Reality TV Shows in the Arab World: Star Academy Impacts on Arab Teenagers

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Abstract

Reality T.V programs are now invading the Arab world and are attracting viewers of all ages, most specifically Arab teenagers. Being live programs taken from real life situations, Reality TV shows feature and monitor the emotions and behaviors of those who are usually involved for the purpose of winning a prize. However, the question to be asked is to what extent such programs are affecting teenagers, being the most susceptible audience. This paper has many objectives including: assessing the authenticity of the television programs; probing the extent the image reflected by talent-contestant shows, namely Star Academy, is affecting teenagers' life; and, assessing what major role Star Academy plays in motivating and influencing the teenage audience. This research is exploratory and uses a quantitative approach; it relies on the use of a survey questionnaire addressed to a convenient sample of 300 teenagers. Findings are to help educators and policy makers to plan for mediations to reduce the negative influences of such programs, and to capitalize on the opportunities that result from free-will decisions.

Keywords: *Lebanon, Reality TV, Star Academy, talent contestant shows, teenagers, cultural impact*

1. Introduction

The mid1990s saw the start of a new era of television programs, whose purpose is to capture fascinating images of real people by filming their lives in front of cameras. Many researchers stress the fact that television introduces images of life that could play a major role in motivating and influencing the audience's perceptions and opinions (Matheson, 2005; Keveney, 2007;Papacharissi&Mendelson, 2007).

Reality television programs have been the focus of much criticism because of the questionable messages some of the shows encode. While these messages may affect audiences in general, the audience that may be the most susceptible is teenagers. However, there is a recurring dilemma as to whether Reality TV is in fact real. O'Guinn & Shrum (1997) argued that reality television programs exhibit what is perceived as reality when in essence it is really not. The filmed characters do not react naturally in their usual settings, hence reflecting planned and adjusted behaviors that are later edited to create the "best entertainment" value for viewers. The scenes portraying stars, or regular people taken as stars, are exaggerated and distorted in a way to affect the views, motives, and desires of the audience (O'Guinn & Shrum 1997; McDermott, 2010).

Viewers desire much more from the image people present on television. To explain this phenomenon, it is interesting to explore the inherent tensions between reality and what is produced for the camera, between authenticity and performance, and between how people look and what they're 'really like'(Matheson, 2005). Accordingly, on the local level, the researchers must explore the Arab Lebanese teenagers' cultural background in relation to the images reflected by Reality TV.

Another problematic issue with such new trend of shows is that producers are importing Reality TV programs without taking into consideration that these need some sort of modifications to fit the existent culture; for instance, in *Star Academy,* one of the reality famous programs, girls and boys from all Arab

countries live in the same academy for over three months – an act that can contradict traditional Arab values and may affect Lebanese and Arab audience, mainly teenagers, who are gradually losing their identity and making some cultural shifts, such as reinforcing cohabitation (Kraidy, 2009**)**.

The aim of this paper is to assess and explore how a reality television program, for example *Star Academy* as a model for this study, is produced, and what is its impact on the cultural background of Lebanese or/and Arab teenagers, whose age range between 12 and 19 years.

Reality TV and the Arab World
Olenski (2013) contends that the various models of audio visual media are always in progress and function as a vital means of communication in the modern world, and are sometimes criticized or even abused; these are also restored and renewed as they accomplish multiple tasks, sometimes leading to the changing of the characters of the viewers who are fascinated by such novelty of modes. Media in general and "Television (TV)" in particular play a major role in shaping societies since TV has become a spiritual and moral reference point to viewers, creating a social change by transmitting desirable information to viewers (Crawford & Rossiter, 1993; Prakash, 2000). Moreover, the media reflect the aspirations of the people, spread noble ideas, and critically and credibly examine facts prior to projecting them. For instance, some researchers argue that today teenagers use television to construct their own personal meaning and identity (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006; McDermott, 2010). While others, like Berry, Martin and Yue (2003), question whether television or any other medium reflect society or does society reflect the influence of television. They also ask if TV shows is the mirror-image of the society one lives in.

Broadcasts around the world seem to have discovered that the so called "reality" shows are very profitable, resulting in a growing string of such shows in recent years. Although not all are successful, many do achieve significant popularity and cultural prominence that does not mean, however, that they are good for society or that they should be aired. Furthermore, since the world is now globalized, communication technologies have caused many changes especially on the level of social identity intersections(Wilkie, 2002; Robinson &Jones-Diaz, 2006).This communication technology has resulted in creating new forms of westernized needs among conservative viewers, and a great commercial benefit to mediums that relyon it through adopting long lasting sorts of "Reality" shows that keep viewers tuned in for as long as they are running (Andrejevic, 2004; Bignell, 2005; Escoffery, 2006).The aforementioned desirable outcome of commercial profit has echoed widely and managed to reach the Arab world, which has suffered for a long time from government resistance to changes and tight censorship.

