IRAQI PRESS COVERAGE OF THE 2023 LOCAL ELECTIONS-AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE CONTENT OF OPINION ARTICLES IN AL-SABAH AND AL-ZAMAN NEWSPAPERS

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Article history		Abstract:
		This study was based on a main objective, which is to know how the Iraqi press dealt with the issue of the Iraqi local elections for the year 2023, by analyzing the opinion articles published in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers before the elections and monitoring the elements of highlighting used in the articles and revealing the contents raised in them in addition to analyzing the persuasion strategies used and monitoring the paths of proof and finally analyzing the media frameworks used. The study reached many results, the most prominent of which were: 1- The personal photos of the writer are the most common highlighting element in both newspapers. 2- Political issues received the main focus of the local election articles in both newspapers. Al-Sabah showed greater interest in purely political issues, while Al-Zaman showed greater interest in multiple issues and economic issues. 3- As for the persuasion strategies used in newspaper articles, the study showed that Al-Sabah showed greater interest in using numbers and statistics compared to Al-Zaman, and Al-Sabah also showed greater interest in using the promises of the candidates compared to Al-Zaman. 4- As for the paths of proof in the articles in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers, the study showed that citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations is the most common path of proof in both newspapers. By comparing them, it becomes clear that Al-Sabah was more interested in citing the events of the October demonstrations compared to Al-Zaman.

INTRODUCTION:

There is no doubt that the Iraqi press before and during the preparations for the 2023 local elections in Iraq had different positions, opinions and viewpoints that reflected different orientations and affiliations that affected, in one way or another, the trends of public opinion and the results of the elections. To monitor this, we saw that we should analyze the orientations of a number of newspapers and stand on the most important positions through the articles and editorials published by the Iraqi press before the elections were held, especially the newspapers (Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman), which are two newspapers, the first is governmental and the other is independent, which may help in giving an idea of the impact of the journalistic opinions presented in them on voters, especially with the presence of many calls to boycott the elections. The press in general and opinion materials in particular perform many important functional roles in contemporary societies, which depend in their multiplicity and diversity on the nature of the prevailing media system in each society. Among these tasks is to enlighten public opinion and increase public awareness of the electoral process, as it collects and disseminates information about the various candidates that occur in the surrounding environment, in addition to explaining and interpreting their electoral programs and clarifying their meaning and importance in the life of the public, which helps to increase their follow-up, awareness and understanding and take a position towards participation. In the electoral process or not.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK
1. The problem of the study:

Calls to boycott the 2023 local elections in Iraq by religious leaders, popular movements, intellectuals, and opinion writers did not prevent their holding. But the elections ultimately produced weak results, sometimes unexpected and disappointing to some political parties. Regarding the content of the boycott calls by religious leaders, they were clear and were summarized in a fatwa to which supporters of one of the religious movements adhered. However, a large segment of Iraqi society who are not affiliated with these religious movements and parties also boycotted the elections. The question that arises is how did this broad spectrum of the Iraqi people respond to the calls for a boycott. There is a firm belief among most intellectuals, including media and politicians, that the media formed the largest part of the boycott process, and that opinion articles in Iraqi newspapers before the elections affected participation rates. Hence the importance of analyzing articles to determine their general trends. The problem of this study can be summed up in the following question ((**How did opinion articles in Iraqi newspapers address the issue of the Iraqi local elections for the year 2023**)).

2. Study Questions:

To answer the main question, there must be sub-questions for the purpose of achieving the study objectives. These sub-questions include:

1. What are the highlighting elements used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections?
2. What is the goal of the content raised when presenting articles covering the local elections in the newspapers under study?
3. What are the issues raised in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections?
4. What are the persuasion strategies used in journalistic arts and newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections?
5. What are the paths of evidence in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections?
6. What are the media frameworks used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections?

3. Importance of the study:

The importance of this study lies in two things: the first is the scientific importance and the other is the applied importance:

Scientific importance:

1- Highlighting the ability of electronic newspapers on the Internet to represent an important source for receiving information for a wide spectrum of society, as this means is characterized by the speed of information transfer and continuous updating.

2- Its importance also comes from the fact that it came at a sensitive political stage witnessed by Iraq and in the midst of complex relations on the Iraqi political scene

3- In addition, this study is important because it deals with a political issue that receives the attention of Iraqi public opinion and is followed by political decision-makers in Iraq.

4- This study also gains importance due to the extent of the interest of the Iraqi media in the Iraqi local elections and the role of electronic newspapers in addressing this event from all sides.

5- In addition, the study aspires to be an addition to the scientific heritage in the field of studies of the theory of media frameworks, which prompted the researcher to delve into this research field.

Practical importance:

1- The importance of the study appears in the absence of significant differences between candidates in the Iraqi local elections, but the difference in reality lies in the difference in press coverage of Iraqi newspapers according to the newspaper ownership pattern and the difference in editorial policies of Iraqi newspapers.

2- The subject gains its importance in terms of the possibility of identifying political positions and predicting the reality in the future through the vision provided by Iraqi electronic newspapers owned by the state and private newspapers.

3- Identifying the extent of technological employment in the field of Iraqi electronic journalism, especially interactive elements and applications to create a journalistic environment that is compatible with the technical developments witnessed by our current era.

4- The results and recommendations of this study represent a guide for those in charge of communication in the field of electronic journalism in particular and for the public interested in interpreting and understanding journalistic opinion materials in general.

4. Objectives of the study:

The main objective of the study is to monitor how opinion articles deal with the Iraqi local elections for the year 2023. The following sub-objectives emerge from the main objective of the study:

1 .Monitor the elements of highlighting used in newspaper articles dealing with the local elections for the year 2023

2 .Reveal the objective of the contents raised when presenting articles dealing with the local elections in the newspapers under study.

3 .Identify the categories of issues raised in newspaper articles dealing with the local elections for the year 2023

4 .Analyze the persuasion strategies used in newspaper articles dealing with the local elections for the year 2023

5 .Monitor the paths of proof in newspaper articles dealing with the local elections for the year 2023.

6 .Analyze the media frameworks used in newspaper articles dealing with the local elections for the year 2023.

5. Type of study:

Based on the nature of the research problem, this study falls within the framework of descriptive analytical studies, which seek to monitor, analyze and evaluate a specific phenomenon whose elements are distinct, in order to receive accurate and sufficient information about it with the aim of interpreting and describing it accurately and objectively, or studying existing facts related to a particular phenomenon. In order to receive sufficient information and accurate data about them without addressing their causes or trying to control them [1], this study seeks to describe and analyze how Iraqi electronic newspapers handled the local elections there, and the field of descriptive studies often seeks to describe issues, events, and beliefs. people, trends, values, goals, as well as various aspects of behavior [2].

6. Study Methodology:

This study relies on the media survey approach, which is one of the widely used scientific approaches in media studies because of its advantages that allow the study of the media phenomenon to be in-depth and to create a database in the field of specialization. The survey is considered one of the scientific approaches most suitable for descriptive studies in general. He studies the phenomenon in its current state and explains it, after creating a database on its various elements [3].

7. Study community and sample:

1- Study community: The study community is represented by Iraqi electronic newspapers on the Internet.

