Up to It	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%87%D8%A7-377921/">https://sawaleif.com/%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%86%D8%AD%D9%86-%D9%84%D9%87%D8%A7-377921/</a>
What Have We Achieved?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d8%b4%d9%88-%d8%a3%d9%86%d8%ac%d8%b2%d9%86%d8%a7-380226/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d8%b4%d9%88-%d8%a3%d9%86%d8%ac%d8%b2%d9%86%d8%a7-380226/</a>
Migrate Qutaibah!	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a9-%d8%ac%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d8%b9%d9%86%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%b1-%d9%8a-382203/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%ad%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a9-%d8%ac%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%af%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d8%b9%d9%86%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%ac%d8%b1-%d9%8a-382203/</a>
Why Is This Happening to Us?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91%d9%8e-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%b4-%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%8a%d8%b1-%d9%81%d9%8a%d9%86%d8%a7-%d9%87%d9%8a%d9%83-%d8%9f-384167/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91%d9%8e-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%84%d9%8a%d8%b4-%d8%b5%d8%a7%d9%8a%d8%b1-%d9%81%d9%8a%d9%86%d8%a7-%d9%87%d9%8a%d9%83-%d8%9f-384167/</a>
Where is Justice?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%88%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a9-385963/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%88%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a9-385963/</a>
The Outcasts	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b7%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%af-388172/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b7%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%af-388172/</a>
Jordan is Ours	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-</a>

	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ae%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b6%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a8%d8%a9-391736/">%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%b1%d8%af%d9%86-%d8%a5%d9%84%d9%86%d8%a7-389780/</a>
The Hidden Part of the Tax	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ae%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b6%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a8%d8%a9-391736/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ae%d9%81%d9%8a-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b6%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a8%d8%a9-391736/</a>
Cabinet Reshuffle	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%aa%d8%b9-%d8%af%d9%8a%d9%84-%d9%88%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%8a-393723/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%aa%d8%b9-%d8%af%d9%8a%d9%84-%d9%88%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%8a-393723/</a>
When the Sea dies more	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91%d9%8e-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d8%b9%d9%86%d8%af%d9%85%d8%a7-%d9%8a%d8%b2%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d8%ad%d8%b1-%d9%85%d9%88%d8%aa%d8%a7-397738/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91%d9%8e-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d8%b9%d9%86%d8%af%d9%85%d8%a7-%d9%8a%d8%b2%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d8%ad%d8%b1-%d9%85%d9%88%d8%aa%d8%a7-397738/</a>
Who Holds Whom Accountable?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%8a%d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%a8-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%9f-399962/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%8a%d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%a8-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%9f-399962/</a>
Isn't Anybody Here but the Nashmi?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d9%85%d8%a7-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%ba%d9%8a%d8%b1-%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b4%d9%85%d9%8a-%d8%9f-402021/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d9%85%d8%a7-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%ba%d9%8a%d8%b1-%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b4%d9%85%d9%8a-%d8%9f-402021/</a>
You Should Know	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b2%d9%85-%d8%aa%d8%b9%d8%b1%d9%81-405985/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b2%d9%85-%d8%aa%d8%b9%d8%b1%d9%81-405985/</a>
Who Are the Country's Dignitaries?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%83%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af-407959/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%83%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af-407959/</a>

Who Are We and Who Are You?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d8%ad%d9%86%d8%a7-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%88-%d8%a7%d9%86%d8%aa%d9%88-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%9f-409915/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f-%d8%a7%d8%ad%d9%86%d8%a7-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%88-%d8%a7%d9%86%d8%aa%d9%88-%d9%85%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%9f-409915/</a>
Who's Next?	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%9F-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%87-414286/">https://sawaleif.com/%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%B3%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%9F-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF%D9%87-414286/</a>
An Evening with Razzaz	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d8%a8%d8%b1%d9%86%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%ac-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%9f-%d8%b3%d9%87%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d9%85%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b1%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b2-417894/">https://sawaleif.com/%d8%a8%d8%b1%d9%86%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%ac-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a%d8%9f-%d8%b3%d9%87%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d9%85%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b1%d8%b2%d8%a7%d8%b2-417894/</a>
Turtles Renaissance	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d9%86%d9%87%d8%b6%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ad%d9%81-422176/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d9%86%d9%87%d8%b6%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b3%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%ad%d9%81-422176/</a>
Ouch, My Country!	<a href="https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91%d9%8e-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d8%a2%d8%ae-%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af-434079/">https://sawaleif.com/%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%b3%d9%81%d9%91%d9%8e-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%9f%d8%9f-%d8%a2%d8%ae-%d9%8a%d8%a7-%d8%a8%d9%84%d8%af-434079/</a>