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Structural Modeling of Cultural Content to Enhance Awareness of Women's Issues in Iraqi Satellite Channels

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the aim of designing a structural model for cultural content to enhance public awareness of women's issues through Iraqi satellite television channels. The research is applied in nature and employed a descriptive-survey method with a correlational approach using a causal modeling framework. The statistical population consisted of managers, activists, experts, and researchers in the field of media and women's culture, as well as producers and stakeholders involved in television programming and satellite networks in Iraq during the years 2024–2025. As the total population size was unknown, the sample size was estimated to be 384 individuals using Cochran's formula, and convenience sampling was employed. Data were collected through a questionnaire derived from the analysis of qualitative data. The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts, and its reliability was verified through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability metrics. Data analysis was performed using SPSS and Smart PLS software. Twelve hypotheses were examined regarding the influence of media governance challenges, the representation of women's identity, and the organization of cultural content production. The results indicated that media governance challenges and media transformations had a positive impact on media policymaking. However, media policies themselves did not significantly influence media capacity-building or the production of cultural content. Instead, existing constraints in content production and the media context had a positive effect on media capacity-building and the organization of cultural content. Furthermore, media capacity-building had a direct effect on the transformation of media policies and on enhancing public awareness regarding women's issues.

Keywords: Cultural content planning, women's issues, satellite television channels

1. Introduction

The evolving media landscape in Iraq has become a critical arena for addressing deeply rooted societal issues, particularly those concerning women. Satellite television channels—once peripheral to the social dialogue—now act as powerful instruments of influence, shaping public perception and cultural discourse. Despite the increased visibility of women in the media, their portrayal often remains stereotypical or marginalizing, reinforcing traditional gender roles and overlooking the



complexities of women's realities in Iraqi society (Addai, 2022; Issa, 2022). This challenge has spurred growing academic and policy interest in culturally responsive media content that not only reflects but also enhances awareness of women's issues.

The increasing attention to the intersection of media, culture, and gender has prompted researchers to explore how cultural narratives embedded in satellite programming contribute to or hinder women's empowerment. Grounded theory, with its emphasis on emergent, contextual understanding, provides a robust framework for uncovering the underlying processes that govern content development and its sociocultural impacts (Brandy et al., 2025; Clarke et al., 2023; Glaser & Holton, 2023). Given the dynamic and often politicized nature of Arab media systems, especially those in post-conflict societies like Iraq, grounded theory allows for a methodologically sound and theoretically rich investigation of how cultural media content evolves in response to social norms, institutional pressures, and audience expectations (Cape, 2023; Wood et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2024).

The portrayal of women in Iraqi satellite channels is both a reflection and reproduction of broader socio-political realities. Studies have documented persistent challenges such as the objectification of women, underrepresentation in decision-making roles, and the commodification of female identities in media advertisements and drama content (Abdelaziz et al., 2023; Karhout & Abbas, 2022; Shavardi & Khazari, 2023). The stereotypical roles often assigned to women in these contexts obscure their real-life struggles and contributions, limiting their societal agency (Mahmoud et al., 2023; Shaker et al., 2022). In response, feminist media critiques have highlighted the need for structural shifts in content production and a reevaluation of editorial policies to foster more equitable representation (Cox-Han & Heldman, 2023; Rakow, 2022).

Moreover, the power of media in shaping women's health, education, and reproductive agency cannot be understated. Research shows that media interventions, particularly those delivered through satellite or digital channels, have a significant impact on women's awareness of critical health issues (Aboalshamat et al., 2023; Zubair, 2023). This is especially crucial in Iraq, where conservative societal norms and limited institutional outreach hinder the effective dissemination of information about reproductive rights and well-being (Abdelaziz et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2023). Satellite media thus holds potential not only as a cultural product but also as a strategic channel for public health communication and social development.

The theoretical underpinnings of grounded theory—rooted in constant comparison, open coding, and the iterative generation of conceptual categories—are particularly suited to exploring these layered phenomena (Deering & Williams, 2024; Elliott & Higgins, 2023; Koleva, 2023). In the context of Iraqi media, such a methodological lens allows for the deconstruction of narrative structures, production routines, and policy decisions that collectively influence the representation of women. Grounded theory also enables researchers to remain sensitive to local cultural meanings and emerging discourses shaped by regional conflicts, religious dynamics, and global media flows (Rantung et al., 2025; van Veggel et al., 2024; Wilson et al., 2022).