2- It is noteworthy that the sample of this study is a deliberate sample based on the comprehensive inventory method of the press materials published by the electronic newspapers Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman related to the local elections for the period from October 15 to December 15, 2023. The period between that date represents approximately the beginning of the election campaigns until the announcement of the final result of the election process by the Electoral Commission, as this period witnesses intense and high-level media interest, in terms of press coverage in all its forms and directions towards this event.

The sample was chosen for several reasons, the most important of which are:

1- Previous studies, including the study of: **Ruaa Abd al-Hadi Muhammad al-Shaikhli (electronic press coverage of the provincial council elections), and the study of: Ahmed Bakr Muhammad al-Haddad (news coverage of the parliamentary elections in the Iraqi daily press)**, indicated that the newspapers sampled for this study (Al-Sabah, Al-Zaman enjoys high popularity and is considered one of the most read newspapers at the local level. The above studies dealt with the two newspapers and emphasized their spread and importance.

2- The interest of the study sample newspapers in addressing international issues that affect and have repercussions on the local Iraqi situation

3- The diversity of journalistic treatment of all international events and issues in the two journalists in the study sample.

4- The expansion of the press coverage of opinion materials allocated by the newspapers of the study sample to international events and issues at the level of form and content.

5- The trends of the newspapers in the study sample reflect the local official and informal position regarding the Iraqi local elections.

8. Data collection tool:

This study used the content analysis form, which is a suitable research tool for collecting data from the study sample vocabulary represented by the journalistic materials provided by the electronic newspapers in the study sample newspapers. The "content analysis form" is defined as: a set of procedures and methodological steps aimed at extracting the meanings hidden in the media text, and discovering the correlations between those meanings, through an organized exploratory process of the features appearing in the text, using an objective quantitative method [4].

9. Study concepts:

Journalistic treatment of elections: is the way in which newspapers deal with data, facts and information related to local elections. It includes all the arts of journalistic editing using different production methods, and relying on specific sources of news. This type of treatment is concerned with the content of the media message presented, and focusing on the elements of highlighting it [5].

Journalistic treatment frameworks: These are frameworks that are formulated from concepts, keywords, symbols, and visual units that carry meaningful connotations and prominence within the media text, by using repetition and reinforcement methods to highlight certain ideas and ignore others [6].

Electronic journalism: These are newspapers that are published on a regular basis and published in digital form on the Internet or other information networks, whether it is a general or specialized newspaper, an electronic newspaper that does not have a printed edition, or an electronic edition of a printed paper newspaper [7].

10. Previous studies:

The researcher reviewed master's and doctoral theses and scientific research published in specialized periodicals and scientific conferences, whether those studies related directly or indirectly to the subject of the study, in an effort to deepen interest in the Iraqi press's treatment of the 2023 local elections.

Al-**Sheikhli's study (2010), which was entitled ((The Iraqi electronic press's coverage of the provincial council elections))**[8] aimed to find out the way in which the Iraqi electronic press covered the Iraqi provincial council elections in 2009. And to demonstrate the extent of the ability of these two newspapers to introduce the political programs of the candidates. In addition to their ability to actively participate in media coverage of public opinion. The

study relied on the descriptive analytical method using the content analysis method. The study concluded that the coverage related to the local elections and candidates for the year 2009 ranked first, then the coverage related to the participating political parties came in second place, and the topic of oil and issues related to Iran came in third and final place, as covered by the media coverage of the study sample.

Madi's study (2023), entitled (Constitutional Amendments in Egyptian Newspapers: A Study in the Analysis of Journalistic Discourse),([9]) aimed to identify the Egyptian journalistic discourse towards the 2019 constitutional amendments through analyzing the active forces, emotional and mental evidence paths, and reference frameworks. The research belongs to descriptive analytical research, as the researcher analyzed the discourse of Al-Ahram newspaper, Al-Wafd newspaper, and Al-Shorouk newspaper, and analyzed journalistic arts, especially opinion materials (article - report - investigation - talk - caricature - readers' mail). The study showed mixed results, as Al-Ahram newspaper supported the constitutional amendments to a large extent and even called for their approval. In the same vein, Al-Wafd newspaper's discourse was in agreement and support of the constitutional amendments to a large extent, despite the emergence of some opinions opposing the amendments. As for Al-Shorouk newspaper's discourse, it was somewhat different, as the discourse's orientations rejected the amendments in many cases and supported them in other cases. However, Al-Shorouk newspaper's discourse was more daring in presenting the opinion subject to the amendments than Al-Ahram and Al-Wafd newspapers.

The study by Ahmed Bakr Mohammed Al-Haddad (2011) entitled (News Coverage of the Parliamentary Elections in the Iraqi Daily Press for the Year 2010) [10] aimed to show the contents that Al-Dustour and Al-Sabah newspapers were interested in, as well as the news forms, type of coverage, sources, and typographic elements that these newspapers applied in their news coverage during the elections. The study also attempted to show whether it was among the priorities of the newspapers in the study sample to set a media agenda related to the topic of the elections.

The study relied on the descriptive approach using the content analysis tool to describe the apparent content, and the analysis form included (6) main categories from which (27) subcategories branched out.

The study relied on a sample of (60) articles from Al-Dustour and Al-Sabah newspapers, with (30) articles for each newspaper for the period from 2/7/2010 to 3/7/2010, by applying the comprehensive inventory method.

The study reached a number of important results. The category of electoral contents and issues (the category of the organizational and security oversight process and the High Elections Commission) ranked first with (157) repetitions, at a rate of 25.3%, in favor of Al-Sabah newspaper. In the category of news sources, the category of personal and private sources of the newspaper came in first place with (405) repetitions, at a rate of 65.2%, in favor of Al-Sabah newspaper. The study also showed in the subject of the position of the newspaper writers that the category (neutral) came in first place with (204) repetitions, at a rate of 32.8%, in favor of Al-Dustour newspaper. While the category of news forms came in first place (the category of press news) with (386) repetitions, at a rate of 62.2%, in favor of Al-Sabah newspaper. In the category of administrative coverage type (interpretative coverage), it came in first place with (291) repetitions, at a rate of 46.9%, in favor of Al-Sabah newspaper. The category of paragraph and secondary titles came in first place in the category of typographic elements with (354) repetitions, at a rate of 57.0%, in favor of Al-Sabah newspaper.

As for Al-Balawi's study (2022), [11]it sought to identify the discourse of opinion articles in the Saudi print and electronic press towards the social issues included in the discourse of opinion articles, which were identified in (women's issues, housing issues, unemployment issues, corruption issues), and this study falls within the descriptive analytical interpretive studies, as it relied on the qualitative approach and the quantitative approach, by using (the comprehensive inventory method) in the newspapers of the study represented by (Okaz, Al-Watan, Mecca) and (Sabq, Sada, Al-Mowaten). During the period extending from January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2019, and among the most prominent results it reached:

• Opinion articles in print newspapers topped the level of (opinion articles) in their coverage of the social issues that are the subject of the study, which the researcher limited to (women's issues, housing issues, unemployment issues, corruption issues) with (510) articles, led by Okaz newspaper with (307) articles, compared to (104) articles in electronic newspapers, led by Sabq electronic newspaper with (54) articles.