Boyd (1993) asserts that miniaturization has enabled individuals with small dishes and signal decoders to pick up signals directly from satellites. With the introduction of direct broadcast satellites (DBS), broadcasters could reach worldwide audiences directly, without interference from government censors. Furthermore,Amin (2004) contends that "Transnational Broadcasting "has evolved since the 1980s, "with the introduction of multi-channel delivery environments that reaped the benefits of the lowered costs of launching communications satellites" (p. 3). He reports that today, "the transnational multi-channel broadcasting environment created by the satellite television channels offers a new horizon of excellent programming that targets a wide variety of audiences in the region. Transnational broadcasting currently provides educational, entertainment, and cultural and artistic services" (p. 3).

Whilst in September 1991, Arab audiences had their first experience of confidential satellite television when MBC went on the air from studio services in London with Western-styled indoctrination and witnessed since then a remarkable prosperity, the years 2002, 2003 created an addiction to substituting news and documentaries by the new trend of "Reality TV."

Reality television is a genre of television programs that presents purportedly unscripted dramatic or humorous situations, documents actual events, and usually features ordinary people's lives or

confessions, sometimes in a contest or other situations where a prize is awarded (Biressi& Nunn, 2005; Hill, 2005). Thus, the reality TV has changed several characteristics of the TV broadcast image and content since it occurred, for it is an interesting phenomenon to be focused on and to know more about. Reality TV in the Arab world is built on certain basics which affect the traditions and cultures of the Arab societies in different ways(Biressi& Nunn, 2005; Khalil and Kraidy, 2009).

The rise of Reality TV in the Arab world, and specifically in Lebanon, was in 2003;the program *Super Star* rapidly became the mostimportant show of that period by far. It was broadcasted on Future TV;*Super Star* attempted a clear Pan-Arab exploration for the next star singer, by means of casting calls, adjudicators, live performances, and the audience's right to take part (Biressi& Nunn, 2005). Moreover, the last day of December 2003 witnessed the broadcastingof the most successful Arab reality show formed in Lebanon: *Star Academy*. *Star Academy* is a reality TV "pop music talent contest show" where contestants win through the audience'svoting. Murray and Ouellette (2009),among others,were able to classify Reality TV shows into eight subgenres, including games, dating, makeover, talent contests, court, reality sitcoms, and celebrity variations.*Star Academy* is one of the programs whichbelongs to the same talent contests subgenrebrought to the Arab world such as Arab Idol show, Arabs Got Talent,theX factor and more. The reason why the researchers of the current paper focus on Star Academy as a model to be investigated is because it has been shown for nine consecutive seasons in Lebanon, and because it reflects a new intercultural phenomena that contradicts local traditional culture in which male and female contestants livingunder the same roof in a boarding school called the "Academy."Exhibit 1 shows a general brief review about Star Academy.

Exhibit 1 *Star Academy*

Star Academy first appeared in France, and was later adopted by the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) for the Arab market. The concept consists of grouping sixteen young contestants, eight are men and eight are women from different Arab countries, to learn music, dance, and to compete. Over the course of sixteen weeks, all contestants (even the unmarried)live in the same house – an arrangement that contradicts the customary Arab traditions. Rules differ from those of the Western versions in separating the contestants' bedrooms and not allowing intimate relationships. The show is broadcasted, via satellites, to enormous audiences throughout the region and who can also participate by voting via mobile phones.

Source: Cestar, 2010, p. 105.

According to Khalil(2005),"Graduation Progression" has permitted the instructors at the Academy to nominatetwo candidates, and the public would vote for one of them to continue with the contest. Joe Khalil, director and executive producer in several Arab TV stations for more than 12 years, said that "*Star Academy* stretched the limits of reality television for the reason of its extraordinary fame and because it represented a complete realization of a promotion and marketing prospective" (Para 25). Possibly the show's major effect, nevertheless, remains its reliable audience's faithfulness to both the "prime" episodes as well as the 24-hour enthusiastic channel.

Star Academy rules of participation include sixteen primes where contestants are evaluated.Each prime occurs once a week and should host a celebrity with excessive rate of fans to attract the highest number of viewers for commercial purposes (Cestar, 2010, p. 105).

The aforementioned intimate created settings reflect a new cultural aspect, sexual attraction, imported to the Arab world's cultural standards. Sexual attraction became one of the main elements in these spots inside the genre of Reality TV shows whereby young guys and girls are locked inside the same place, more specifically, inside the same place called the Academy.Sexual attraction is manifested by young people differently from that of adults since the latter are able to distinguish the traditional norms that differentiate between the roles of the man or the woman. Zurbriggen and Morgan (2006)indicate that viewing reality dating shows predicted adversarial sexual attitudes, a focus on one's appearance, and sexual double standards, but these correlations aremediated by viewer engagement through their

interaction with the candidates' activities.Markey & Markey (2012) researched the viewers' connectedness to Reality TV shows; they suggest that reality television connectedness (i.e., feeling as if one relates personally to the show) correlates especially with the viewers' appearance (valuing physical appearance as a major facet of self-esteem), but not related to their performance.In the case of young people,and according to Galloway (2013), "reality programming was also related to more attention to physical appearance with 72% of reality TV watchers saying they spend a lot of time on their appearance, compared with 42% of those who didn't watch reality shows" (Para 10).