From a policy perspective, the role of media in nation-building and cultural development is especially salient. Television content can reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies, making it a critical tool for shaping national identity and civic values (Attia, 2022; Getan, 2022; Micova, 2023). In Iraq, where post-war reconstruction intersects with deeply gendered power dynamics, the ability of media to reflect inclusive narratives becomes a matter of democratic importance. However, current content often fails to align with these transformative goals, necessitating more nuanced frameworks for content design and dissemination (Abadi et al., 2022; Ahmad & Mohammed, 2022; Mojab, 2022).

Research on Arab media reform underscores the influence of institutional, religious, and geopolitical constraints in shaping media outputs, particularly in relation to women's issues (Aghapouri, 2023; Sabri & Aziz, 2023). The lack of editorial autonomy, coupled with fragmented regulatory frameworks, has historically undermined the credibility and consistency of gender-sensitive programming. Yet, recent shifts toward participatory media strategies and community-based storytelling suggest new opportunities for reimagining cultural content from the ground up (Loisa et al., 2023; Ros-Sanchez et al., 2023; Yeganeh Nooshzad et al., 2022).

Additionally, qualitative studies indicate that media professionals—particularly women journalists and producers—are increasingly advocating for more inclusive production models and thematic diversity in content planning (Denny &



Weckesser, 2022; Didier et al., 2023; Nushi, 2022). These efforts, however, often remain isolated or symbolic unless supported by institutional reforms and capacity-building initiatives. Effective interventions must therefore consider not only the content but also the organizational cultures and governance mechanisms that determine media production processes (Shandy & Sari, 2023; Stoner et al., 2023; Zheltukhina & Radhi, 2023).

The integration of grounded theory into media research on women's issues in Iraq is further strengthened by recent academic advances in qualitative methodologies and constructivist epistemologies. Scholars have emphasized the importance of reflexive interviewing, theoretical coding, and participant validation in developing culturally grounded and analytically rigorous models (Clarke et al., 2023; Smith, 2024; Zhang et al., 2022). Such practices enable researchers to capture the lived experiences of women, media producers, and policy-makers while accounting for socio-political context and discursive complexity (Didier et al., 2023; Glaser & Holton, 2023; Wood et al., 2025).

Ultimately, designing a grounded theory-based structural model of cultural content for Iraqi satellite channels offers both theoretical and practical contributions. It aligns with broader academic efforts to decolonize knowledge production in media studies by centering marginalized voices and indigenous knowledge systems (Shin et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2022). It also supports actionable strategies for institutional transformation in the media sector—one that promotes gender equity, civic engagement, and cultural resilience in the face of ongoing instability.

This study, therefore, aims to construct and validate a grounded theory-informed structural model of cultural content in Iraqi satellite television, with the specific goal of enhancing public awareness about women's issues.

2. Methods and Materials

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative components. In the qualitative section, the grounded theory method was used, following the systematic design and procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1998). In the quantitative section, a descriptive-survey method was adopted to validate the structural model of cultural content aimed at increasing awareness of women's issues in Iraqi satellite channels.

To assess validity, first-order and second-order confirmatory factor analyses and item analysis were conducted. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha method. The statistical population in the quantitative phase consisted of managers, activists, specialists, and researchers in the field of media and women's culture, as well as producers and managers involved in television and satellite channel programming in Iraq during the years 2024–2025. The sample size was estimated using Cochran's formula, resulting in 384 participants selected via convenience sampling.

Quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire designed based on the analysis of qualitative data. This questionnaire included components with the highest significance coefficients, and its validity was established through expert confirmation. Regarding reliability, the calculation of Cronbach's alpha indicated that the questionnaire possessed acceptable internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the positive correlation among items, with higher inter-item correlation resulting in a higher alpha value.

To evaluate construct reliability, three indicators were used: composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha. According to the standards of Fornell and Larcker (1981), the value of composite reliability should exceed 0.7, and the AVE should be greater than 0.5. Additionally, Mackenzie et al. (1996) considered an AVE value of 0.4 and above to be acceptable. In the obtained results, the composite reliability values for all indicators were above 0.6, and the construct reliability was reported as acceptable.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27 and Smart PLS version 4. In the descriptive section, descriptive statistics were used, including frequency, percentage, frequency distribution tables, chart visualizations, and description of respondents' characteristics. In the inferential section, factor analysis was employed for data interpretation.

3. Findings and Results

Following the analysis of software outputs and a thorough review of the existing literature, the overall model of this study was developed. This model was constructed using Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory strategy and was formed through three stages of coding, ultimately presented as a paradigmatic model. The final model comprises six axial codes, which were



interrelated through five theoretical hypotheses and structured using analysis software. These codes were positioned within the paradigmatic model in accordance with the relevance and significance of the qualitative data.