• In the field of the quality and direction of opinion discourse, it was evident that the guiding discourse dominated opinion materials in both print and electronic newspapers, as the guiding strategy constituted (36%) of opinion materials in print newspapers, while its percentage in electronic newspapers was (44%).

• The political reference achieved first place with (26%) in print newspapers, while the social reference came in first place in electronic newspapers with (46%).

• The study showed the weak interest of electronic newspapers in the art of caricature as one of the opinion materials expressing societal issues, through the complete absence of caricature in both (Sada and Al-Mowaten electronic newspapers), and the absence of social caricature in (Sabq electronic newspaper) towards issues related to the study, in favor of political caricature.

Darwish's study (2017)[12] also aimed to: To know the articles most commented by readers, who are their writers, what is their intellectual orientation, and the topics that these articles address. The study relied on the content analysis form as a tool for collecting data, and the time period for the study was from the beginning of October 2014 until the end of December 2014. The researcher chose the newspaper article as a sample for the study. The results confirmed

that Fahmy Huwaidi's articles in Al-Shorouk newspaper attracted the most readers' comments on the articles and their responses to each other, and Amr Hamzawi's articles in Al-Shorouk newspaper in The second rank, and the articles of Magdy El-Gad in third rank, and Hamdy Rizk in last rank, and that the readers' participation in the newspaper articles of the electronic newspapers on the social networking site Facebook came in first rank on all social networking sites.

The Harmer & Southern (2020) [13] study also aimed to test the importance of digital journalism. The study aimed to analyze the content to compare the extent to which BBC News, Mail Online, The Guardian, Buzzfeed and Huffington Post used video, hyperlinks and Twitter posts to better inform citizens about politics during the 2017 UK election. The results showed the hybridization of online news in the UK as both public service and commercial media adopt some online practices but reject others, just as digital sites blend traditional journalism with digital tools to produce new ways to support their journalism.

Alsridi's study (2018) [14] aimed to investigate the use of local and Arab news websites among young people in Bahrain, identify usage patterns, and reasons for choices. The study is a descriptive study that used the survey method by conducting a survey of a random sample of 522 young Bahrainis aged between 18 and 29 years. The results confirmed that the interest rate in online news among young people in the Kingdom of Bahrain is high despite the presence of other major media outlets, and that there are some difficulties that hinder the process of providing a successful news experience and achieving real satisfaction upon use, and that there are a number of mandatory advertisements, especially in the news agency, and that young Internet users in Bahrain are increasingly associated with the use of online news, which creates a new social and cultural reality, which has been reinforced by the unprecedented use of smartphone applications in recent years.

The study of Al-Ubaidi (2017) [15] also attempted to identify the role of Libyan electronic journalism in shaping the knowledge and attitudes of Libyan youth towards terrorism issues, by focusing on newspaper coverage of the issue of terrorism and the editorial arts used in it, and showing the extent to which young people in Libya are exposed to electronic journalism. The study analyzed the content of 4532 journalistic articles, and the questionnaire was applied to a deliberate sample of 400 individuals represented by Libyan youth. The results of the analysis of this study showed that the press news topped the journalistic arts in terms of publication in the sample newspapers, then came the press report, followed by the rest of the other journalistic arts. The study showed that the journalistic correspondent came first in relying on him as a source used by the study newspapers at a rate of 39.5%, while the editor came in second place at 24.5%. The study confirmed that the conflict was in the first place among the most used news values during the journalistic treatment of the issue of terrorism at a rate of 16%, and topics of human interest came in second place at a rate of 15.8%.

Karim's study (2016) [16] analyzed the relationship between exposure to Kurdish electronic newspapers and the level of knowledge of political reform issues among university youth. The study used the media survey method and chose the questionnaire tool by interviewing the respondents in order to collect data related to the study topic. The questionnaire was applied to young people from the universities of Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, Duhok, and Salahuddin for the period from 2015 to 2016. The results of the analytical study revealed the existence of statistically significant differences in the degree of knowledge acquisition regarding the issue of political reform among the respondents, according to the educational level. The study indicated that the majority of the sample members expressed relative confidence in what the Kurdish electronic newspapers provide about the issue of political reform, at a rate of 60.8%, while the issue of terrorism ranked second at 22.4%, and social issues came in third place at 18.6%.

Hassan's study (2021) [17] also aimed to identify the role of newspapers and websites in shaping voters' attitudes towards the House of Representatives elections (2020). The research relied on the media survey method. The research tools were a content analysis form and a questionnaire form. They were applied to a sample of (450) individuals distributed over the three major regions, namely Greater Cairo, Lower Egypt, and Upper Egypt, of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The research results showed that there was no correlation between the educational level of the respondents and the level of influence of the cognitive component among them, as the significance level (0.062) was greater than (0.05) not significant. As for the social level, there was a weak negative correlation with a coefficient of (0.178), at a strong significance level (0.000) less than (0.1) between the social level of the respondents and the level of influence of the behavioral component among them.

The study of Halima, Iman, (Karim2020) [18] also analyzed the electoral campaign for the December 12, 2019 presidential elections in Algeria through Al-Bilad newspaper, which is an analytical study of the content of Al-Bilad newspaper in 2019 based on the content analysis method. The study concluded that Al-Bilad newspaper was interested in the electoral campaign as a current event, and indicators of this interest were evident in the daily and continuous coverage of this event within fixed and advanced pages in the ranking, as well as publishing it in different locations on those pages and using various newspaper arts, in addition to diversifying the means of support and highlighting.

Comment on previous studies:

Through the aforementioned review of previous studies related to the subject of the study, several observations were reached, the most prominent of which are:

In terms of the objective: Electronic newspapers, which were addressed in most previous studies, were interested in political issues, the state of political polarization that appears clearly in the elections, and the importance of electronic journalism in disseminating political information through its electronic means, whether on the news website or on the pages of websites on social networking sites. Some studies addressed general issues related to the elections, such as

economic conditions, security, combating corruption, and social justice, among the most prominent issues during press coverage of the elections. Most studies that addressed the treatment of electronic newspapers relied on the theory of media frameworks in the theoretical framework, and the theory of reliance on the media in descriptive field studies.

In terms of the tool: Some studies relied on the content analysis tool, Halima's study, (2020) and Thomas & Cushion's study (2019). Others were interested in the questionnaire to collect data, and these studies belonged to descriptive studies such as the study of Obaidi (2017), and the study of Karim (2016) to identify the audience's uses of news from electronic newspaper websites.

In terms of results:

Most previous studies highlighted the reliance of electronic newspapers on news stories in terms of publication rates, and conflict was the most prominent framework in the news values of political journalistic materials, which was confirmed by many studies such as the study of Obaidi (2017), as well as the audience's interest in political issues such as the study of Karim (2016), and the audience's interest in following electronic newspaper websites, and the most prominent motives were utilitarian and related to knowing everything new due to the richness of the information they cover, and that they cover topics moment by moment.

Electronic newspaper websites shaped the trends of electronic newspaper audiences towards elections, and their circulation of some fake news that may affect the audience's interaction with that content.

Most previous studies agreed that there is a match between the scale of media priorities and the interests of the audience.

Some studies have indicated an increase in the rate of following electronic newspapers during times of hot events and crises due to the capabilities that these newspapers possess, such as the immediacy of reporting events.