Reality TV Shows and Culture

Research findings concur that people's cultures determine their needs and justify their behaviors since these are acquired through local values, religion, beliefs, along with physical components such as clothing and tools (Hall, 2003; Keegan & Green, 2013). In this research paper, the physical aspects is taken into consideration so as to evaluate how much the image diffused from the *Star Academy*'s talent contestant genre of reality TV shows, is mirrored by teenage Arabs' ways of dressing, eating, speaking or/and acting. According to Zaharna (2001), culture is described as a "blueprint", a "road map", an "imprint" and even a "collective unconscious". The researchers stress culture, within the Arab nations, as a significant variable that might influence teenagers' behaviors and perceptions. Culture is seen as the larger umbrella under which communication is covered, and under which a person develops and improves his/her competencies either by education or training. Moreover, Arab nationalism, which characterizes the Arab culture, has generally "based its principle of unity around such factors as language and geography rather than faith" (Browers, 2009, p. 20).

For decades, scholars have viewed global television through the lens of cultural imperialism, focusing on programs mainly produced by US and UK markets and exported to foreign nations, including the Middle East. However, the imported Reality TV shows reproduced and presented on the Arab TV screen are not taking into consideration cultural differences, though Oren and Shahaf (2011), contributors address massive global hits ranging from the "Idol" franchise around the world, dance competitions, sports programming, quiz shows, sitcoms, reality TV shows, and more.

Elouardaoui (2013) pointed out that "in light of the rapid profusion of satellite Arab TV channels, one might wonder if the shift towards privatization, transnationalism and liberalization in Arab media has only led to the emergence of commercially-based entertainment programs…" (p. 5).Nachbar and Lause (1992) assert the popular equation which states that "the popularity of a given cultural element (object, person, and event) is directly proportional to the degree to which that element is reflective of audience beliefs and values" (p. 5). While Miller (2008) contends that "the higher the level of popularity, whether in that era or over time, is indicative of the level of reflexivity of the era in which it was produced. For example, television programming in 1950s reflected the myth of family values" (p. 4).

Miller asserts that reality programming today, is a reflection of current audience' beliefs and values regarding the following:

    1) Reality television is a reflection of the concept of culture as a commodity available for sale to those who pay more dollars

    2) Access of other people's lives, recent occurrences, and experiencing as many culture as quickly as possible

    3) A reflection of audience beliefs in the virtues of celebrity culture seeking for spotlight and fame(pp. 4-5)

In their turn, Riley and Rosen (2011) stress the fact that each generation of television programming reflects some elements of the major beliefs and values of the time in which it was created.

Kraidy (2006) contends that "Star Academy was as controversial as it was popular. Clerics and politicians from Morocco to Iraq condemned it; electronic diatribes swirled against it in cyberspace" (p. 19). "The

controversy surrounding Star Academy persisted and evolved into a highly public debate about a variety of hot-button issues having to do with modernity and tradition, social change and cultural identity" (p. 20). Kraidy (2009) pointed out the many changes that *Star Academy* has brought to the concept of Arab traditions and cultures: viewers are being inspired by the participants' activities, hence leading several conservative families to disconnect the popular Lebanese LBC television channel so as to stop their children from watching and imitating the participants' dresses, behaviors on stage, and their interactions with the other sex.

Around the aforementioned perspectives, Beach (2003) contends that "media representations shape teenagers' perceptions of experience, their beliefs about gender, social class, race, and values in the society" (Para 5). However, Tobin (2001; cited in Beach 2003) argues that " teens are able to resist these representations and adopt their own creative alternatives" (Para 5);accordingly, "teens may recognize that media texts represent idealized role models or identities that shape their own self-images" (Beach, 2003, Para 7). Beach (2003) contends that "teens learn to recognize the power of media representations to go beyond simply mirroring cultural practices to actually create cultural practices and ways of thinking, just as "reality TV" has created a new, mediated-form of reality" (p. 59).

Armstrong (2013) posited that "Reality TV promises access to real people (contestants) in ordinary and extraordinary situations. These contestants conform to specific demographic ideals such as diverse ethnic and racial representation to avoid alienating consumer groups; the equal representation of males and females, and; the physical attractiveness and youth of the selected participants." (pp. 77-78).

Uses and gratifications approach suggests that the use of media is not passive but involves an interaction between the viewer and media. "Research found that viewers were purposeful in their media consumption and actively selected media to satisfy specific needs and wants" (Pearce, 2009, p. 244).According to Dr. Khalil Rinawi, instructor of communications (cited in Agbarieh, n.d.), "Arab society is highly emotional, and the programs on Reality TV are based on the factor of emotional identification between the viewer and the protagonists"(Para 10). "The Arab channels ignore social and ethical borders in order to enlarge earnings. It is obvious to see how the participants symbolize, an exceedingly tolerant, social cultures that are unusual for Arab society, as they hug and kiss on live TV. Although most viewers agree with the undesirability of such actions, they cannot split their eyes away from the screen. The reality shows get such high ratings that one wonders about present priorities in the Arab world" (Agbarieh, n.d., Para 5-6). Consequently, the researchers of this paper seek to examine the interaction between teen's perceptions and reality show viewing. This will later facilitate a future research approach that applies semiotic analysis to understand the intended meaning of the images presented in the Reality TV programs.

