

# Challenges of Satire in Lebanon

## The Price of Offense



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March 2023



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## Introduction

On December 21, 2022, Dalia Ahmad, a host on Al-Jadeed TV, and actress Joanna Karaki performed a satirical skit about women from the southern region of Lebanon on Al-Jadeed's show "فشة خلق" (Letting off steam). The skit targeted Shiite women, who are Amal Movement followers, portraying them as arrogant and self-victimized. The skit also included a sexual reference the physical features of some southern residents, such as blue eyes and blond hair, which were allegedly acquired due to foreign conquests of Lebanon. These references were made only days after an Irish UNIFIL peacekeeping soldier was killed in South Lebanon. The show's intended message was to underscore the significance of a positive interaction between UNIFIL soldiers and southern residents. However, the comedic skit ultimately backfired.

This segment caused a massive uproar online, and a campaign against the show and both women was mobilized. Following this, several violent attacks targeted Al-Jadeed station, starting with a Molotov cocktail that was thrown at the building on the morning of December 27. The following night, the station was riddled with bullets on December 28, causing significant damage to the offices and surrounding offices.

The Samir Kassir Foundation (SKF) monitored the social media reactions, in Lebanon, following the attacks on Al-Jadeed station in response to the satirical performance mentioned earlier. The objective is to gauge the Lebanese public's stance on crucial freedom of expression debates. To ensure accuracy and efficiency in the monitoring process, SKF has partnered with [Reputell](#), a data service provider with access to vast amounts of data and software filter out relevant content. This process helps understand if the discussion around the case study was reflected in the online arena and, if so, how. It is important to note that this study does not represent a comprehensive view of the digital landscape but aims to highlight the prominent actors, platforms used, and possible patterns as realistically as possible. This is the second in a series that will use Reputell's technology to provide a clearer picture of discussions taking place in the Lebanese online sphere regarding controversial freedom of expression debates.

The monitoring period for this study is from December 21, 2022 to January 3, 2023.

The keywords that have been entered into the machine learning monitoring software are as follows:

- قناة الجديد
- مبنى الجديد
- فشة خلق
- داليا أحمد
- جوانا كركي
- نساء الجنوب
- قنبلة مولوتوف على مبنى قناة الجديد
- رصاص باتجاه مبنى قناة الجديد