Benefit from previous studies:

1- Previous studies helped in crystallizing the problem of this study, defining it accurately, and formulating its concepts. Previous studies also contributed to raising questions and helping to determine the appropriate theoretical framework for the content of this study, related to electronic journalism, its nature, importance, advantages, types, and digital characteristics.

2- The researcher benefited from the results of previous studies in identifying the research methods and tools that were used in the field of journalistic processing, and employing them to complete this study.

Theoretical Framework

The theory used in the study:

The researcher found that the **media frames theory** is the most appropriate theory to address the problem of this study and achieve its objectives. The origin of this theory goes back to Bateson's use in 1972 of the term frames in reference to the individual's tendency to interpret the message and the metaphors it contains outside the intended context, mixing fantasy with reality. Bateson linked frames to the frame of the image, which defines for the viewer the limits of his vision of the thing and ignores everything that falls outside the image. [19]

However, the use of frame analysis as a tool employed to classify and organize experiences goes back to Goffman in 1974, the author of the book Frame Analysis, who is seen as the true founder of the frame approach. [20] According to his theses, the frame facilitates individuals' perception of the world around them by classifying issues in limited ways and building within themselves systems of interpretation for those issues. The frame does not necessarily constitute a one-way flow of information from the media to the public, but rather "a continuous process involving several patterns of perception, interpretation, presentation, selection, focus, and exclusion. [21] After Goffman's theses in the sixties and seventies, the theory of frame analysis gradually began to gain attention and acceptance in the eighties and nineties of the last century. Then, Todd Gitlin's theses in 1980 contributed to crystallizing the concept of frame analysis for mass communication research through his study of the CBS network's coverage of the student movement's activities and its relationship to the riots that occurred during the sixties of the last century, where the position was based on the frameworks of this movement have marginalized and underestimated it in American society. There is no doubt that Gitlin's contributions represent a new stage in the development of framework studies through the mature empirical testing of the theory [22].

The most important mechanisms of media framing: [23]

Researchers believe that framing tools are an important element in the process of understanding the different framing effects on the public, taking into account the important role they play in analytical studies as they seek to determine the features of the frames through which different issues are covered. These mechanisms include:

1- Selection: This is the basic pillar for setting news frames, as it must be extracted from questions related to the content that was selected and how it was selected, and the justifications for this selection for the news material to appear in its final form.

2- Prominence: This is when the issue occupies the largest share of the media sources available in the public arena, and is the dominant issue, and can be observed and given meaning so that it is easy for the public to remember it.

Prominence means choosing some aspects of the topic and making them more prominent in the media text. Those interested in the theory confirm that prominence is achieved as one of the most important framing mechanisms by focusing on a specific piece of information and repeating it.

3- Social hints: The formation of media frames for messages and texts depends on the prevailing symbols, meanings and social hints used by the media to spread and promote targeted ideas and opinions.

4- Exclusion or omission: This means ignoring certain information that may affect the audience's interpretation of events, through: ignoring certain news or blocking some sources from reaching the media institution or ignoring some explanations that explain the reason for the event and how it happened.

Exclusion occurs on several levels, either avoiding publishing some news or blocking some sources from reaching the media institutions, or excluding some explanations that may shed light on the causes and justifications of the event, and this also happens when editing opinion materials where existing negatives are excluded and focusing on the advantages only, with the aim of attracting the audience.

5- Formal elements in journalistic texts: The location and size of the journalistic text. "Zolman" and others have identified many news characteristics that generally form the features of frames, namely the main headlines, subheadings, pictures and picture captions.

6- Linking press coverage to models of similar frames: This mechanism assumes that individuals' interpretation of media texts containing new events is based on their previous experiences, and their meanings are generated through signals and symbols that link these experiences to the media content, and their evaluations of events that represent previous cognitive systems and are linked to these events. In application to editorial advertisements, this mechanism depends on individuals' interpretation of advertising texts in light of their previous experiences about the product or service advertised in the advertising text.

7- Metaphors, figurative language, and keywords: Metaphors are used in media texts to give things or events a kind of exaggeration other than what they appear to be in reality. News frames consist of concepts, symbols, keywords, and metaphors.

Hypotheses of the media framing theory:

The basic premise of frame theory is that events in and of themselves do not have a specific meaning, but rather they gain their meaning by placing them in a framework that defines and organizes them and gives them a degree of consistency by selecting some aspects of the perceived reality, focusing on them and making them more prominent in the media text, to raise or It promotes the definition of a particular problem, its causal explanation, the rational evaluation, and the processing of propositions specific to the topic at hand, and this can be explained in a number of sub-hypotheses [24].

Likewise, the use of different frames of reference in media messages leads, in turn, to differences in judgments issued by public opinion regarding different events or issues [25].

The period of coverage of an event affects the nature and strength of the frames formed by the public, as the public's perception of the issue varies with the period of coverage, whether before the event, during the event, at its end, or after its end.

Finally, the perception of the frame is linked to the respondents' orientation and affiliation with the event, as the probability of perceiving the event more prominently increases the more this frame is consistent with the respondents' orientation and the extent of their nature of connection to the event [26].

It can be concluded from the previous presentation that newspapers seek to build specific frames around the issues and topics raised, with the aim of influencing the audience's attitudes by using words, images and citations that help them place the media message in a specific context, which gives the intended meaning to the audience.

The role of the press in the electoral context.

There is no doubt that the most prominent function of the press is the news function that deals with all events and public issues, especially those facts with a political dimension. Political content often tops the headlines of newspapers, and political affairs receive a large share of the editorial staff's attention in public newspapers due to the impact this matter has on most aspects of life in any human society, and its impact is reflected in other areas, whether economic, social, cultural, or others.

Since elections are included within political activities and are a pillar of democracy, it is not surprising that they receive great focus and attention from newspaper owners, managements, editorial staff, writers, and correspondents. The electoral process plays a pivotal role in democratic political systems, and its results shape the political reality in any country, resulting in changes in the general programs and plans adopted by countries at various levels. Democratic countries use various types of mass communication media: written, audio, visual and electronic, within the constitutional frameworks and agreed upon ethical and legal controls, including ensuring the foundations of legitimate political competition, political freedoms, freedom of the press and media, most notably freedom of criticism, expression and publication [27].

During elections, the press plays different roles, ranging from educating voters about their rights and the importance of their electoral vote in determining the fate of the country, and sometimes influencing their choices and orientations towards this or that candidate, according to the newspaper's interest and in line with its political vision. The press also plays a supervisory role that monitors the course of the electoral process in a way that ensures standards of integrity and transparency, but within the legal and ethical frameworks specified by media legislation and international conventions on journalistic work. However, electoral competition between political forces and parties may distort the course of the role of the press, as there are a large number of newspapers owned by influential political parties or others seeking to achieve electoral gains through their newspapers that qualify them to reach power and achieve their own goals [28].

Local newspapers may extend their interest to the elections of other countries, follow their paths and affairs with interest, address their details with various editorial arts, frame their journalistic treatment of their events with frameworks of different aspects and forms, and allocate wide areas of daily coverage of their events. This focus stems from the nature of the political, economic and security relations that link the two countries, and the connection of the nature of that relationship to the results of the elections, which may result in the victory of a party, figure or political party that possesses visions, orientations and opinions that differ from the state that owns the journalistic coverage of those elections. This reality is what we see in Iraqi newspapers, which devote their journalistic activities extensively to covering the Iraqi local elections.

