

## **Exploring Classifications and Functions of Topoi as Rhetorical Features in Arab Didactic Socio-Religious TV Shows**

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes632>

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Received: 27.12.2024

Accepted: 22.5.2025

Published Online: 25.5.2025

**Abstract:** Didactic socio-religious TV shows flourished as a form of post-Arab Spring social reform, aiding in raising public awareness. However, a few studies have investigated topoi as a distinctive feature of argumentative media texts in Arabic. Given the essential role these TV shows play in (re)shaping the audience's mindsets and the persuasive functions of topoi in creating common grounds with them, this study aims to examine the classifications and functions of the topoi manifested in the selected Arab TV shows featuring two influential televangelists: Al-Fitaihi from KSA and Husni from Egypt. Following a qualitative-quantitative approach, (10) episodes from the Saudi show *And My Life* (2013; 2014) and four episodes from the Egyptian *Live the Moment* (2014) were randomly selected, manually transcribed, validated for accuracy, and analyzed qualitatively based on Wodak and Meyer's (2001) categories of topoi. The results indicated that the most common topoi include authority, definition, number, danger/threat, advantages/usefulness, reality, and history. This research is the first that highlighted the distinct classifications of topoi employed in Arab socio-religious shows as remarkable features of persuasion and didacticism, significantly contributing to interdisciplinary research of linguistics, rhetoric, and media. The findings imply applying topoi in similar awakening TV shows and in argumentation pedagogy.

**Keywords:** argumentation, didactic socio-religious TV shows, Islamic televangelists, persuasion, topoi

### **1. Introduction**

Some critical factors have led to the renewal of the religious discourse in the Arab world. The constant technological developments have contributed to the urge to revive the religious discourse; however, the social and ideological shift of the Arab societies following the Arab revolutions that peaked in 2011 have necessitated renewing the religious discourse. This objective has been mandated by all religious scholars, including Al-Azhar, due to its critical role in combating violence and terrorism (Mustafa 2021). Baharuddin (2020), hence, normalized the need for ongoing religious discourse renewal based on the given circumstances by deploying the tools that would logically, emotionally, and ethically ensure effective communication between the included parties, i.e., the preacher and his audience (Sami' 2004; Jasim 2015). Hasan (2022) also emphasized the mediated unbiased nature of the renewed religious discourse that targets a wide range of audiences with different intellectual, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds.

Religious preaching TV programs in the Middle East have recently been transforming with the emergence of a new generation of televangelists who adopt a mediated religious discourse, i.e., an Islamic approach that navigates the space between Westernization and Islamic extremism. These figures are often referred to as *Al-Du'aa Al-Judud* (The new preachers) because their television preaching styles are unprecedented within the country's forty-year Islamic Revival" (Moll 2018: 234). Through the years, they have proven their success by widening the scope of their audience as they have been able to attract the attention of many youths: "These men are outside the religious establishment yet hold considerable power through the global reach of Satellite television and the Internet" (Floden 2016: 2). Their presence has been welcomed to stand against Islamophobia that has been widely spread in the West because, as Ismail stressed, their discourse is based on "the use of innovations to reach a kind of politically-correct and accepted version of Islam" (2020: 149). Alazrak (2017) empirically investigated the influence of the religious discourse presented by some new preachers such as Mustafa Husni, Ahmed Al-Shuqairi, Moez Masoud, and Amr Khaled on (400) Egyptian University students' attitudes and lifestyles. Alazrak's study found that most participants were highly interested in this discourse, with a statistically significant relationship between the new preachers' discourse and their social and behavioral changes.

Their intent to connect Islam to life-relevant practices has extended from preaching in mosques or in traditional religious TV programs by *Imams* to include a new form of didactic shows. They are presented by young men preaching in style, i.e., appearing unbearded, wearing shirts and pants, and speaking colloquial Arabic or simple standard Arabic to establish a rapport with a broad audience (Panaligan 2011). The didactic aspect of their revived religious discourse emerges from this mixture of preaching and delivering related socio-religious information, supported with evidence from various sources, "that build a self-directed form of spiritual engagement online is well examined in religions like Christianity, where aspects of orality and literacy are combined into a new, hybrid form of communication" (Lövheim 2006; Fakhrurroji 2015, as cited in Ismail 2020: 149).