# Sentiment Analysis

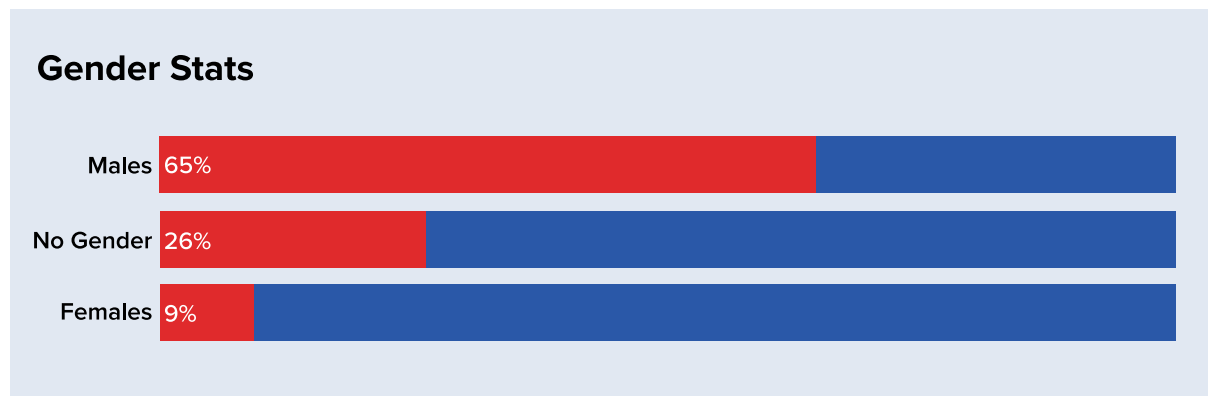


Figure 1: Account distribution by gender

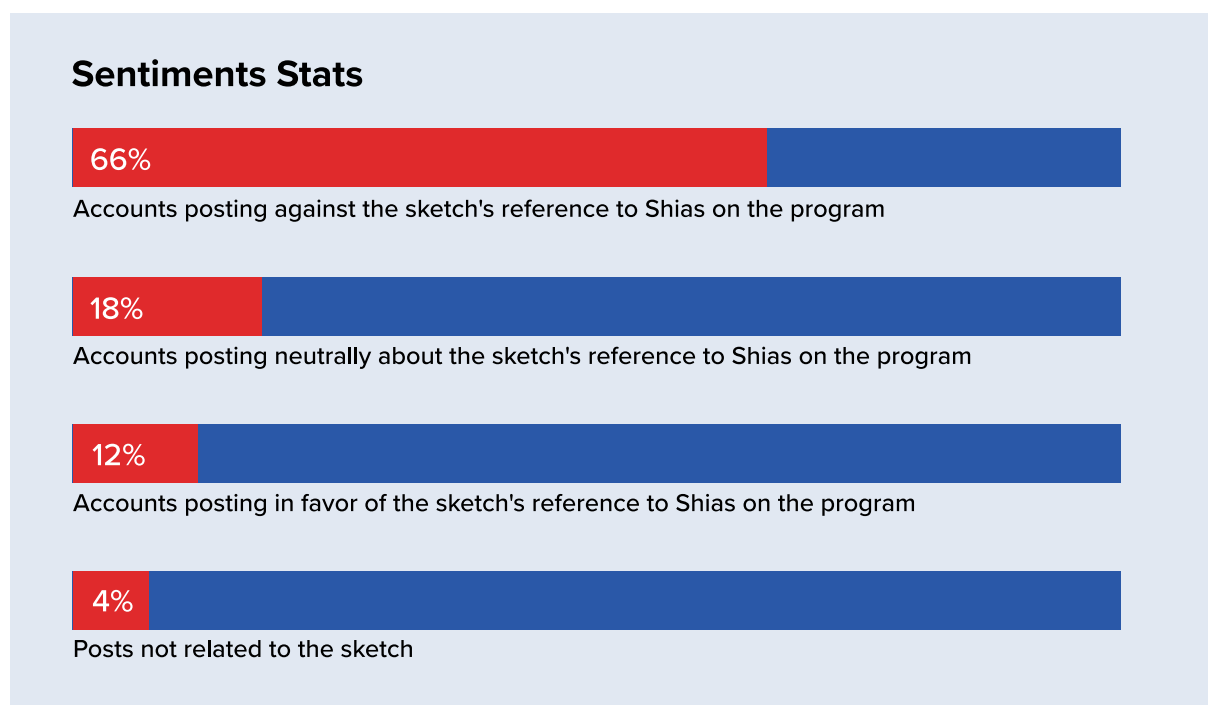


Figure 2: Account distribution according to sentiment

Figure 1 above displays the gender distribution among Male, Female, and unidentifiable gender accounts, with the majority of contributors being Male (65%). Accounts that could not be identified as either made up 26% of posters, while only 9% of authors were identifiable as Female.

Regarding the public's stance on the topic, Figure 2 indicates that a high percentage of accounts, specifically 66%, posted against the sketch. In contrast, only 12% of the accounts expressed support for the sketch from Al-Jadeed program "فنشة خلق". Additionally, 18% of the accounts posted in a neutral tone, reporting on the sketch or inquiring for details. It is also worth noting that 4% of the collected posts were unrelated to the discussion, despite containing at least one of the specified keywords in the methodology. While the number of unrelated posts has been negligible in previous studies, this time it was not. Therefore, an additional element called "Posts not related" was added to the chart to reflect this.

In Figure 3 below, the screenshots depict authors condemning the sketch in various representative ways. Notably, a well-known journalist announced that he and his lawyer had pressed charges against Al-Jadeed, actress Johanna Karaki, TV host Dalia Ahmad, as well as the Al-Jadeed production team, and all those involved in the conception of the skit. The overarching theme was “the insult to the women of the South.” This, coupled with the predominant posts by male accounts, reflects the persona of the “male protectors” the authors sought to portray themselves as. However, they were not above using misogynistic remarks against the women in the sketch while at the same time calling the sketch misogynistic. Ambiguous threats of retaliation and intimidation tactics often seen in Lebanon were not uncommon either. Interestingly, the most prominent “negative” posts in terms of engagement and quantity were by journalists, albeit ones who strongly support Hezbollah and Amal Movement politics.