Accordingly, the axial code "*virtual literacy*", consisting of three components—media literacy, cultural literacy, and information literacy—was identified as the causal condition influencing user empowerment. Furthermore, the "*contextual conditions*" of the model included the axial code "*strategic platforms*", which encompasses environmental and digital infrastructures. The code "*media anomalies*", including four components—media aggression, cultural discrimination, filtering, and globalization—was introduced as an intervening condition in the model.

The code "*digital cultural development*", which includes cultural convergence development and domestic platforms, was identified as a set of effective strategies. Subsequently, the axial code "*user empowerment*", composed of operational, normative, and media empowerment, was recognized as the central phenomenon in the model. Finally, the ultimate outcome of the model, referred to as "*cultural consensus*", included the components of cultural solidarity and social cohesion.

Hypotheses:

1. Media governance challenges have a significant effect on media policymaking for enhancing awareness of women's issues.
2. Media transformation in the representation of women's identity has a significant effect on media policymaking for enhancing awareness of women's issues.
3. Media policymaking for enhancing awareness of women's issues has a significant effect on media capacity-building.
4. Media policymaking for enhancing awareness of women's issues has a significant effect on organizing the production of cultural content about women.
5. The prevailing context of cultural content production has a significant effect on media capacity-building.
6. The prevailing context of cultural content production has a significant effect on organizing the production of cultural content about women.
7. Extra-administrative constraints have a significant effect on media capacity-building.
8. Extra-administrative constraints in cultural content production have a significant effect on organizing the production of cultural content about women.
9. Media capacity-building has a significant effect on the transformation of media policies to support women's issues.
10. Media capacity-building has a significant effect on deepening public awareness regarding women's issues.
11. Organizing the production of cultural content about women has a significant effect on the transformation of media policies to support women's issues.
12. Organizing the production of cultural content about women has a significant effect on deepening public awareness.

This section presents the descriptive analysis of the research variables, as detailed in the table below. The table reports each variable alongside its descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, variance, minimum, and maximum values.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Studied Variables

Studied Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Min	Max
Media Governance Challenges	384	3.6732	0.47618	0.227	2.17	4.83
Media Transformation in the Representation of Women	384	3.4991	0.47752	0.228	2.00	4.83
Media Policymaking to Enhance Awareness on Women Issues	384	3.6866	0.49764	0.248	2.33	5.00
Context of Cultural Content Production	384	3.5813	0.51118	0.261	2.11	4.89
Extra-Administrative Constraints in Content Production	384	3.6163	0.49971	0.250	2.17	5.00
Media Capacity-Building	384	3.4045	0.65834	0.433	1.17	5.00
Organizing Cultural Content Production	384	3.3099	0.61130	0.374	1.33	5.00
Transformation of Media Policies	384	3.6363	0.49594	0.246	2.17	5.00
Deepening Public Awareness	384	3.7500	0.50884	0.259	2.17	5.00

In Partial Least Squares (PLS) models, two primary models are tested. The first is the *outer model*, which corresponds to the measurement model, and the second is the *inner model*, which corresponds to the structural model in covariance-based SEM. In the first stage, the measurement model is evaluated through assessments of validity and reliability. In the second stage, the structural model is examined by estimating path coefficients between variables and determining model fit indices.



To assess the fit of the first part—the measurement model—three major criteria are applied: *indicator reliability*, *convergent validity*, and *discriminant validity*. Indicator reliability is further evaluated using three metrics: (1) Cronbach's alpha, (2) composite reliability or Rho, and (3) factor loading coefficients.

The first element to be considered in model evaluation is the unidimensionality of the indicators, meaning that each indicator must be strongly related (i.e., have a high loading) to only one latent variable. A factor loading should exceed 0.4 to be acceptable. It should be noted that loading values below 0.4 are considered weak and must be removed from the set of indicators. This process is done manually by eliminating indicators with loadings below 0.4. After computing the factor loadings and removing items with insufficient loadings, the factor loading coefficients were calculated and presented in Figure 1.