Televangelists have been known for their influencing role in shaping the mentalities and identities of the audience, especially the youth. Therefore, after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, most televangelists in the Arab countries relied on remarkable reasoning patterns such as '**topoi**' to instill social values and highlight the essence of building and renovating the society. They called for embracing positive mindsets and attitudes and avoiding or correcting the negative ones, both on individual and societal levels. According to Alazrak, the new preachers' ultimate objective is to "provide a new different religious frame for how to build yourself in order to build a new Egypt, or in general a newly developed nation in the whole Islamic Arabic countries and take a turn for the better" (2017: 55). Rončáková, in her study of *topoi* deployed in the coverage of Christian religious issues in print media, confirmed that "[a]ny communication, whether religious or secular, that attempts to address an audience in such a way so as to seek their consent and shape their attitudes, must be based on *topoi*" (2012: 457).

Tracing the origins of **topoi**, Žagar (2010) found that topoi stem from Aristotle's (1994) and Cicero's (1998) classical argumentation theory. Thus, inspired by the definition of the Greek word equivalent to the term '**topics**' which denotes "having to do with commonplaces," Bloomer (2001) believed it to be "classical and medieval sets of generally accepted arguments that can be used in a speech or composition" (Walton 2007: 19). Kienpointner (1996: 194), Wodak and Meyer comprehensively defined the concept of topoi as "content-related warrants or 'conclusion rules'" whose function is to link the argument(s) with the conclusion to justify the advanced claim (2001: 74). In this regard, Gaitano (2008) referred to the value of identifying topoi in argumentations as they operate as questions to help promote understanding them by locating arguments and their refutations. Richardson viewed **topoi** as "reservoirs of generalized key ideas from which specific statements or arguments can be generated" (2004: 230). Besides, topoi, for van Dijk, "represent premises that are taken for granted, as self-evident and as sufficient reasons to accept the conclusion" (2000: 3). Their classifications and functions can be identified in terms of the lexical choices used in the given contexts. They reflect the values and assumptions of the language users. Van Dijk (2000) referred to topoi as "ready-mades" in argumentation, positioned between semantics and rhetoric.

Despite their significant persuasive function, a few studies have investigated topoi in limited discourse genres, such as English and Arabic newspaper articles (Ashmawi 2012), online newspapers' blogs (Herrera, 2018), and political discourse analysis (Hasan 2020). Therefore, Zompetti (2006) highlighted Vancil's (1979) criticism of the argument scholars and practitioners' inattention to topoi. Zompetti also called for the necessity of reviving the study of topoi as an integral part of contemporary argumentation theories to assist students and teachers in comprehensive argument pedagogy in terms of their role in identifying and developing arguments and enhancing critical thinking skills.

Topoi have seldom been explored in religious discourse. Rončáková (2012) examined how religious messages are tackled in Slovakia's secular and church media, using topoi to identify the depiction of some religious topics in media. Similarly, Mansouri et al. (2017) studied topoi within Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical framework to scrutinize the persuasive effect of oratory discourse represented in an Islamic sermon for a native English orator.

To the best of our knowledge, no studies have analyzed the use of topoi manifested in Arabic texts in Islamic media discourse, i.e., didactic TV shows for Arab televangelists. This study aims to explore the classifications and functions of topoi as essential rhetorical features that distinguish this genre of religious media discourse. The researchers, hence, investigated the different types of topoi employed in the advanced arguments presented in two didactic socio-religious Arab TV shows to achieve the desired persuasive impact on the target audience. The researchers, hence, compare an Egyptian and a Saudi TV show by two well-known televangelists, namely, Husni (2014) and Al-Fitaihi (2013; 2014), to answer the research questions proposed below: (1) What are the key classifications of topoi utilized in the Egyptian and Saudi didactic socio-religious TV shows? (2) What are

the functions of the topoi that distinguish the genre of the didactic TV shows? The significance of the study emerges from its tendency to focus on topoi that have remained underexplored, adding new insights into interdisciplinary research of linguistics, rhetoric, and media.