There was an overall focus on feeling insulted, calls for accountability, and for “justice equating the gravity of the crime.” Several accounts referred to sketch as work done by “Al-Jadeed mercenaries” (#مرترقة\_الجديد).





Figure 3: Posts condemning the Al-Jadeed sketch

The highest number of “positive” posts were unsurprisingly produced by Al-Jadeed’s Twitter account itself. It quoted members of the team, including TV host Dalia Ahmad, who insisted on her commitment to Lebanon and women’s rights. The discourse focused on the idea that the sketch was not assessed in its entirety and had been taken out of context. Some political commentators also seized the opportunity to highlight their stances against the leading Shiite parties in Lebanon, expressing support for both Al-Jadeed and the values of freedom of expression. They condemned the attacks on Al-Jadeed and accused Hezbollah and Amal Movement of violating the values of freedom of expression. Samples of all these tweets can be seen in Figure 4 below.

**AL Jadeed Tv** @ALJadeed\_TV

#داليا\_أحمد : انا بنت #لبنان لو قد ما غزيتوني .. وبدافع عن المرأة اللبنانية بكل نشرة  
 وبكل حلقة  
 #قناة\_خلق  
 #للجنوبيات\_تحية

Translate Tweet



2:35 21.5K views

9:07 PM · Dec 28, 2022 · 53K Views

22 Retweets 12 Quote Tweets 179 Likes

**Al Jadeed News** @ALJADEEDNEWS

#سمراء\_أبو\_خليل : نساء الجنوب فخرنا.. و"الجديد" لديها تاريخ مع المقاومة  
 @samarabukhalil

Translate Tweet



3:22 23.1K views

11:54 AM · Dec 27, 2022 · 58.4K Views

16 Retweets 15 Quote Tweets 193 Likes

**Lebanese Kataeb Party** @LebaneseKataeb

يستنكر جهاز الاعلام الاعتداءات المتكررة على المؤسسات الاعلامية وآخرها على  
 #قناة\_الجديد ويرفض محاولات إسكات الرأي الآخر في بلد قُدّست فيه حرية الرأي  
 فأضحت تحدد هويته.  
 لذا وجب على القوى الأمنية انتهاء التحقيق في أسرع وقت ومحاسبة الفاعلين، ليبقى  
 لبنان موطن الحريات.  
 @ALJADEEDNEWS

Translate Tweet

12:26 PM · Dec 28, 2022 · 1,388 Views

31 Retweets 56 Likes

Figure 4: Posts supporting Al-Jadeed or condemning the attacks

Neutral accounts were rare given the highly controversial nature of the discussion and the heated stances taken. While there were several accounts inquiring for more details or merely reporting on the matter, it was not uncommon to find accounts adopting an approach similar to that of Dima Sadek in Figure 5 below. In the first tweet, she acknowledges that the sketch is not in good taste and indeed insults the Shiite women of the South and their community. In a follow-up tweet, she reiterates that the reactions attacking Al-Jadeed station are unacceptable and exaggerated.

 **Dima صادق** ✓  
@DimaSadek

ما كنت شايقة سكتش الجديد. و بطبيعة الحال متضامنة مع الجديد و مع حرية التعبير.اليوم شفته وفي شي ما قادرة ما قولو:مع كل محيتي و احترامي لكركي ولداليا ومع تضامني غير المشروط معها بمواجهة العنصرية الكارثية التي تعرضت لها، بكل محبة اقول:ما ورد فيه اهانة غير مقبولة ابدا بحق المرأة

[Translate Tweet](#)

11:11 AM · Dec 27, 2022 · **285.4K** Views

22 Retweets 49 Quote Tweets 487 Likes

 **Dima صادق** ✓  
@DimaSadek

وفي المقابل ردة الفعل على ما ورد في السكتش مرفوضة تماما، التهديد مرفوض ومدان، التعدي اللفظي على داليا و على مريم مرفوض ومدان كليا. مع تحفظي على المضمون، الا ان ردة الفعل على ما ورد في البرنامج مبالغ فيها كثيرا و مرفوضة تماما لا بل انها فاقت في ذكورتها باشواط ما ورد في البرنامج.