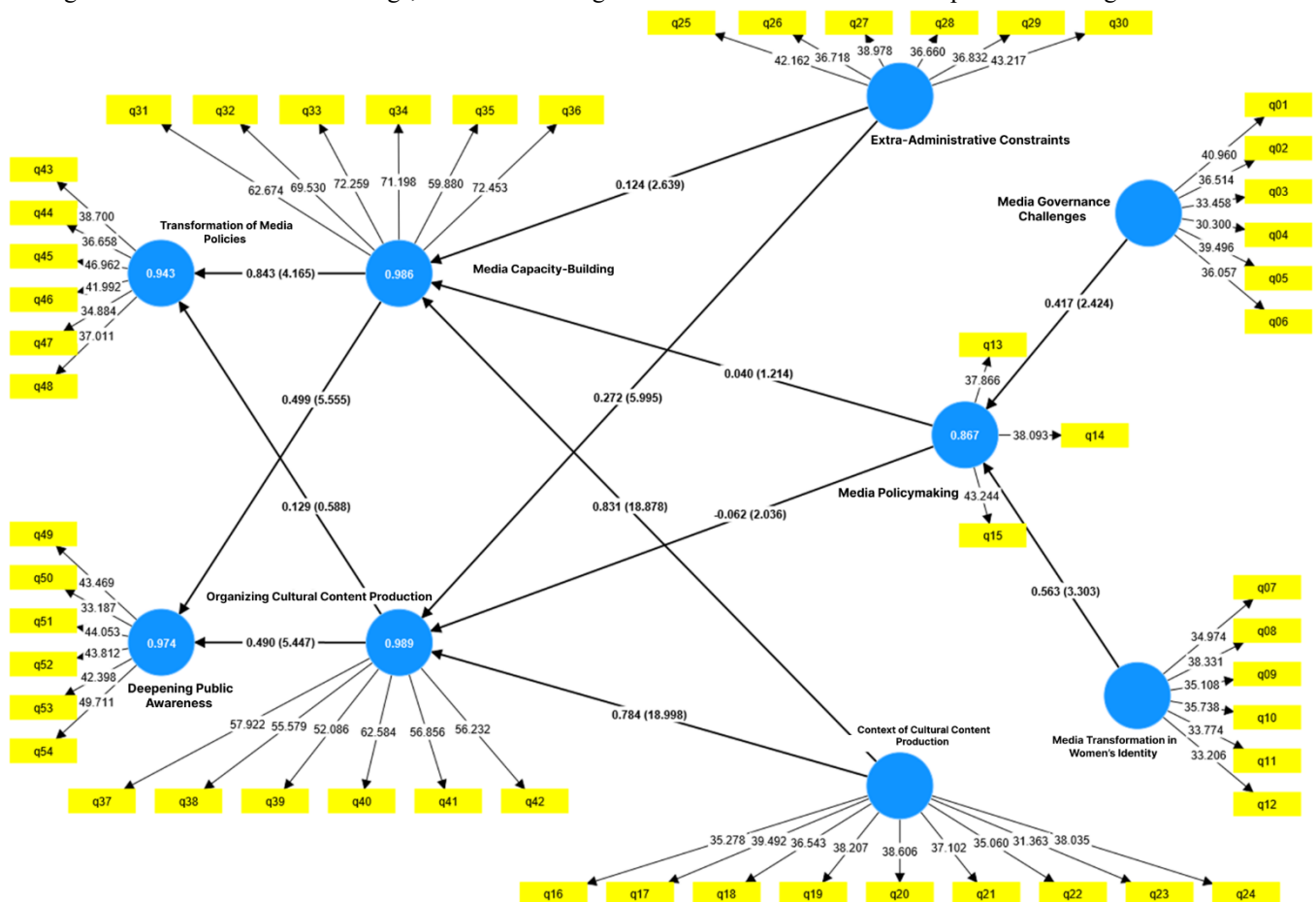


Figure 1. Factor Loading Coefficients

Another criterion for evaluating internal consistency and reliability of the model is the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which ranges from 0 to 1. Values above 0.7 are considered acceptable, while values below 0.6 are considered undesirable. The assessment of the outer model (measurement model) includes the evaluation of the reliability and validity of the constructs and research instruments. As Cronbach's alpha is a traditional measure for evaluating construct reliability, PLS methodology also employs a more modern metric known as composite reliability (CR). This measure, introduced by Werts et al. (1974), is considered superior because it evaluates construct reliability not absolutely but based on the correlations between constructs. Therefore, to improve the accuracy of reliability assessment in the PLS approach, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are used. Some scholars consider the composite reliability (CR) to be equivalent to Rho. If the CR value for any construct is greater than 0.7, it indicates appropriate internal stability in the measurement model; values below 0.6 indicate lack of reliability. After calculating CR values for the research variables, the corresponding values were summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho a)	Composite Reliability (rho c)
Context of Cultural Content Production	0.910	0.910	0.926
Media Transformation in Representing Women	0.855	0.855	0.892
Transformation of Media Policies	0.864	0.864	0.898

Deepening Public Awareness	0.879	0.880	0.909
Organizing the Production of Cultural Content	0.911	0.912	0.931
Media Policymaking	0.775	0.776	0.822
Media Capacity-Building	0.927	0.928	0.943
Extra-Administrative Constraints	0.872	0.873	0.904
Media Governance Challenges	0.857	0.857	0.893

Fornell and Larcker (1981) introduced the *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)* criterion for assessing convergent validity. They stated that the critical threshold for this index is 0.5, meaning that if the AVE value is above 0.5, it indicates acceptable convergent validity.