## 2. Method

Following the qualitative-quantitative approach, the researchers randomly selected (10) episodes from the Saudi show *And My Life* by Al-Fitaihi (2013; 2014) and (4) episodes from the Egyptian show *Live the Moment* by Husni (2014). Two researchers transcribed the scripts of the episodes, and a third one checked the accuracy by comparing the two transcriptions to ensure data reliability. Based on Wodak and Meyer's (2001) classifications of topoi, the qualitative linguistic analysis of the selected data was conducted, mainly investigating the various topoi applied in each TV show. Quantitatively, the frequency of the topoi's occurrences is calculated and presented in numerical values illustrated in tables to provide precise results concerning the intended comparisons between the two selected TV shows.

The two Arab TV shows are purposively selected due to the influential status of their presenters, who are also the ideas' owners and scriptwriters. First, Husni, classified as a televangelist and one of the new preachers, has been airing at least one TV show annually, particularly in the holy month, Ramadan, since his start on *Iqra'* Channel. He has occupied the top ranks in the Muslim500 annual books, taking the 27<sup>th</sup> rank in the 2024 book (Muslim500, 2024). Besides, Alazrak (2017) found that the youth considered Husni the most inspiring new preacher. As for Al-Fitaihi, one of the pioneers of the Saudi medical sector, he was ranked 20<sup>th</sup> by the Arabian Business Magazine (2012) among the world's most powerful Saudis for 2012 in the science category and recently the 41<sup>st</sup> of the 2023 top 100 healthcare leaders in the Middle East by Forbes (2023). *And My Life*, broadcast in four seasons from 2013 to 2017, was the only T.V. show he presented.

The episodes under study were randomly selected from the two TV shows. First, *Eesh El-Lahza* (i.e., *Live the Moment*), broadcasted on TV in Ramadan 2014, can be categorized as a socio-religious show. In (29) episodes, Husni (2014) mainly focuses on social issues from a religious perspective. The first episode, *The Beginning*, introduces the show's objective and sets the basis for the argument elaborated in the remaining (28) episodes; each represents positive and negative turning points in life. The four selected episodes encompass two negative moments, i.e., Ep.4, *Anxiety Moments* and Ep.24, *Separation/Divorce Moments*, and two positive moments, Ep.10, *Happiness Moments*, and Ep.20, *Charity Moments*. Regarding *And My Life*, Seasons 1 and 2 were televised in Ramadan, 2013 and 2014, tackling different societal or personal problems. They comprise (26) and (27) episodes, respectively, in addition to a final episode which functions as a conclusion that collects the various threads woven in the individual episodes into a meaningful canvas; in other words, Al-Fitaihi finalizes each season with one episode that clarifies the semantic coherence of the show's broader context. In each episode of the two seasons, Al-Fitaihi puts forward a standpoint and advances an argument to

prove it. The selected data encompasses (6) episodes from the first season, namely Ep. 2, *And If Anyone Saved a Life*; Ep. 3, *Questions*; Ep. 5, *Abuse and Children's Future*; Ep. 21, *E-Communication Generation*; Ep. 22, *Comprehensive Concept of Medication*; and Ep. 23, *Forgotten Dutifulness*. In addition, (4) episodes were randomly selected from the second season: Ep. 1, *Anxiety*; Ep. 9, *Sexual Harassment*; Ep. 17, *Optimism*; and Ep. 25, *Health Enhancement*. The discrepancy in the number of each show's episodes arises from the attempt to equate the two shows' cumulative duration of the episodes under study in each show, which amounts to approximately (97) minutes, seeking to identify the differences between both.

Hence, the present study utilized Wodak and Meyer's (2001) classifications of topoi as one of the major argumentation strategies, summarized in the list below (pp.74-77): the topoi of **usefulness/advantage**, **uselessness/disadvantage**, **definition or name-interpretation**, **danger or threat**, **humanitarianism**, **justice**, **responsibility**, **burdening or weighting**, **finances**, **reality**, **number**, **law and right**, **authority**, **history**, **culture**, and **abuse**. The **topos of authority** resembles one form of van Dijk's (2000) **evidentiality**, which can take different forms, namely, **appeal to authority or wisdom** (i.e., of authority), **appeal to reliable sources**, **appeal to written documents**, or **eyewitnessing something**. Wodak and Meyer (2001) confirmed that "the analyses of typical content-related argument schemes can be carried out against the background of the list of topoi though incomplete and not always disjunctive" (p.74).