The importance of elections in political and public life:

- Elections gain great importance due to their impact on the political reality, first and foremost, in any country. This impact quickly produces changes that are characterized by speed and effectiveness, in addition to its ability to portray the political scene with its negatives and positives. Since elections are one of the most important means to embody and achieve representative democracy, they may be used by some political systems as a formal facade to ensure the legitimacy of their exercise of power and to maintain their survival and continuity. This is a violation of the principle of political participation and contrary to the principles of the democratic system [29].

It is noted here that elections are important at the political level, and their importance extends to all aspects of life.
- If elections are one of the democratic means of assuming power or remaining in it, then it is associated with a set of conditions that give it this status, represented by the existence of a transparent and fair electoral law that guarantees the right to political participation for every citizen, and achieves equality between voters and candidates alike. The availability of these standards contributes to providing tools for political, social and administrative reform, and otherwise it is an introduction to the collapse of the democratic process [30].

Elections are of great importance in achieving political stability and strengthening democracy on the practical level within society, as they are a source of legitimacy for the ruling authority, and the best means of creating representative institutions that work to manage the affairs of the state and achieve the aspirations of the people. More importantly, elections contribute to the process of rooting the ideas and principles of democracy, and making it a daily practice and permanent social behavior among citizens and within the state's administrative apparatus, which results in a general democratic climate within which all public practices and activities interact, whether political, social, administrative or economic, which helps to highlight the elements of ability, experience and efficiency in achieving national goals [31].

Elections also play a major role in curbing contradictions between competing political parties with different visions and ideas through peaceful means, in addition to contributing to achieving calm and balance between social and political parties with conflicting orientations and viewpoints, through resorting to public opinion and relying on the majority opinion on various issues, and establishing the principle of peaceful transfer of power [32].
- The election translates the electoral votes and converts them into seats for the winning candidates, and thus it performs a precise administrative and organizational role that relies on statistical methods in counting and sorting the votes. If this process is characterized by transparency and skill, it gives every citizen the opportunity to participate politically in the elections or follow or monitor their course, then view the voting results that follow the electoral process and reveal the winner and loser to public opinion [33].

Finally, it can be concluded from the above that the importance of elections touches on most areas of life, and is a factor of security and stability in society and the state alike through the general popular feeling and public conviction that the citizen is an active and important entity within his societal environment, and a participating element in shaping the political system and its various institutions, and what this entails in terms of recognition of public rights and respect for public and private freedoms, as elections represent a standard for measuring the extent of progress, development and prosperity of the political system in any country, or they may reveal a state of backwardness and decline of that system.

Practical framework

Results of the analytical study of the content of opinion articles in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers and their treatment of the 2023 Iraqi local elections

Validity and reliability tests

1- **Validity test:** This refers to the extent to which the study tool is able to measure what the study actually seeks to measure. The researcher presented the content analysis form to a group of arbitrators [34] to judge its validity and suitability for achieving the objectives that the study seeks to achieve. Based on the opinions of the arbitrators, the researcher made the necessary modifications.

2- **Reliability test:** This refers to the degree of consistency of the information collection tool, which allows measuring variables and obtaining identical or similar results if it is used more than once to collect the same information or to measure the same phenomena or variables.

The researcher used the retest method, which content analysis experts agree is the most appropriate way to measure the stability of the analysis form. He conducted the stability test with two other researchers to determine the stability of the analysis coefficient between them at the overall level of the scale. The stability was conducted on 10% of the articles in the pages of the study sample. To measure the stability percentage, the researcher explained the analysis categories to each researcher. He also provided each researcher with the operational definitions of the analysis categories and took a symbol for each of them. The Holsti coefficient was used to determine the extent of the agreement of the analysis between the researcher, who was symbolized by the symbol (A), and referee No. (1), who was symbolized by the symbol (B), and referee No. (2), who was symbolized by the symbol (C), in light of the following equation:

First: Description of the analytical sample in terms of form:

Al-Sabah Electronic Newspaper: It is one of the Iraqi electronic newspapers, owned by the state, affiliated with the Iraqi Media Network. It is a newspaper with political and diverse content, and provides detailed journalistic treatments of events and issues, whether local, Arab or international. It is issued daily and periodically. Its news materials are characterized by breadth and diversity in terms of editorial arts and topics, which is a fertile journalistic environment for study, monitoring and analysis. The number of analyzed articles is 29 newspaper articles.

Al-Zaman Electronic Newspaper: It is an Iraqi electronic newspaper with private funding, issued daily, and its editorial approach tends to criticize the state's general policies. Its journalistic materials vary between political, economic and cultural, but the political dimension receives great attention during its journalistic treatment of Iraqi and international events alike, which helps to subject its materials to analysis and study. The number of newspaper articles is 30 newspaper articles

Table No. (1) Language used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections

Repetition / Alternatives	Al Sabah Newspaper		Al Zaman Newspaper		Total		rank
	Re	%	Re	%	Re	%	
Classical Arabic	25	86.2	25	83.4	50	84.7	1
Media and Classical Arabic	1	3.4	4	13.3	5	8.5	2
Classical Arabic and English	3	10.3	1	3.3	4	6.8	3
Total	29	100.0	30	100.0	59	100.0	

Table No. (1) above shows the distribution of the language used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 Iraqi local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand the type of language used in these articles and how it is used to convey information and influence the reader. Modern Standard Arabic was the most common language in both newspapers, representing (84.7%) of the total articles. This language is used to express information accurately and clearly. Comparing the two newspapers, Al Sabah shows a greater interest in classical Arabic (86.2%) compared to Az-Zaman (83.4%), Az-Zaman shows a greater interest in media and classical Arabic (13.3%) compared to Az-Sabah (3.4%), and Al Sabah shows a greater interest in classical Arabic and English (10.3% (compared to Az-Zaman and 3.3%). This language is used to attract the reader's attention and interest, and is also used to reach a wider audience, including readers who do not speak Arabic. The analysis results show that classical Arabic is the most used language in local election coverage in both newspapers. Al Sabah shows a greater interest in this language, while Az-Zaman shows a greater interest in media and classical Arabic.