2. Research Questions

Ayish (2009) asserts that "western-style television programs, in particular Reality TV, have stirred much controversy and heated public debate in Arab societies over their potentially detrimental effects on the region's social values and traditions" (Para 1). Specifically, Reality TV shows in the Arab world have raised many question marks regarding their influence on Arabs teenagers' societal and cultural components, knowing that these teens are in the process of forming their own personality and identity. Despite all the financial and technological benefits generated by such shows; the message and image they reflect to viewers is under much criticism. "Reality Television has a huge impact on the youth watching viewing them. The cast members of these shows impact a certain behavior, appearance, and physiology. It has a negative impact because it makes them want to think, act, and feel like the characters on the screen which takes away critical thinking and true emotion towards situations" (Anonymous, 2013, Para 5).

The exposure of teenage viewers to *Star Academy* talent contestant reality TV show may influence their forming identity and personality and make them desire to adopt the fame image reflected on T.V by the

ordinary people who are chosen as participants. In order to investigate the impact of *Star Academy* on teenage Arabs in general and teenage Lebanese in particular, the following factors are measured: The amount of exposure to *Star Academy* and its influence on age, gender, culture, identity, personality, behavior, perception, and image. Accordingly, the researchers developed the following research questions:

1. To which extent does real TV mirror reality?
2. To which extent does *Star Academy* reality TV image influence the teens' lifestyle?
3. Does reality TV image, as illustrated by *Star Academy,* reflect Lebanese and Arabs' culture? If yes, how?
4. Are Lebanese and Arab teenagers aware of what is and what is not acceptable in their respective societies? How?
5. How can *Star Academy* image influence people's beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors?

3. Methodology

This paper is exploratory in nature and uses quantitative research methodology. The purpose is to assess the extent to which *Star Academy* influences Arab and Lebanese teenagers' cultural beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. The quantitative approach is based on using a survey questionnaire distributed to two stratified samples of teenagers selected conveniently based on their gender and age categories as well as on their willingness to participate in the research. One sample consisted of teenage audience who had attended the studio primes of *Star Academy,* and another sample of teenagers who viewed the show on TV at their homes.

Survey Design and Procedures
A survey questionnaire consisting of two sections was used. The first section consists of 21 questions related to the respondents' views and attitude towards the Reality TV program. Questions explored cultural values and opinions about the structure of the program, and to what extent they, as viewers/audience, support and interact with the actors. Moreover, questions assessed the extent the image of *Star Academy* influence Arab teenagers' attitudes and behavior. The second section consists of demographic questions. In both sections triadic and multiple choice questions are used.

Data for the first sample annotated "audience" data, using the survey, was collected at the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International (LBCI) premises — well known Lebanese TV station—as *Star Academy* show was broadcasted. While, data for the second sample annotated "viewers" data, using the survey, was chosen from fieldwork visitations to different geographical regions in Lebanon. The field surveyors for both samples underwent proper training to execute data collection. Surveyors were divided into two teams, one team interviewed audience during primes in the TV station studio, and the other team interviewed respondents who watched the show on their TV sets at homes.

Sample Selection
The sample respondents for this study consist of Arab Lebanese teenage males and females aged between 12 and 19 from the general Lebanese public who watch *Star Academy*. 150 respondents are from the audience who attend primes and 150 from teens who view the show at home. The sample was selected according to the "Quota Sampling" technique where a population is first segmented into mutually exclusive sub-groups that is based on gender (where females form 52% of the samples), and age category (where two groups were specified as major watchers of the show, namely 12-15 and 16-19years old with a distribution of 48% to 52%, consecutively) just as in stratified sampling. As observed, judgment was used to select the subjects from each segment based on a specified proportion (Hejase and Hejase, 2013).

4. Results and Findings

Descriptive statistics was applied to analyze the answers quantitatively and to investigate the variables that made up the research on how the image of *Star Academy* affects Arabs teens' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. Data of the survey is reported using cross-tabulation based on gender, age category, and audience versus viewers.

Demographics

Although the intention was to distribute the proportion of audience to viewers as 50-50, however the final distribution consists of 48.33% (145/300) audience versus 51.67% (155/300) viewers. Age categories consist of 47.67% 12-15 years old versus 52.33% 16-19 years old. Moreover, 48.33% are males and 51.67% are females. Table 1depicts the gender distribution of each age category.

Table 1: Category distribution

Audience category distribution					
Age	Gender				Total
	Frequency		Percent		(based on 300)
			(based on 300)		
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	
12-15	33	35	11.00	11.67	22.67
16-19	37	40	12.33	13.33	25.66
Total	70	75	23.33	25.00	48.33
Viewers category distribution					
Age	Gender				Total
	Frequency		Percent		
			(based on 300)		
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**	
12-15	36	39	12.00	13.00	25.00
16-19	39	41	13.00	13.67	26.67
Total	75	80	25.00	26.67	51.67

General views and attitudes toward the program
(1) The Reality Reflection of Star Academy Program among Teenagers

Based on Gender:
Results show that 38.13% of male respondents who watch *Star Academy* regularly declare that these shows "somewhat" reflect the reality of the participants, 30.22%confirmed that these shows reflect the reality of the said participants, while 31.65% did not agree". On the other hand, 44.10% of females "somewhat" believe that the shows reflect reality, and 26.09% think they don't. The percentage of males who believe that the program does not reflect the reality of its participants is higher than that of females who believe so.