To obtain the objectives of the current study, the researchers implemented the following procedures. First, the episodes of the two selected didactic TV shows are downloaded from YouTube using the YTDDownloader application. Second, two researchers manually extracted the verbal transcriptions of the selected episodes, and a third researcher checked the reliability of the transcribed data. Third, the argumentation manifested in the verbal text is analyzed in terms of the topoi proposed by Wodak and Meyer (2001) as discourse analytical tools. Fourth, the researchers manually calculated the frequency of the utilized topoi. Fifth, the selected extracts are translated into English; Muhsin Khan and Tadi-ud-Din al-Hilali's translation from the Qur'an mobile application is adopted for the Quranic verses in the examples. Finally, the results are tested against the objectives of the study and the research questions put forward.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Topoi in *And My Life*

Table 1. The frequency of each topos in the selected episodes from the two seasons of *And My Life*

Topoi		<i>Abuse and Children's Future</i>	<i>E-Communication Generation</i>	<i>Forgotten Dutifulness</i>	<i>Questions</i>	<i>Comprehensive Concept of Medication</i>	<i>And If Anyone Saved a Life</i>	<i>Anxiety</i>	<i>Optimism</i>	<i>Sexual Harassment</i>	<i>Health Enhancement</i>	<i>Total Topoi</i>
Topos of Authority	Appeal to Wisdom	3	1	7	2	3	1	6	3	1		27
	Appeal to reliable sources	4	2	2	5	4	1	8	12	3	4	45
Topos of number		2	2	1	4	2	2	4	4	5	4	30
Topos of advantage					6	1	1	5	8	1	4	26
Topos of Danger/Threat		5	3	2		4	1	7		2	2	26
Topos of Definition		2	1	3		1	1	3	4	2	2	19
Topos of responsibility		2	2	2	1	2	2			1	4	16
Topos of abuse		1		4						3		8
Topos of Reality		1	1		1	1	1		1		1	7
Topos of History				1	1	1		1	1			5

According to Table 1, **topos of authority**, including its three sub-categories, is the most frequently used in the selected episodes of *And My Life*. First, pertaining to the medical perspective of the show, **the appeal to reliable sources** sub-category is the most prevailing one in the episodes under study. They entail factual information referring to some scientific studies carried out regarding each argumentation in each episode to verify the points of view advanced aiming at persuading his audience in general and his antagonists in specific. Moreover, to add more credibility and reliability to the arguments, there are other examples of appeal-to-reliable-sources topos, which can also fall under the category of **appeal-to-written-documents topos**; they involve references of books and studies carried out

by specific doctors and/or published in some universities, journals, research centers, or companies as shown in the example below from *Abuse and Children's Future*.

1. وفي دراسة مقارنة نشرتها المجلة الأمريكية للطب النفسي تبين أن دماغ أولئك الأفراد اللذين عانوا من العنف اللفظي يحتوي على نسبة أقل من المادة الرمادية التي لها علاقة وطيدة بمستوى الذكاء والقدرة على التحليل والتفكير المعقد.

[In a comparative study published by the American Journal of Psychiatry, verbal abuse victims' brain was found to consist of a lower percentage of grey matter closely related to levels of intelligence and analytical and critical thinking abilities.]

In addition to the scientific approach to the current argumentations of the selected episodes, Al-Fitaihi also depends on some religious evidence to address his audience via a wide range of **topoi of appeal to wisdom**. To increase the persuasive impact, the protagonist resorts to quoting from the Qur'an, as in Example (2) from *Anxiety*, Prophetic hadiths, and some sayings of the Prophet's companions and followers, such as Umar Ibn-AlKhattab.