After calculating the AVE values for the research variables, the corresponding table for convergent validity is completed as follows. Given that all AVE values exceed 0.5, it can be concluded that the convergent validity of the model is at an acceptable level.

Table 3. Convergent Validity Values

Construct	AVE
Context of Cultural Content Production	0.582
Media Transformation in Representing Women	0.579
Transformation of Media Policies	0.595
Deepening Public Awareness	0.624
Organizing the Production of Cultural Content	0.693
Media Policymaking	0.606
Media Capacity-Building	0.734
Extra-Administrative Constraints	0.610
Media Governance Challenges	0.582

Another essential criterion for evaluating discriminant validity is the degree of a construct's relationship with its own indicators compared to its correlation with other constructs. In general, acceptable discriminant validity indicates that a construct should have stronger interactions with its own indicators than with other constructs.

Fornell and Larcker (1981) explained that discriminant validity is deemed acceptable when the AVE of a construct is greater than the shared variance between that construct and any other construct (i.e., the square of the correlation coefficients between constructs). In the PLS approach, this is assessed using a matrix showing the correlation coefficients between constructs and the square roots of the AVE values on the diagonal. The model exhibits acceptable discriminant validity when the values in the main diagonal of the matrix are greater than those beneath them in each column.

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker Values

Construct	CCCP	MTW	TMP	DPA	OCCP	MP	MCB	EAC	MGC
Context of Cultural Content Production	0.763								
Media Transformation in Women's Identity	0.610	0.761							
Transformation of Media Policies	0.672	0.681	0.772						
Deepening Public Awareness	0.686	0.693	0.664	0.790					
Organizing Cultural Content Production	0.694	0.606	0.665	0.685	0.833				
Media Policymaking	0.678	0.696	0.662	0.672	0.672	0.779			
Media Capacity-Building	0.693	0.609	0.671	0.685	0.691	0.674	0.857		
Extra-Administrative Constraints	0.690	0.604	0.667	0.686	0.689	0.678	0.686	0.781	
Media Governance Challenges	0.693	0.698	0.665	0.689	0.685	0.667	0.692	0.676	0.763

CCCP = Context of Cultural Content Production; MTW = Media Transformation in Women's Identity; TMP = Transformation of Media Policies; DPA = Deepening Public Awareness; OCCP = Organizing Cultural Content Production; MP = Media Policymaking; MCB = Media Capacity-Building; EAC = Extra-Administrative Constraints; MGC = Media Governance Challenges

According to the values presented in Table 4, it is evident that the square roots of the AVE values (in the main diagonal) are greater than the corresponding correlations beneath them in each column. Therefore, it can be concluded that the model possesses relatively acceptable discriminant validity.

The R^2 statistic is used to connect the measurement model and the structural model in structural equation modeling (SEM). It reflects the extent to which an exogenous variable explains variance in an endogenous variable. Importantly, the R^2 value is calculated only for endogenous constructs, and for exogenous constructs, this value is zero. The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1,



with higher values indicating a better fit. According to Chin (1988), values near 0.67 are considered substantial, values around 0.33 are moderate, and values around 0.19 are weak.

Table 5. R-Squared Values

Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Transformation of Media Policies	0.943	0.943
Deepening Public Awareness	0.974	0.974
Organizing Cultural Content Production	0.989	0.989
Media Policymaking	0.867	0.866
Media Capacity-Building	0.986	0.986
Average R ²	0.952	

The obtained R² values indicate that the structural model demonstrates a good fit.

This metric, introduced by Stone and Geisser (1975), evaluates the predictive power of the model and assesses how well the model can predict the values of endogenous constructs. According to their view, structural models with acceptable fit should also be capable of accurately predicting relationships among constructs and their impacts. In other words, if the inter-construct relationships are properly defined, these constructs should exert meaningful influence on one another, validating the hypotheses. If the Q² value for an endogenous construct is zero or negative, it suggests that the relationships involving that construct are poorly defined, and the model requires revision.

Henseler et al. (2009) provided thresholds for interpreting Q²: 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), and 0.35 (strong).