Table No. (2) Highlighting elements used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections

Repetition / Alternatives	Al Sabah Newspaper		Al Zaman Newspaper		Total		rank
	Re	%	Re	%	Re	%	
Personal photos of the writer	29	50.9	30	81.1	59	62.7	1
Different fonts	9	15.8	0	0.0	9	9.6	2
Presence of correct word formation	1	1.7	0	0.0	1	1.1	6
Archival photos	2	3.5	0	0.0	2	2.1	5

Subheadings within the article	6	10.5	3	8.1	9	9.6	2
Presence of incorrect hamzas	2	3.5	0	0.0	2	2.1	5
Presence of a separate conclusion to the article	5	8.8	0	0.0	5	5.3	4
Presence of numbering within the article	3	5.3	4	10.8	7	7.4	3
Total	57	100.0	37	100.0	94	100.0	

Table No. (2) above shows the distribution of highlighting elements used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 Iraqi local elections in the newspapers "Al-Sabah" and "Al-Zaman." This analysis aims to understand how these elements are used to attract the reader's attention and increase the clarity and attractiveness of articles. Personal photos of the writer are the most common highlighting element in both newspapers, representing 62.7% of the total articles. These photos are used to identify the writer and give the article a sense of personality. Different fonts are the least common highlighting element, representing 9.6% of the total articles. These fonts are used to highlight certain parts of the article, such as titles, quotes, and important points. Subheadings are used to divide the article into sections and facilitate its reading. The presence of numbering within the article came in third place, as numbering helps organize the information within the article and facilitates its reading. In fourth place came the presence of a separate conclusion to the article at a rate of 5.3%, as the conclusion helps summarize the article and leave a lasting impression on the reader. In fifth place came archival photos. These photos are used to show events or people from the past related to the topic of the article and the presence of incorrect hamzas at a rate of 2.1%. And: incorrect hamzas are among the spelling errors that affect the clarity and attractiveness of the article. In sixth place came the presence of numbering in some articles in the study sample, and by making a comparison between the two newspapers, the following was revealed: The results showed that Al-Zaman newspaper showed greater interest in the personal photos of the writer (81.1%) compared to Al-Sabah (50.9%), and Al-Sabah showed greater interest in different fonts (15.8%) compared to Al-Zaman (zero), and Al-Sabah also showed greater interest in the presence of numbering within the article (5.3%) compared to Al-Zaman (10.8%). The results of the analysis show that personal photos of the writer are the most used highlighting element in the coverage of local elections in both newspapers. Al-Zaman shows greater interest in this element, while Al-Sabah shows greater interest in different fonts and the presence of numbering within the article.

Second: In terms of content

Table No. (3) The objective of the content raised when presenting articles dealing with local elections in the newspapers under study.

Category / Newspapers	Al Sabah Newspaper		Al zaman Newspaper		Total		rank
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%	
Highlighting the weakness of electoral participation	2	6.5	-	-	2	3.1	7
Supporting local elections	15	48.3	6	17.6	21	32.3	1
The desire to resolve crises while supporting electoral promises	1	3.2	-	-	1	1.5	8
Highlighting the obstacles and challenges of electoral participation	1	3.2	12	35.3	13	20.0	2
Crises facing elections during and before the elections (corruption and bribery)	2	6.5	ك	%	2	3.1	7
Calling for withdrawal from the elections	2	6.5	3	8.8	5	7.7	5
Highlighting the role of the opposition	-	-	1	3.0	1	1.5	8
The negative impact of electoral propaganda	4	12.9	3	8.8	7	10.9	4
Not combining a government job with running for elections	1	3.2	ك	%	1	1.5	8

Directing candidates to vote for a specific candidate	2	6.5	1	3.0	3	4.6	6
Integrity of elections	1	3.2	ك	%	1	1.5	8
General talk about the elections	0	0.0	8	23.5	8	12.3	3
Total	31	100.0	34	100.0	65	100.0	

Table No. (3) above shows the distribution of the contents of articles related to local elections in the newspapers "Al-Sabah" and "Al-Zaman." This analysis aims to understand the main trends of the contents covered. The results showed that topics supporting local elections dominated the coverage in both newspapers, representing (32.3%) of the total articles, while topics highlighting obstacles and challenges to electoral participation came in second place with (20.0%). There is no significant focus on the role of the opposition or the integrity of the elections, as each of them represents only 1.5% of the total articles. Comparing the two newspapers, the website of Al-Sabah newspaper showed greater interest in highlighting the weakness of electoral participation at 6.5% and the crises facing the elections at 6.5% compared to Al-Zaman. The website of Al-Zaman newspaper showed greater interest in supporting electoral promises at 17.6% and the negative impact of electoral propaganda at 8.8% compared to Al-Sabah. From the analysis of the previous table, the following results become clear:

• Highlighting the weakness of electoral participation: These articles indicate low rates of participation in local elections, and provide analyses of the reasons for this, such as lack of confidence in the electoral process and voters' frustration with the lack of change. • Supporting local elections: These articles encourage participation in local elections, and emphasize the importance of these elections in identifying local issues and providing services to communities.

• Desire to resolve crises while supporting electoral promises: These articles demonstrate voters' desire to address pressing issues such as unemployment and poor public services, and evaluate the extent to which candidates fulfill their electoral promises.

• Highlighting obstacles and challenges to electoral participation: These articles discuss the obstacles voters face in participating, such as difficult registration procedures and lack of electoral awareness.

• Crises facing elections during and before elections (corruption and bribery): These articles highlight corruption and bribery practices that may affect the integrity of elections, and call for reforms to ensure free and fair elections.

• Calling for withdrawal from elections: These articles discuss the justifications for candidates' withdrawal from elections, and provide analyses of the impact of this on the electoral process.

• Negative impact of electoral propaganda: These articles point to the negative or misleading effects of electoral propaganda on voters, and call for ethical standards for organizing electoral campaigns.

• Avoiding combining government employment with running for election: These articles discuss the controversy over allowing government employees to run for election, and offer different perspectives on the potential advantages and disadvantages of such a practice.

• Guiding voters to choose a particular candidate: These articles point out the dangers of pressuring voters to support specific candidates, and advocate for the freedom of choice for voters.

• General Elections: These articles provide general information about local elections, such as their rules, schedule, and candidates.

Table No. (4) Categories of issues raised in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections

Newspapers / Category	Al Sabah Newspaper		Al zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%
Political	28	77.8	11	36.7	39	59.1
Economic	0	0.0	1	3.3	1	1.5
Multiple Issues	8	22.2	18	60.0	26	39.4
Total	36	100.0	30	100.0	66	100.0

Table No. (4) above shows the distribution of the categories of issues covered in newspaper articles related to the 2023 local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand the objective focus of the articles and identify the main issues raised, as political issues dominate the coverage in both newspapers at (59.1%) of the total articles. Al-Sabah newspaper showed a greater focus on political issues at (77.8%) compared to Al-Zaman at (36.7%). As for economic issues, Al-Zaman newspaper showed a greater interest at (3.3%), while Al-Sabah newspaper did not address any of the economic issues related to the elections during the time period of the study. Al-Zaman also

showed a greater interest in multiple issues at (60.0%) compared to Al-Sabah (22.2%). From the previous presentation, the following is clear:

• Political issues: These articles include discussions about the candidates' programs and their positions on various issues, and analyses of the political implications of the local elections. • Economic Issues: These articles focus on the local economic situation, the impact of the elections on the economy, and the promises made by the candidates to improve the state of the economy.

• Multi-issues: These articles discuss a mix of different issues, such as politics, the economy, and society.
This shows that political issues were generally the main focus of local election articles in both newspapers. As shown in the table above, Al-Sabah showed a greater interest in purely political issues, while Al-Zaman showed a greater interest in multi-issues and economic issues.