Based on Age:
43.95% of respondents who are 12-15 years old, and who watch *Star Academy* regularly declare that these shows "somewhat" reflect the reality of the participants, 38.22%confirmed that these shows reflect the reality of the said participants, while 17.83% answered with a "No". On the other hand, 38.46% of respondents 16-19 years old "somewhat" believe that the shows reflect reality, and 20.98% think they don't. The percentage of respondents within the age range of 12-15 years old who believe that the program does not reflect the reality of its participants is lower than that of 16-19 years old who believe otherwise. This discrepancy maybe attributed to maturity. .

Based on audience versus viewers:
36.00% of audience respondents who watch *Star Academy* regularly declare that these shows "somewhat" reflect the reality of the participants, 38%confirmed that these shows reflect the reality of the said

participants, while 26% did not agree. On the other hand, 46.67% of viewers "somewhat" believe that the shows reflect reality, 22% answered with "yes" and 31.33% think they don't. The percentage of audience who believe that the program does not reflect the reality of its participants is less than that of viewers who believe otherwise. Hence, audience in the studio watching the program live has more touch of reality as compared to viewers who sit at home and watch the program.

Variables that Make Teenagers Watch Star Academy
Table 2 exhibits the reasons for watching *Star Academy*. All the reasons are chosen similarly by gender, age and type of audience. Therefore, data is reported by gender but reflects other categories in the same manner. "Entertainment" is the top factor reported by 60.04% of male respondents and 59.94% of female respondents, followed by "liking one of the participants and following his/her news" with a percentage of 20.96% for males and 25.04% for females. "Getting to know new cultures" comes in thirdas reported by 10% of male respondents and 8.02% of female respondents. 5.30% of males and 3.88% of females watch the show because "their friends watch them and have advised them to". The rest of the variables are not statistically significant to be analyzed.

Table 2: Variables that Make Teenagers Watch Star Academy

	Entertainment	Liking of participants	Culture exposure	Following trend	Social belonging	Peer pressure
Gender						
Male	60.04%	20.96%	10.00%	3.00%	0.70%	5.30%
Female	59.94%	25.04%	8.02%	3.08%	0.04%	3.88%
Age						
12-15	49.90%	27.02%	9.74%	3.29%	4.19%	5.87%
16-19	50. 02%	25.94%	9.02%	6.29%	3.70%	5.03%
Audience vs Viewers						
Audience	49.60%	27.33%	9.00%	6.33%	2.41%	5.33%
Viewer	50.33%	24.31%	8.36%	6.33%	3.34%	7.33%

Variables that Make Teenagers like Star Academy
Table 3 shows the multiple reasons for liking *Star Academy*. All the reasons are chosen similarly by gender, age and type of audience. That is,38.88% of male respondents and 39% of female respondents chose "Friendship" to be the first factor as a reason why they like to watch *Star Academy*, followed by "participants' behavior," "participants' lifestyle," "participants' characters, "and "participants' romance." "Friendship" was reported to be the number one factor in all the criteria of comparison.

Table 3: Variables that Make Teenagers like Star Academy

	Participants Friendship	Participants Lifestyle	Participants behavior	Participants Character	Participants Romance
Gender					
Male	38.88%	20.12%	25.16%	10.24%	5.60%
Female	39.00%	20.02%	26.71%	9.15%	5.12%
Age					
12-15	38.13%	19.85%	25.84%	10.11%	6.07%
16-19	39.75%	20.29%	26.03%	9.28%	4.65%
Audience vs Viewers					
Audience	51.33%	28.67%	28.00%	16.00%	7.33%
Viewer	36.00%	34.00%	31.33%	15.33%	20.67%

Teenagers Cultural Acceptance of the "Stars of the Show Living under the Same Roof"
Table 4 shows that 76.98% of male respondents versus 60.25% of female respondents accept that young men and women live under the same roof throughout the show, whereas 16.55% males versus 24.84% females "somewhat" accept it, and only 6.47% males versus 14.91% females disapprove of it totally. The percentage of male teens who accept this fact is higher than that of females. The table also shows similar overall trends in age category and type of viewers except where viewers' acceptance is higher than that of audience, and viewers' rejection is less than that of the audience, maybe due to their parents being with them at home.