Table 6. Q² Values

Construct	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1 - SSE/SSO)
Context of Cultural Content Production	3456.000	1832.210	0.470
Media Transformation in Women's Identity	2304.000	1364.691	0.408
Transformation of Media Policies	2304.000	1314.382	0.430
Deepening Public Awareness	2304.000	1226.119	0.468
Organizing Cultural Content Production	2304.000	1003.931	0.564
Media Policymaking	1152.000	894.309	0.224
Media Capacity-Building	2304.000	873.035	0.621
Extra-Administrative Constraints	2304.000	1266.307	0.450
Media Governance Challenges	2304.000	1357.309	0.411

Given that all Q² values exceed 0.15, it can be concluded that the model possesses desirable predictive power. Thus, the model effectively predicts the relevant values and demonstrates strong performance in explaining the relationships and impacts among variables.

The redundancy value for each indicator is computed using the second-order mean, reflecting the relationship between that indicator and its associated construct via factor loadings. Additionally, the redundancy index represents the degree to which the variability of indicators for an endogenous construct is influenced by exogenous constructs. It is calculated by multiplying the average shared variance of the endogenous construct by its R² value. In simple terms, a higher average redundancy (Red) value indicates a better-fitted structural model in the study.

The overall model encompasses both the measurement and structural components. When overall fit is confirmed, the model is considered fully evaluated. At this stage, a single metric called **GOF (Goodness-of-Fit)** is used. GOF values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are considered weak, moderate, and strong, respectively.

Table 7. Redundancy and GOF Values

Construct	Redundancy (Red)
Context of Cultural Content Production	–
Media Transformation in Women's Identity	–
Transformation of Media Policies	0.556
Deepening Public Awareness	0.601



Organizing Cultural Content Production	0.679
Media Policymaking	0.518
Media Capacity-Building	0.717
Extra-Administrative Constraints	–
Media Governance Challenges	–
Average Red	0.614
GOF Value	0.770

Based on the above table, the average variability explained by the model is approximately 27.5%. Moreover, the computed GOF value of 0.770 indicates a strong overall model fit, as it exceeds the 0.36 threshold. It should be noted that GOF is calculated by multiplying the mean values of R^2 and AVE, followed by taking the square root of the product.

The most fundamental criterion for evaluating the relationships between constructs in the structural model is the *t-value* for significance testing. If the *t-value* exceeds 1.96, it indicates a statistically significant relationship between constructs, confirming the research hypothesis at the 95% confidence level.

Table 8. t-Test Statistics for the Conceptual Model

Pathway Relationship	Factor Loading	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t-Statistic	p-Value	Result
Media Governance Challenges → Media Policymaking	0.417	0.172	2.424	0.015	Accepted
Media Transformation in Representing Women → Media Policymaking	0.563	0.171	3.303	0.001	Accepted
Media Policymaking → Media Capacity-Building	0.040	0.033	1.214	0.225	Rejected
Media Policymaking → Organizing Cultural Content Production	-0.062	0.030	2.036	0.042	Accepted
Context of Cultural Content Production → Media Capacity-Building	0.831	0.044	18.878	0.0001	Accepted
Context of Cultural Content Production → Organizing Content Production	0.784	0.041	18.998	0.0001	Accepted
Extra-Administrative Constraints → Media Capacity-Building	0.124	0.047	2.639	0.008	Accepted
Extra-Administrative Constraints → Organizing Cultural Content	0.272	0.045	5.995	0.0001	Accepted
Media Capacity-Building → Transformation of Media Policies	0.843	0.202	4.165	0.0001	Accepted
Media Capacity-Building → Deepening Public Awareness	0.499	0.090	5.555	0.0001	Accepted
Organizing Cultural Content Production → Transformation of Policies	0.129	0.220	0.588	0.557	Rejected
Organizing Cultural Content Production → Deepening Public Awareness	0.490	0.090	5.447	0.0001	Accepted