[Translate Tweet](#)

 **Dima صادق** ✓ @DimaSadek · Dec 27, 2022

ما كنت شايقة سكتش الجديد. و بطبيعة الحال متضامنة مع الجديد و مع حرية التعبير.اليوم شفته وفي شي ما قادرة ما قولو:مع كل محيتي و احترامي لكركي ولداليا ومع تضامني غير المشروط معها بمواجهة العنصرية الكارثية التي تعرضت لها، بكل محبة اقول:ما ورد فيه اهانة غير مقبولة ابدا بحق المرأة

11:39 AM · Dec 27, 2022 · **85.8K** Views

6 Retweets 13 Quote Tweets 127 Likes

 **Mustapha El Hajj Hassan**  
29 December 2022 · 🌐

(انقسام بال شخصية)  
السكتش تبع داليا على كرخانة الجديد فيه نوع من الاهانة رغم انه اخرج عن سياقه ، قامت الدنيا وما قعدت على وسائل التواصل واعتدي على محطة الجديد مرتين والحجة الطعن بكرامة المرأة الجنوبية، يا شيعي وانا واحد منكم، ما عم يرفلك جفن بيالي عم يعملوه فينا وباهلنا واخواتنا من سرقة اموالنا وسرقة قرارنا وتجويعنا واهانتنا على ابواب المستشفيات والشفقة علينا بكرتونة اعاشة اولياء الامر عنا بالطائفة بالاشترار مع امراء الطوائف الاخرى ، رزق الله بس تروحوا شرقا وتتركونا ؟ الكرامة لا تتجزأ

 41 15 comments

Figure 5: Accounts condemning both the sketch as well as the attacks against Al-Jadeed

نفى قسم العلاقات العامة في "حزب الله" والمكتب الإعلامي في "حركة أمل" لـ "صواب" كل ما يتم تداوله حول "دعوات للتظاهر وحرق وتدمير قناة الجديد" الاثنين.

دعوات لتظاهر غدا  
هيو يا شيعية علي \*ودافعو عن شرفكم وعرضكم واحرقو  
ودمرو قناة الجديد  
وقتلوهم يعذبهم الله بأيديكم  
الزمان غدا الاثنين الواقع في ٢٦/١٢/٢٠٢٢ المكان امام  
قناة الارهاب والفتنة والدعارة المسامات الجديدة  
في تمام الساعة الرابعة عصرا  
الدعوة عامة كتائب الامام الحسين الاستشهادية

sawab.lb • Follow

نفى قسم العلاقات العامة في sawab.lb في "حزب الله" والمكتب الإعلامي في "حركة أمل" لـ "صواب" كل ما يتم تداوله حول "دعوات للتظاهر وحرق وتدمير قناة الجديد" اليوم الاثنين.

جاء ذلك عقب عرض حلقة من برنامج "#فئة\_خلق" على القناة التي استضافت الممثلة #جوانا\_كركي بشخصية "بتول" لتحسيد المرأة الشيعية، وأثارت الحلقة انتقادات واسعة طالبت كركي والقناة المذكورة.

#factcheck الخيرية\_متل\_ما\_هتي#  
Edited · 9w

36 likes  
DECEMBER 26, 2022  
Log in to like or comment.

المدن - almodon

24 December 2022 ·

انهالت الشتائم على قناة "الجديد" بعد "سكتش" قدمته الممثلة جوانا كركي مع داليا أحمد قالت فيه إن الطليان والانكليز "دخلوا" بأهالي الجنوب. على الرابط: <https://bit.ly/3vgqmTG>