2. إن معظم الضغوط والقلق منبعا إما حزنٌ على الماضي أو خوفٌ من المستقبل وهما من أدوات الشيطان ليخوفَ بهم الإنسان، يقول تعالى: " الشَّيْطَانُ يَعِدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُم بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعِدُكُم مَّغْفِرَةً مِّنْهُ وَقَضَاءً وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ"... وعلاج ذلك قوله تعالى: "وَكَايِنٍ مِّن دَابَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رَزْقَهَا اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ"

[Sources of most stress and anxiety are either grief about the past or fear of the future, which are Satan's tools to terrify a man. Allah says, "Shaitan (Satan) threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit Fahsha (evil deeds, illegal sexual intercourse, sins, etc.), whereas Allah promises you Forgiveness from Himself and Bounty, and Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knower." However, its remedy is as Allah says, "And so many a moving (living) creature there is, that carries not its own provision! Allah provides for it and for you. And He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower." (Translated by Muhsin Khan and Tadi-ud-Din al-Hilali).]

Al-Fitaihi addresses the audience with an almost equal utilization of topoi of both scientific and religious authorities as basic features of *And My Life* to maintain objectivity, credibility, and reliability. The two fall into a significantly integrated relationship to defend the standpoints under discussion and satisfy a diverse audience. In other words, the appeal to authority acts as the presenter's golden card because it has a remarkable persuasion effect on people who trust in the power of science and those who might doubt its veracity.

The second most frequently used topos in the present selected episodes is **the topos of number**. It corresponds to the appeal-to-reliable-sources sub-category of the topos of authority, as illustrated in the example below for further justification. Specifying the numbers of some studies' samples, their age range, and statistical findings, as shown in Example (3) from *Health Enhancement*, significantly helps the protagonist reinforce the credibility, objectivity, and accuracy of the information utilized to verify his points of view.

3. فإحصائيات منظمة الصحة العالمية لعام 2011 تبين أن 70% من الرجال و80% من النساء في الكويت 63% من الرجال و66% من النساء في السعودية مصابون بالسمنة.

[The WHO's statistics in 2011 indicated that 70% of men and 80% of women in Kuwait and 63% of men and 66% of women in the KSA are obese.]

**Topos of advantage/usefulness** in the selected episodes effectively persuades the audience with specific issues such as curiosity and passion for knowledge, a comprehensive concept of diagnosis and medication, first aid protective procedures against child sexual abuse, health enhancement plans, and positivity. When it is justified in terms of topos of authority of the reliable sources type, the persuasive effect of these topoi of advantage or usefulness is extended, as in the example below from *Anxiety*.

4. ومن رحمة الله بالإنسان أن جعل في البكاء تخفيفاً للضغط، فقد اكتشف د. وليام فراي أن الدموع الناتجة عن عاطفة أو حزن أو ضغوط نفسية تحتوي على كميات كبيرة من هرمونات القلق والسموم لطردها خارج الجسم، بل وفي دراسات أخرى وُجِدَ أن البكاء يفعل هرمون الأندروفين وهو بمثابة مخدر طبيعي في الجسم.

[Out of Allah's mercy towards man, He has made crying relieve pressure. Dr. William Frey found that tears of emotion, sorrow, or psychological pressure expel large amounts of anxiety hormones and toxins from the body. Other studies indicated that crying activates Endorphins, i.e., a bodily natural anesthetic.]

**Topos of danger or threat** demonstrates the potential hazards of particular negative attitudes or beliefs that might lead to devastating consequences, as illustrated in Example (5). Besides, some examples are also topos of authority appealing to reliable sources to amplify the impact of these ventures using objective, credible, and trustworthy sources. Based on the emphasized dilemma, topos of danger/threat could address individuals or the entire society. For instance, in *Anxiety*, individuals are advised to avoid such a negative feeling to prevent possible health risks. Moreover, the society could be recognized as a consolidated unit in some topoi of danger when the protagonists address crucial issues such as first aid value in *And If Anyone Saved a Life*, the importance of sexual assault crimes disclosure in *Sexual Harassment*, and the urgent investment in man in *Health Enhancement* (see Example (5)). Therefore, the show's didactic aspect is intended to be reflected rhetorically by the topos of danger/threat. In addition to raising their awareness by elevating their vigilance, it seeks to persuade the intended audience to take prompt steps to halt these threats and change the current unsafe situations.