Table No. (5) Persuasion strategies used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections

Newspapers / Category	Al- Sabah Newspaper		Al-Zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%
Use numbers and statistics (logical)	10	34.5	24	80.0	34	57.6
Promises (emotional)	5	17.2	0	0.0	5	8.5
Both	14	48.3	6	20.0	20	33.9
Total	29	100.0	30	100.0	59	100

Table No. (5) above shows the strategy used for persuasion, such as the use of numbers, statistics, and candidates' promises in newspaper articles related to the 2023 local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand how these elements are used in the press coverage of the elections, as numbers and statistics were clearly used in both newspapers at a rate of (57.6%) of the total articles. These articles include statistical data, numbers, and information about the elections, such as participation rates, opinion poll results, and campaign budgets. As for the use of promises in articles that urged voters to participate, Al-Sabah was the only one to use this category at a rate of (8.5%). As for the third category, which is related to the use of both numbers, statistics, and candidates' promises together in articles, Al-Sabah showed superiority at a rate of (48.3%) compared to Al-Zaman (20.0%), with a total rate for the two newspapers of (33.9%). In comparison between the two newspapers: Al-Sabah showed a greater interest in using numbers and statistics (34.5%) compared to Al-Zaman (80.0%), and Al-Sabah shows a greater interest in using the candidates' promises (48.3%) compared to Al-Zaman (20.0%), as these articles focus on the candidates' promises. and their commitments, and provides analyzes of the possibility of achieving these promises.
The results of the analysis also showed, in general, for this category that numbers, statistics, and candidates' promises are important elements in the coverage of local elections in both newspapers. Al-Sabah showed more interest in using numbers and statistics independently, while Al-Zaman showed more interest in using candidates' promises and combining them with numbers and statistics.

Table No. (6) Evidence paths in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections.

Newspapers / Category	Al- Sabah Newspaper		Al-Zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%
Citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations	17	54.8	19	59.4	36	57.1
Using numbers and statistics	5	16.1	8	25.0	13	20.6
Legal evidence	4	12.9	0	0.0	4	6.3
Proverbs	2	6.5	0	0.0	2	3.2
Combining events and personalities	3	9.7	5	15.6	8	12.8
Total	31	100.0	32	100.0	63	100

Table (6) above shows the distribution of evidence paths used in newspaper articles related to the 2023 local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand how writers and journalists use evidence to persuade readers of their views on the elections.
The most common main evidence paths in the articles are:
• Citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations: These articles link the local elections to the demands of the protest movement that erupted in 2019, and use the events and slogans of that movement to support their views.
• Using numbers and statistics: These articles include statistical data and numbers that support analyses and information about the elections, such as participation rates, opinion poll results, and election campaign budgets.

• Legal evidence: These articles include texts from laws, regulations, and court rulings to support the writer's arguments about the elections.

• Sayings: These articles include quotes from political figures, thinkers, and opinion leaders to support the writer's views.

• Combining events and personalities: These articles link specific events to specific personalities, and use the behavior and statements of these personalities to support the writer's analyses.

The results of the analysis showed that citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations is the most common path of proof in both newspapers. Comparing them, it becomes clear that Al-Sabah paid more attention to citing the events of the October demonstrations, at a rate of (54.8%) compared to Al-Zaman (59.4%), while the total articles in both newspapers amounted to (57.1%).

In the category of numbers and statistics, the results of the table above show that Al-Zaman paid more attention to using numbers and statistics, at a rate of (25.0%) compared to Al-Sabah, which paid less attention to this topic, at a rate of (16.1%). The total use of numbers and statistics by the two newspapers amounted to (20.6%), which is an almost modest percentage of the total articles.

As for the use of legal evidence as a path of proof, this path was used only in Al-Zaman newspaper, at a rate of (6.3%). There is no significant difference in the use of other evidence paths between the two newspapers. By reviewing

Thus, the results of the analysis show that writers and journalists in both newspapers use a variety of evidence paths to convince readers of their views on the local elections. Such as citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations, which is the most common evidence path, while legal evidence is used less commonly. Al-Sabah showed a greater interest in citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations, while Al-Zaman showed a greater interest in using numbers and statistics.

Table No. (7) The trend of the content used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 Iraqi local elections

Newspapers / Category	Al- Sabah Newspaper		Al-Zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%
Negative (sarcasm)	9	31.0	19	63.3	28	47.5
Positive	11	37.9	7	23.3	18	30.5
Neutral	9	31.0	4	13.4	13	22.0
Total	29	100.0	30	100.0	59	100.0

Table No. (7) above shows the distribution of the content trend used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 Iraqi local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. It became clear that negative content (sarcasm) is the most common trend in both newspapers, representing (47.5%) of the total articles, as these articles criticize the local elections, candidates, and electoral processes. Sarcasm, sarcasm, and negative language are used to convey their message. Positive content was less common, representing (30.5%) of the total articles, as these articles praise the local elections, candidates, and electoral processes. Positive language and optimism are used to convey their message. The analysis showed that neutral content is the least common, representing (22.0%) of the total articles, and these articles provide information about the local elections without expressing a clear opinion. It uses objective and neutral language to convey its message. Comparing the two newspapers in terms of the content used, the following is clear:

• Al-Sabah showed greater interest in negative content (sarcasm) at a rate of (31.0%) compared to Al-Zaman at a rate of (63.3%).

• Al-Sabah also showed greater interest in positive content (37.9%) compared to Al-Zaman at a rate of (23.3%).

• Contrary to the above, Al-Zaman showed greater interest in neutral content at a rate of (13.4%) compared to Al-Sabah at a rate of (31.0%).

In general, the results of the analysis of this category showed that negative content is the prevailing trend in the coverage of the Iraqi local elections in both newspapers. However, it should be noted that the results also showed that Al-Sabah showed greater interest in positive content, while Al-Zaman showed greater interest in negative and neutral content.

Table No. (8) Balance in presenting the issue used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections

Newspapers / Category	Al- Sabah Newspaper		Al-Zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%

Show one point of view	23	79.3	19	63.3	30	50.9
Show two points of view	6	20.7	0	0.0	16	27.1
Show more than one point of view	0	0.0	11	36.7	13	22.0
Total	29	100.0	30	100.0	59	100.0

Table No. (8) above shows the distribution of the balance in presenting the issue used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand how different viewpoints on the elections are presented in these newspapers. It is clear from the previous table that presenting one viewpoint is the most common practice in both newspapers, representing 50.9% of the total articles, and presenting two viewpoints is the least common practice in Al-Sabah, while this method is the most common practice in Al-Zaman newspaper. The results finally showed that the method of presenting more than one viewpoint is a rare practice in both newspapers. Comparing the two newspapers, the following became clear:

• Al-Sabah showed greater interest in presenting one viewpoint (79.3%) compared to Al-Zaman (63.3%), as these articles present one viewpoint on the elections, without presenting opposing viewpoints that clarify the position on the elections and give the reader the opportunity to make a decision whether to participate in the elections or not. This may be the writer's viewpoint, the viewpoint of an interviewee, or the viewpoint of a specific party. • On the other hand, Al-Zaman showed a greater interest in presenting two points of view (27.1%) compared to Al-Sabah (20.7%), as these articles present two different points of view on the elections. These points of view may be opposing or contrasting.

• Al-Zaman showed a greater interest in presenting more than one point of view (36.7%) compared to Al-Sabah, which did not show the slightest interest in this topic, as these articles present multiple points of view from different people or different points of view from the same person on the elections.