435 691 comments 12 shares

Figure 6: Media accounts sharing updates concerning the attacks on Al-Jadeed

## Twitter Statistics

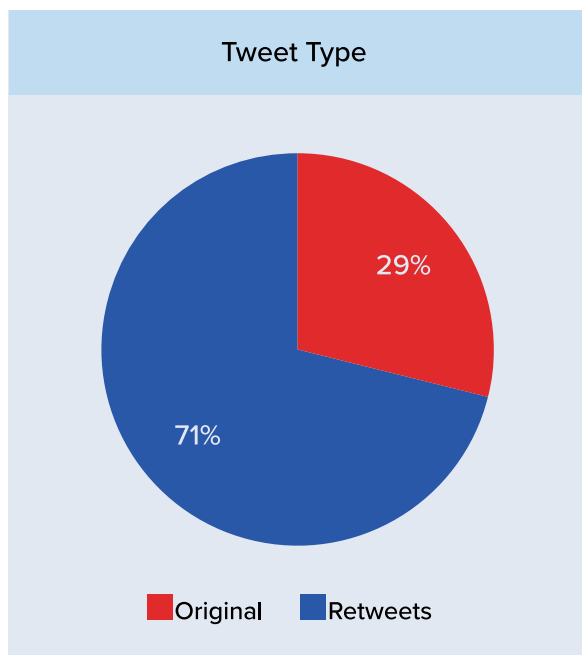


Figure 7: Tweet distribution by type

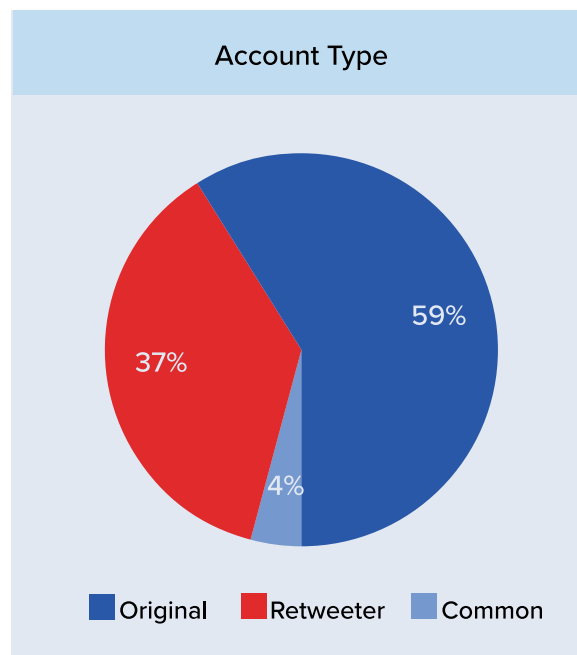


Figure 8: Tweet distribution by type

A total of 8,917 were monitored, out of which 2,546 were original (written by the account itself), while 6,371 were retweets. The fact that each tweet had an average of 2.5 retweets suggests that the authors had a certain level of influence and trust among their followers, as well as some homogeneity within the networks.

Additionally, Figure 8 shows that out of the total 3,899 accounts that participated in the online discussions, 1,588 were original creators, 2,483 were simply retweeters, and 172 belonged to the common category of accounts that both authored tweets and retweeted content. On average, each original account posted around 1.6 tweets, while each account that retweeted did so 2.6 times, indicating a rather significant interest in the conversation. Twitter is an active platform in Lebanon, and there are many influential accounts, with no single account or political leaning monopolizing that influence.



While the top keywords in Figure 9 above do not precisely indicate the direction of the conversation, they hint at it. The keywords “نساء” (women) and “الجنوب” (the south) are often used together in tweets criticizing Al-Jadeed while simultaneously aiming to defend the women of the south, who the authors felt were attacked by the sketch. In addition, they confirm the accuracy of the research in terms of topic and keywords chosen. It is worth noting that these words could easily be part of positive, negative, or neutral posts. Therefore, by taking a deeper look at the top hashtags in Figure 10, the picture becomes clearer.

The hashtags “#لجديد\_باعث\_شرفها” (Al-Jadeed has sold its honor), “#التاريخ\_يشهد\_لامهاتنا” (History is a witness for our mothers) and “#مرتزقه\_الجديد” (Mercenaries of Al-Jadeed) were used in a total of 1,527 posts by 820 contributors. These hashtags were indeed popular and propagated by about twice the number of accounts tweeting them, hinting at a campaign at work, or at the very least, a highly homogeneous audience.

## Conclusion

Freedom of expression is a crucial yet delicate human right, as even the slightest constraint can have far-reaching consequences. This right encompasses the freedom to insult, but respect is of paramount importance for the Lebanese people, particularly when it comes to religious and sectarian matters and traditional family values. Various segments of society from diverse backgrounds have resorted to forcibly enforcing this attitude, both online or offline. In this increasingly polarized country, open and peaceful conversations are essential. Nuanced positions, such as those observed among the posts qualified as neutral in the research, have always been rare, but they have become even scarcer in recent times. Nonetheless, they remain critical now more than ever.

With the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the  
Netherlands

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