5. إنها معادلة واضحة جليا، إذا لم نفهمها اليوم ونطبقها فإننا سندفع ثمن تقاعسنا غاليا في المستقبل القريب، بل إننا ندفعه اليوم، وسيدفعه أبناؤنا وأوطاننا أضعافا مضاعفة، بل سيؤدي لآ محالة إلى خلق التنمية واستنزاف الشعوب التي غفلت عن الاستثمار الصحيح في مراحل المبكرة، إنه الاستثمار في البشر قبل الحجر. فلنبدأ بالإنسان.

[It is a crystal-clear equation: If we do not understand and apply it today, we will pay dearly for our inaction shortly. We are already paying for it today, and our children and countries will pay it back manifold. Investing in humans before bricks will definitely enhance development. It will also drain peoples who have overlooked the right investment in its early phases, so let us start with the man.]

The **topos of definition** is exploited in the selected episodes of *And My Life* for three major purposes. First, it serves as a departure point for most arguments; Al-Fitaihi usually starts his arguments with a topos of definition to introduce the issue under discussion and to guarantee the void of his claims from any ambiguity or potential misunderstanding. For instance, *Abuse and Children's Future* begins

with a clear definition of verbal child abuse in terms of its various forms (see Example (6)). The second purpose is to elucidate critical concepts related to the arguments under investigation, such as parental duties forms, optimistic people's "cognitive flexibility", the "health enhancement" concept, and the modified definition of "health", according to the WHO. The presenter's academic background motivates him to document some of the manifested definitions, resorting to credible sources such as the WHO, the ASCAP (i.e., the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry), the American Journal of Psychiatry, and some renowned psychologists such as Dr. Seligman and Dr. Dodge. Accordingly, the aforementioned examples can be considered both types of *topoi*, namely definition and appeal to authority. Finally, the third purpose of the *topos* of definition or name-interpretation in the selected episodes in *And My Life* is to simplify scientific terms and information for the audience who might not be familiar with them by clarifying their functions such as Dopamine, adrenal glands, cortisol, and amygdala.

6. العنف اللفظي هو الألفاظ المسيئة التي تحمل عبارات السخرية والشتم والازدراء والتخويف والتهديد من قِبَل الوالدين أو أي فرد تجاه الطفل، وكذلك استعمال اللغة السوقية والانتقاد المستمر للطفل ومقارنته بأطفال آخرين، أضف على ذلك التعبيرات التي تحمل رسائل ساخرة أو جارحة وفيها احتقار واستخفاف.

[Verbal abuse encompasses the use of words of sarcasm, insult, contempt, intimidation, and threat by parents of any individual toward children, vulgar language, constant criticism and comparison between them and other children, and verbal expressions that convey mocking, hurtful, ridiculing, or irreverent messages.]

Al-Fitaihi's show tends to guide his audience and address the sense of responsibility of certain individuals or the whole society concerning some problematic matters via the use of **topos of responsibility**. In *Abuse and Children's Future* and *Forgotten Dutifulness*, for instance, he directs his argument to parents, and to justify the responsibility placed on their shoulders towards their children, the *topos* of advantage is typically attached to emphasize the positive outcomes of the parents' compliance with their obligations. In addition, the medical systems playing the role of the antagonists of the argument in *Comprehensive Conception of Medication* are addressed by the same *topos* of responsibility as shown in Example (7). In other episodes such as *And If Anyone Saved a Life*, *Generation of E-Communication*, *Questions*, *Sexual Harassment*, and *Health Enhancement*, the **topos of responsibility** is implemented to urge the individuals' social accountability to take action to solve societal problems before they have to face their catastrophic consequences.