Table No. (9) Media frameworks used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections

Newspapers / Category	Al- Sabah Newspaper		Al-Zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%
General Policy Issues Framework	11	37.9	7	23.3	18	30.5
Participation Framework	8	27.6	4	13.3	12	20.3
Conflict Framework	6	20.7	2	6.7	8	13.6
More than one Framework	4	13.8	17	56.7	21	35.6
Total	29	100.0	30	100.0	59	100.0

Table (9) shows the distribution of media frames used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand how the writer and journalist frame the elections in these articles. Previous data showed that the general political issues frame is the most common frame in both newspapers, representing (30.5%) of the total articles, and the participation frame was the most common frame in second place, representing (20.3%) of the total articles. The conflict frame came in third place with (35.6%). • Al-Sabah showed greater interest in the general political issues frame with (37.9%) compared to Al-Zaman with (23.3%), as these articles focus on the political implications of the local elections, and discuss related issues, positions and policies. These articles also focus on the responsibility of candidates and elected officials towards voters, and discuss how to hold these officials accountable. • Al-Sabah also showed greater interest in the conflict framework (20.7%) compared to Al-Zaman (6.7%). These articles focus on conflicts, disagreements, and challenges related to local elections, and discuss different viewpoints on these issues.

• While Al-Zaman showed greater interest in the participation framework (13.3%) compared to Al-Sabah (27.6%), these articles focus on the importance of participation in local elections, and encourage readers to vote and participate in the democratic process,

• Finally, Al-Zaman showed greater interest in using more than one frame (56.7%) compared to Al-Sabah (13.8%).

Table No. (10) Issues covered by newspaper articles on the 2023 Iraqi local elections

Newspapers / Category	Al- Sabah Newspaper		Al-Zaman Newspaper		Total	
	repetition	%	repetition	%	repetition	%
Iraq's Interest	1	3.3	4	11.1	5	7.6
Electoral Bribery	3	10.0	5	13.9	8	12.1

Electoral Process, Participation and Calls for Boycott	24	80.0	18	50.0	42	63.6
Conflict between Parties and Candidates	2	6.7	9	25.0	11	16.7
Total	30	100.0	36	100.0	66	100.0

Table No. (10) above shows the distribution of issues covered by newspaper articles covering the 2023 Iraqi local elections in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers. This analysis aims to understand the main topics that these articles focused on. The electoral process, participation, voters, and calls for boycott are the most common issues in both newspapers, representing (63.6%) of the total articles. These articles discuss various aspects of the electoral process, including candidates, election campaigns, counting, and results. They also discuss participation rates, factors affecting participation, and calls for boycotting the elections.

• The issue of electoral bribery is the second most common issue, representing (12.1%) of the total articles. These articles discuss the manifestations of bribery in local elections, and address their effects on the integrity and legitimacy of the elections.

• These articles also discuss the competition between parties and candidates in local elections, and address the strategies and tactics used by these parties to win the elections. • The interest of Iraq is the least common issue, representing (7.6%) of the total articles. These articles discuss the importance of local elections for the interest of Iraq, and address the effects that these elections can have on the future of the country. In comparison between the two newspapers:

• Al-Sabah showed greater interest in the electoral process, participation in it, voters, and calls for boycott by (80.0%) compared to Al-Zaman by (50.0%).

• Al-Zaman also showed greater interest in the conflict between parties and candidates by (25.0%) compared to Al-Sabah by (6.7%).

• Al-Zaman showed greater interest in the topics of electoral bribery by (13.9%) compared to Al-Sabah (10.0%).

The analysis results showed that the main issue addressed by newspaper articles dealing with the 2023 Iraqi local elections is the electoral process, participation in it, voters, and calls for boycott. Al-Sabah shows greater interest in this issue, while Al-Zaman shows greater interest in electoral bribery and the conflict between parties and candidates.

Study results:

After analyzing the opinion articles in Al-Sabah and Al-Zaman newspapers related to the 2023 local elections, this study showed many results, the most prominent of which were:

1- The results of the study showed that the category of highlighting elements used in newspaper articles is that personal photos of the writer are the most common highlighting element in both newspapers. These photos are used to identify the writer and give the article a sense of personality. As for the different fonts, they are the least common highlighting element. These fonts are used to highlight certain parts of the article, such as titles, quotes, and important points. Subheadings are used to divide the article into sections and facilitate its reading.

2- Regarding the purpose of the content raised in the press, the results showed that topics of supporting local elections dominate the coverage in both newspapers, and topics of highlighting obstacles and challenges to electoral participation come in second place.

3- As for the issues raised in the articles, the study showed in general that political issues received the main focus of local election articles in both newspapers. Where Sabah showed more interest in purely political issues, while Azzaman showed more interest in multiple issues and economic issues.

4- As for the persuasion strategies used in newspaper articles, the study showed that Sabah showed more interest in using numbers and statistics compared to Azzaman, and that Sabah also showed more interest in using candidates' promises compared to Azzaman.

5- Regarding the paths of proof in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections in Sabah and Azzaman newspapers, the study showed that citing the events of the October 2019 demonstrations is the most common path of proof in both newspapers. Comparing them, it becomes clear that Sabah was more interested in citing the events of the October demonstrations compared to Azzaman, but regarding the use of legal evidence as a path of proof, this path was only used in Azzaman newspaper, and there is no significant difference in the use of other paths of proof between the two newspapers.

6- As for the direction of the content used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 Iraqi local elections, it became clear that negative content (sarcasm) was the most common direction in both newspapers before the elections, as these articles criticize the local elections, candidates, and electoral processes. Sarcasm, sarcasm, and negative language are

used. Positive content was less common, as these articles praised the local elections, candidates, and electoral processes. They used positive language and optimism to convey their message.

7- The study also showed, with regard to the category of balance in presenting the issue used in newspaper articles covering the elections. Al-Sabah showed greater interest in presenting one point of view compared to Al-Zaman and in proportion, as these articles present one point of view on the elections, without presenting opposing points of view that clarify the position on the elections and give the reader the opportunity to make a decision whether to participate in the elections or not. This may be the point of view of the writer, the point of view of an interviewee, or the point of view of a specific party. Al-Zaman showed greater interest in presenting more than one point of view compared to Al-Sabah, which did not show the slightest interest in this topic, as these articles present multiple points of view from different people or different points of view from the same person on the elections.

8- Regarding the media frameworks used in newspaper articles covering the 2023 local elections, the study showed that Al-Sabah showed greater interest in the framework of general political issues compared to Al-Zaman, as these articles focus on the political implications of the local elections, and discuss related issues, positions, and policies. These articles also focus on the responsibility of candidates and elected officials towards voters, and discuss how to hold these officials accountable. Sabah also showed a greater interest in the conflict framework than time, as these articles focus on conflicts, disputes and challenges related to local elections, and discuss different points of view on these issues.

9- As for the category of issues covered by newspaper articles dealing with the issue of the 2023 local elections, the study showed that the topic of the electoral process, participation in it, voters and calls for boycott is the most common issue in both newspapers, as these articles discuss various aspects of the electoral process, including candidates, election campaigns, counting and results. They also discuss participation rates, factors affecting participation and calls for boycotting the elections.

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