Table 4: Teenagers Cultural Acceptance of the Stars of the Show Living under the Same Roof

	Somewhat	*Yes*	*No*
Gender			
Male	16.55%	76.98%	6.47%
Female	24.84%	60.25%	14.91%
Age			
12-15	19.11%	69.43%	11.46%
16-19	23.08%	66.43%	10.49%
Audience vs Viewers			
Audience	20.00%	64.67%	15.33%
Viewer	22.00%	71.33%	6.67%

Contradiction of "Stars of the Show Living together" with Arab Values and Traditions
Table 5 displays that 54.68% of male respondents versus 39.75% of female respondents believe that the fact that young women and men living under the same roof doesn't contradict with the Lebanese values and traditions, whereas 21.58% males versus 36.65% females believe that it "somewhat" does, and approximately 24% of both sexes believe that it does. The results show that the percentage of males who don't believe that it contradicts with the Lebanese values and traditions is higher than that of females, and teens aged between16 to 19 seem to accept that the idea of living together doesn't contradict with their values and traditions, whereas those aged 12 to 15 appear to be more conservative and tied more to values and traditions. A similar attitude is observed between audience and viewers, though with less difference.

Table 5: Contradictions of Stars of the Show Living together with Arabs Values and Traditions

	Somewhat	*Yes*	*No*
Gender			
Male	21.58%	23.74%	**54.68%**
Female	36.65%	23.60%	39.75%
Age			
12-15	36.31%	21.66%	32.04%
16-19	22.38%	25.87%	**51.75%**
Audience vs Viewers			
Audience	32.00%	26.67%	**41.33%**
Viewers	27.33%	20.67%	**52.00%**

Eagerness among Teenagers to Participate in the Show

Table 6 shows that females (44.10%) are more eager than males (32.37%) to participate in *Star Academy* if they get the chance to. Teens between 12 and 15showed more eagerness to become contestants than those aged 16 to 19. As for audience and viewers, there is no significant difference in attitudes.

Table 6: Eagerness among Teenagers to Participate in the Show

	Somewhat	*Yes*	*No*
Gender			
Male	22.30%	**32.37%**	45.32%
Female	29.81%	**44.10%**	26.09%
Age			
12-15	28.66%	**45.22%**	26.11%
16-19	23.78%	**31.46%**	44.76%
Audience vs Viewers			
Audience	24.00%	**40.67%**	35.33%
Viewers	28.67%	**36.67%**	34.67%

Factors that influence teenagers the most after watching Star Academy

Table 7 shows that 27.33% of male respondents and 26.62% of female respondents are influenced by participants' outer appearance. Secondly, 20.33% males versus 24% females are influenced by candidates' "way of dressing and hairdo". Thirdly, males versus females respondents are influenced by the candidates' "way of speaking", and fourthly, by the latter's "behavior in front of camera." Further, 17.99% males versus 8.63% females admit that their patterns of watching TV have changed, whereas an insignificant percentage of respondents is not influenced by anything. The first three factors are labeled similarly by the type of audience where, "outer appearance" is first, followed by "way of dressing and hairdo," and "way of speaking." The audience is more affected by the "pattern of watching TV" as compared to the viewers; and, the viewers are more affected by the "Behavior in Front of Camera." The first could have been influenced by the joy of being in the studio in person while the viewers are affected by the changes that contestants' behavior in front of cameras.

Table 7: Factors that influence teenagers the most after watching Star Academy

	Outer Appearance	*Way of Speaking*	*Pattern of Watching TV*	*Behavior in Front of Camera*	*Hairdo and dress code*	*Nothing*	*Others*
Gender							
Male	27.33%	20.14%	17.99%	13.67%	20.33%	0.54%	0.00%
Female	26.62%	20.57%	8.63%	20.18%	24.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Age							
12-15	27.00%	20.57%	12.63%	16.40%	23.18%	0.40%	0.00%
16-19	26.95%	20.15%	14.00%	17.45%	21.15%	0.14%	0.00%
Audience vs Viewers							
Audience	28.22%	19.30%	20.27%	10.00%	22.21%	0.00%	0.00%
Viewer	25.73%	21.41%	6.36%	23.85%	22.12%	0.54%	0.00%

Reflection of a Positive or a Negative Image of Star Academy on Society

Table 8 shows 96.40% of male respondents versus 95.03% of female respondents believe that *Star Academy* reflects a "positive" image of the Lebanese society. Only a small percentage of both males and females believe that *Star Academy* show reflects a "negative" one. Results on the average also show a similarity in opinion as manifested by age patterns and type of audience.

Table 8: Reflection of a Positive or a Negative Image of Star Academy on Society

	Positive Image	*Negative Image*
Gender		
Male	96.40%	3.60%
Female	95.03%	4.97%
Age		
12-15	97.45%	2.55%
16-19	93.71%	6.29%
Audience vs Viewers		
Audience	93.33%	6.67%
Viewer	98.00%	2.00%

Perception of Star Academy as a measure of societal development or deterioration

Table 9 shows that the majority of the survey respondents (96.40% males and 95.03% females) consider *Star Academy* to be a measure of societal development, whereas a little percentage of respondents considers it a sign of deterioration and backwardness. Teens' opinions do not differ significantly between females and males. Whereas those aged 12 to 15 are more positive and believe that *Star Academy* show is a measure of societal development than those aged 16 to 19. This also applies to viewers in comparison with audience, where viewers are more positive and believe that *Star Academy* show is a measure of societal development.