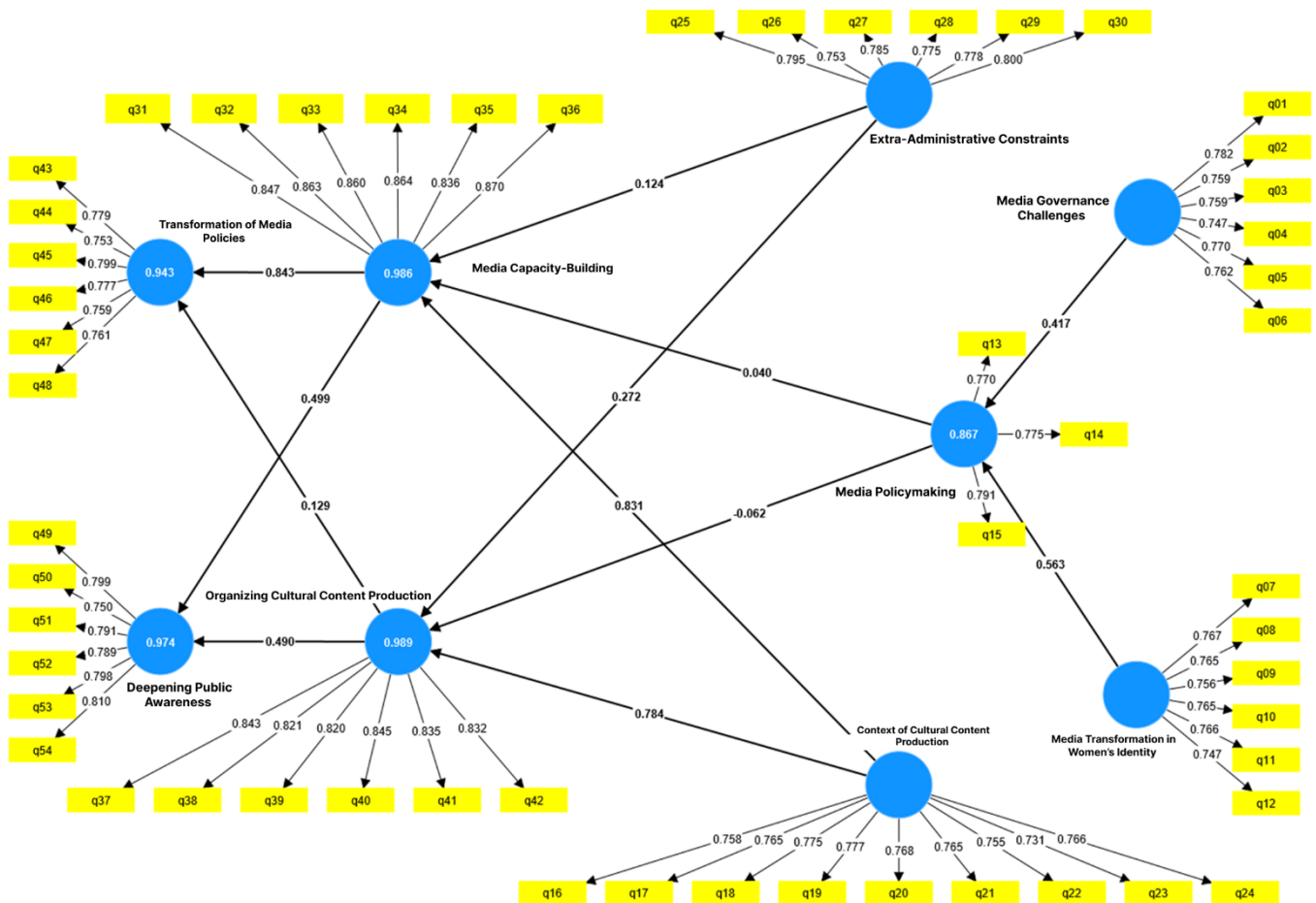


Figure 2. t-Values of Structural Model Paths

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of how structural, contextual, and strategic components within Iraqi satellite television influence public awareness of women's issues through cultural content. The structural equation modeling results confirmed the significance of key pathways in the grounded theory-based model. Specifically, the results highlighted the strong positive effect of *media governance challenges* and *media transformation in representing women* on *media policymaking*. This suggests that both institutional constraints and shifting representational norms critically inform the direction and scope of policies that aim to enhance awareness of women's issues. These findings align with prior studies that have emphasized the role of institutional limitations and political agendas in shaping media outputs in Iraq and the broader Middle East (Addai, 2022; Aghapouri, 2023; Ahmad & Mohammed, 2022).

Interestingly, while *media policymaking* was expected to significantly affect both *media capacity-building* and the *organization of cultural content production*, the former pathway was statistically insignificant. This suggests that policy frameworks alone may lack the operational leverage required to build institutional capacity unless accompanied by systemic changes in production culture, human resources, and governance mechanisms. The weak linkage between policymaking and capacity-building echoes earlier critiques that policy in isolation is insufficient in transforming media practices unless rooted in supportive institutional ecosystems (Abadi et al., 2022; Sabri & Aziz, 2023). Conversely, the path from *media policymaking* to *content organization* was significant, although negative, possibly indicating that top-down directives may sometimes constrain rather than enable culturally relevant content production.