Table 9: Perception of Star Academy as a measure of societal development or deterioration

	Societal Development	*Societal Deterioration*
Gender		
Male	96.40%	3.60%
Female	95.03%	4.97%
Age		
12-15	97.45%	2.55%
16-19	93.71%	6.29%
Audience vs Viewers		
Audience	93.33%	6.67%
Viewer	98.00%	2.00%

5. Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of the paper is to investigate and assess two samples of respondents' opinions toward the research questions rewritten herein:
1. To which extent does real TV mirror reality?
2. To which extent does *Star Academy* reality TV image influence the teens' lifestyle?

3. Does reality TV image, as illustrated by Star Academy, reflect Lebanese and Arabs' culture? If yes, then how?
4. Are Lebanese and Arab teenagers aware of what is and what is not acceptable in their respective societies? How?
5. How can *Star Academy* image influence people's beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors?

Results from the descriptive statistics generated from the sample's responses reveal a mixture of findings with regard to *Star Academy*'simpacts on Arab Lebanese teenagers. In response to the first research question, respondents' results are categorized by gender, age and type of audience, whereby 68.35% males, 73.91% females, 82.17% age 12-15, 79% age 16-19, 74% audience, and 68.67% viewers reported that the program "either somewhat or yes it does" reflects reality. Therefore, on the average and irrespective of the characteristic variable, 74.35% of the respondents believe that the program reflects reality. Hill (2005) provides an interpretation for such an outcome by asserting that reality shows suggest that the media is not passive but involves an interaction between viewers and media.
However, 53.31% on the average follow the program just for entertainment, 25.10% follows it because they like the participants, and only a minority of 9.02% follows it to get exposed to different cultures.

The research also provides insight into the second question as to whether*Star Academy* reality TV image builds expectations about lifestyle. Results show that respondents built their expectations based on five show participants' dimensions, namely, friendship, lifestyle, behavior, character, and romance. The highest scores are attributed to friendship (average 40.52%), behavior (average 27.18%), and lifestyle (average 23.83%). The least dimensions are attributed to character (11.69%) and romance (8.24%). Here the average represents the three dimensions of analysis being gender, age and type of audience.

As for the third research question, "Does reality TV image, as illustrated by *Star Academy*, reflect Lebanese and Arabs' culture? If yes, then how?" The response is manifested in the teenagers' cultural acceptance of the "Stars of the show living under the same roof."

Respondents' results are categorized by gender, age and type of audience, whereby 93.53% males, 85.09% females, 88.54% age 12-15, 89.51% age 16-19, 84.67% audience, and 93.33% viewers reported that the respondents' culture "either somewhat or yes they do agree" that the "Stars of the show living under the same roof" is acceptable within their cultural norms. Therefore, on the average and irrespective of the characteristic variable, an overall 89.11% of the respondents believe that their Lebanese and Arab cultures tolerate program's participants living together under the same roof.Andrejevic (2004) contends that the present priorities in the Arab world seem to have changed as evidenced by the program's high ratings, while Hall's (2009) observation that there is contradiction between viewers' undesirability of the show's intimate actions (hugging and kissing) which are based on cultural values versus their behavior while watching (cannot split their eyes away from the screen) is confirmed.

The fourth research question is: "Are Lebanese and Arab teenagers aware of what is and what is not acceptable in their societies? How?"

This question is addressed by analyzing respondents' opinion as to whether there is contradiction between "the "Stars of the show living under the same roof" and Arab values and traditions.

The respondents' answers for such a question are really mixed since more males (54.68%) versus females (39.74%) believe the fact that the stars living together does not contradict values; more mature teenagers (51.75%) versus younger teenagers (32.04%) believe the fact that the stars living together does not contradict values; and, more viewers (52%) versus audience (41.33%) are tolerant of the fact in question. Therefore, on the average, 45.26% have no problem that the stars living under the same roof.

Going back to the results of the two aforementioned questions, one may observe that although the grand majority of 89.11% of the respondents perceive that their cultural conviction does not oppose contestants living under the same roof, still when they compare such an act to their values and traditions, almost 50% of the respondents reject the idea. This outcome emphasizes the fact that respondents have agreed at first with the idea but later on became more realistic since they had to reflect on the issue and compared it with their current status at home where values and traditions are practices enforced by their parents and governed by the society at large.

How can Star Academy image influence people's beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors?

This research question is evaluated by analyzing the responses on three survey questions.

(1) Factors influencing teenagers the most after watching Star Academy.

Several factors were tested including: contestants' outer appearance, way of speaking, pattern of watching TV, behavior in front of the camera, and hairdo and dress code. The most influential factors on teenagers are respondents' outer appearance followed by the way of dressing and hairdo and finally by the way of speaking. This order is confirmed by gender, age categories, and type of audience as delineated in Table 7. However, it is worth noting that when respondents were asked if their pattern of watching TV has changed, male respondents and the audience answered to a higher extent when compared to their females and viewers counterpart. One possible interpretation is that the males present in the studio and watching live performance were more excited by the experience when compared to females, consequently practicing self-regulation of what to see and what not to see in terms of TV shows. The aforementioned results confirm Chandler 's (1995) observation that teenagers tend to create erotic and aesthetic models which are common to genders, reflecting and reinforcing the real homogenizing attitude of clothes, hairdos and behavior.