A key contribution of this study is the identification of *contextual and environmental variables*, particularly the *context of content production* and *extra-administrative constraints*, as highly influential in shaping both *media capacity-building* and *content organization*. The strength of these pathways reflects the practical realities of Iraqi media institutions, where infrastructural limitations, digital divide, and resource shortages play a more defining role than formal policy frameworks. This

finding is consistent with earlier qualitative research on the impact of operational bottlenecks, financial limitations, and cultural resistance within Iraqi media environments (Challoop, 2022; Issa, 2022; Mahmoud et al., 2023).

Moreover, the results demonstrated a robust influence of *media capacity-building* on both *the transformation of media policies* and *deepening public awareness*. This finding underscores the central role of capacity—human, technical, and institutional—as a mediating mechanism through which abstract policies are translated into effective media strategies. This is in line with grounded theory research that positions capacity-building as a driver of sustainable change in media systems (Deering & Williams, 2024; Glaser & Holton, 2023; Rantung et al., 2025). It also supports feminist and participatory media scholarship that advocates for bottom-up empowerment approaches, where producers, especially women, are equipped with tools and autonomy to influence editorial agendas (Aboalshamat et al., 2023; Bartolini De Angeli, 2023; Shavardi & Khazari, 2023).

The study further revealed that *content organization* had a significant effect on *public awareness* but not on *policy transformation*. This bifurcation may reflect a disjuncture between practice and policy in Iraq's media ecology. While well-organized content production can effectively communicate with the public and shift perceptions, its ability to influence upstream policy frameworks remains limited unless it is institutionally recognized and scaled. These findings parallel earlier work that highlighted the symbolic yet often inconsequential role of progressive content when not structurally embedded within decision-making hierarchies (Mojab, 2022; Sabri & Aziz, 2023; Shin et al., 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, the model affirms the utility of grounded theory in capturing the complexity and dynamism of content production processes. The inclusion of axial codes such as *media governance challenges*, *cultural anomalies*, *digital cultural development*, and *user empowerment* reflects a multi-dimensional understanding of how structural and agentic forces interact in media environments. This aligns with methodological innovations in grounded theory research that emphasize iterative coding, contextual interpretation, and theoretical saturation (Elliott & Higgins, 2023; Koleva, 2023; Smith, 2024).

In addition, the study enriches the literature by offering an Iraq-specific model that is both empirically grounded and culturally nuanced. Previous studies often applied generic frameworks to Middle Eastern media systems without adequate contextualization (Attia, 2022; Micova, 2023; Zheltukhina & Radhi, 2023). In contrast, this research integrated culturally embedded themes such as digital illiteracy, religious conservatism, and tribal media consumption habits into the analysis, thus making the findings more locally relevant. This localized approach resonates with calls for decolonizing media research and adopting context-sensitive methodologies in studying gender and media in the Global South (Mojab, 2022; Wilson et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022).

Additionally, the findings affirm the dual role of Iraqi satellite media as both a mirror and a mold of societal values. While cultural content reflects prevailing norms, it also holds potential for shifting them when systematically supported. This duality is captured in the final axial code of the grounded model—*cultural consensus*—which combines *cultural solidarity* and *social cohesion* as aspirational outcomes of media reform. These concepts are not only consistent with national development goals but also echo transnational discourses on inclusive media systems and gender-responsive communication (Aseidu et al., 2023; Nushi, 2022; Ros-Sanchez et al., 2023).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to Iraqi media professionals, researchers, and producers, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings to other Arab or Middle Eastern contexts. Second, while the use of grounded theory ensured analytical depth, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias, particularly in a politically sensitive environment. Third, the study focused solely on satellite media, thereby excluding emerging digital platforms and social media, which are increasingly influential in Iraq's media ecosystem. Finally, cross-validation of the structural model through longitudinal or cross-regional datasets was not conducted due to practical constraints.

Future studies could expand the scope to include digital content producers, social media influencers, and cross-border media networks to capture a more holistic picture of gender representation in the evolving Iraqi media landscape. Comparative studies between different Middle Eastern countries may also uncover region-wide patterns or country-specific dynamics in media reform. Moreover, applying mixed methods—combining grounded theory with quantitative content analysis or experimental methods—can enhance the robustness of findings. Lastly, investigating the perspectives of media audiences, especially women, can offer critical insights into content reception, engagement, and behavioral outcomes.



Media policymakers and content producers should prioritize the institutionalization of gender-sensitive content development frameworks. This involves not only revising editorial guidelines but also investing in capacity-building programs that empower female journalists and producers. Collaborative partnerships between media outlets, academic institutions, and civil society organizations can also be instrumental in designing culturally relevant yet progressive content. Finally, embedding audience feedback mechanisms and participatory design processes into media programming can ensure that women's voices are not just represented but actively shape the media narratives that concern them.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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