The researchers also analyzed some few scenes that had an immediate influence on teenagers and made them want to "imitate them (dress code and hairdo) and behave like them".For instance, when one of the contestants woreabandana, a big majority of Lebanese and Arab teens followed his trend and wore it. Another contestant used to cook noodles everyday in the academy and many teenagers started to order noodles everywhere. A third contestant used a specific hairdo and dressed differently than other contestants. He influenced many Lebanese and Arab teens to dress up and fix their hair to imitate him.

(2) Reflection of a positive or a negative image of Star Academy on Society.

As shown in Table 8, male respondents are more convinced than females respondents that *Star Academy* reflects a "positive" image on society. When responses were categorized per age and type of audience, it became clear that younger aged respondents and viewers are more convinced than older respondents and audience. Looking into such behavior, Kraidy's (2009) observation which states that Arab teenagers are gradually losing identity and making some cultural shifts manifested in their reinforcing cohabitation, for example, is real.

(3) Perception of Star Academy as a measure of societal development or deterioration.

Similar results are obtained as compared to question two above.

Reflecting on the overall analysis of the aforementioned three survey questions, it is clear that *Star Academy* has a clear influence on the teenagers as manifested by their behavior, perception and overall sentiment that such programs help develop the society since they bring people together irrespective of their race, religion and region. In addition to that, when respondents were asked if they are eager to participate in such a show, and when grouping "somewhat and yes" answers, reflecting confirmation, the following outcomes are salient: 73.91% (29.81% somewhat; 44.10% yes) of the females confirmed versus 54.67% (22.30% somewhat; 32.37% yes) of the males; 73.88% (28.66% somewhat; 45.22% yes) of the 12-15 age category confirmed versus the 55.24% (23.78% somewhat; 31.46% yes) of 16-19 years old category; and, finally 64.67% (24% somewhat; 40.67% yes) of the audience agreed versus 65.34% somewhat; 36.67% yes) of the viewers. However, the aforementioned influence was discussed by

O'Guinn & Shrum (1997) and McDermott (2010) who assert that scene portraying stars are exaggerated and distorted in a way to affect the views, motives, and desires of the audience, especially teenagers.

Star Academy program brought forward a challenge to the general society in what it is trying to depict; however, in return it is faced with social attitudes which have remained constant because the Arab society is more conservative and demands conformity from its members(Berry et al., 2003;Dr. Georges Masse, professor of cultural studies and international affairs, personal communication, February 13, 2015). It is important for observers to be able to identify and distinguish these cultural patterns from individual behaviors. According to Kraidy (2009), the rules of the program consist of not broadcasting unethical sexual behaviors conveyed by the participants, though sometimes program supervisors do not pay attention to scenes they consider normal and could be of a huge influence on teenage viewers.

It is true that viewers do not necessarily read the signs, or notice what will happen at the end of the show, and if what is happening is true or not. They get the signs and codify them each according to his/her perception. The impact could be positive or negative depending on the receiver's perceptions of life and point of views. For this reason, the TV shows have to be viewed with discretion because teenagers do not always know how to differentiate between good signs and negative ones, and would not know how to handle them influence their modes of life, values, perception, behavior and attitude.

6. Recommendations

This research has attempted to study the role of reality television programs, probing the extent the image reflected by talent contestant shows, namely *Star Academy*, is affecting teenagers' life; and, assessing what major role *Star Academy* plays in motivating and influencing the teenage audience. In general, the findings provided support that the sampled teenage audience bring a fair amount of accuracy to the current assessment process and take the process seriously despite the misperceptions of some. Therefore, the Lebanese and Arab communities need to motivate and convince their sons and daughters that their opinions and attitude towards change are valuable and essential to improve their efforts to observe and analyze adequately and according to the ethical social conduct.

There are few studies that have addressed "Reality TV" shows and audience's perspectives on viewers/audience's values and behavior(Khalil, 2005, Kraidy, 2006, 2009; Ayish, 2011). It is important to note that the results of the current research will provide exploratory findings that can be used by other researchers, Middle Eastern or others; consequently, cross-cultural comparisons could be performed. Another contribution of the current study is its stimulating effect that might lead others to test the effectiveness of the assessment process used to address Reality TV programs. However, the researchers had two limitations. The sample surveyed in this study is limited to Lebanese and Arab teenagers living in Lebanon; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all Lebanese teenagers within Lebanon or Arabs living in their respective countries. Second, parents' perceptions of and opinions about the Reality TV were not examined and included in the current study.

Other implications from the current research stress that the evaluation process is complicated and the evaluation survey differs from one Arab country to another. Therefore, the challenge for future research is to continue with the study around the effectiveness and validity of the current research by using semiotic analysis. There are many ways to address this subject, for instance, a collection of the most watched scenes on YouTube could be analyzed and compared with relevant descriptive statistical tests. Outcomes could provide valuable information pertaining to the evaluation process. This could be done by each country and results will contribute to the improvement of the applied methodologies as well as finding ways to encourage both teenagers and parents' participation in the evaluation process because their feedback is valuable.

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