7. ولذلك فإن العلاج الصحيح يستوجب الأخذ بالمكونات الثلاثة في التشخيص والعلاج، ومن واجب الطبيب كذلك عند علاج المريض أن يسعى لتحقيق الاحتياجات الجسدية والعقلية والنفسية له، فيحترم عقله ويجعله جزءاً شريكاً في صنع قرارات العلاج، ويلبي الاحتياجات النفسية والعاطفية عند المريض لكي يكتمل العلاج الشمولي، ويتم الشفاء بإذن الله.

[Therefore, the correct medication requires considering the three components in diagnosis and treatment. It is the doctor's duty when treating patients to strive to meet their physical, mental, and psychological needs, respect their mentality and to include them in the medication decisions, and obtain these psychological and

*emotional needs to achieve comprehensive medication and guarantee healing, God willing.]*

Some examples of **topos of abuse** in *Forgotten Dutifulness, Abuse and Children's Future*, and *Sexual Harassment* shed light on the problem of violence against children, particularly in Arab countries. For the latter episode, the topos of abuse is scientifically verified in terms of studies and statistics either in foreign countries such as Switzerland and America or in Arab countries such as Palestine and Saudi Arabia. The protagonist attempts to warn the entire society that abuse is not constrained to the physical form, but it can take distinct forms such as psychological, mental, verbal, and sexual (see Example (8)). It not only evokes compassion towards those helpless victims, but it also raises the audience's awareness and urges them to take serious actions to diminish this wrongdoing and avoid its catastrophic consequences on the child's health and the entire society. Topos of abuse, hence, digs deeper into the target societies to rectify the roots of the malignant plant that can destroy future generations.

8. بل ما يفاقم الأمر في عالمنا العربي غياب ثقافة الحوار بين الأطفال والآباء وخوف الأطفال ألا يصدقهم الكبار والخوف من نتائج الإخبار والإشهار وفضح الأسرار وسيطرة ثقافة التلقين والتلقي، وهي تجسيد لفكرة الفاعل والمفعول به حيث إن الكبار يلقنون والصغار يتلقون دون مناقشة أو تفكير، يتلقون الحقائق والمعلومات بل وفلسفة الحياة كما يتلقون الإهانات والتوبيخ والعنف الجسدي والجنسي دون مقاومة أو رفض أو نقاش.

*[What aggravates this issue in our Arab world are the absence of a conversation culture between children and their parents, the children's fear that their parents will not believe them, fear of the disclosure's consequences, and the domination of indoctrination-receiving culture. This culture incorporates the doer-and-receiver concept according to which the adults teach, whereas the young receive facts, information, and even life doctrine without discussion or thinking. They also receive offenses, reproofs, and physical and sexual abuse without resistance, rejection, or discussion.]*

The functions of **topos of reality** vary according to its position in the argument. When used in the introduction, the protagonist strives to establish a common ground between his views and the audience's, as in Example (9) from *And If Anyone Saved a Life*. Moreover, the topos of reality can sometimes be manifested in the middle of the arguments to verify the efficacy of the recommended solutions and motivate the target addressees to take action accordingly. Finally, the generalization included in the topos of reality utilized at the end of the episode in Example (10) from *Optimism* acts as a rhetorical conclusive justification for the argumentation's standpoints.

9. "تُخلف حوادث السيارات أعداداً كبيرة من الضحايا والمصابين كل عام، وتكتمل الكارثة بتجمّع كثيرين حول المصاب وهم مكتوفو الأيدي.

*[Car accidents result in large numbers of victims and injuries yearly, and the disaster gets enormous when bystanders stand helpless.]*

10. إن طبيعة الحياة التي نعيشها تفرض على إنسان اليوم واقعا يشعره بأنه لن يستطيع أن يغير الكثير مما يجعله ضحية سهلة للتشاؤم ولا فكاك من ذلك إلا بتغيير طريقة تفكير الإنسان وحديثه لنفسه.

*[The nature of our life imposes reality on today's man, which makes him feel like he cannot change much, which turns him into an easy victim of pessimism. This can only differ when he changes how he thinks and speaks to himself.]*

**Topos of history** found in episodes *Comprehensive Conception of Medication, Questions, Forgotten Dutifulness, Anxiety, and Optimism* pertains to the religious perspective of the show. It aims to teach lessons from Islamic history for prominent Islamic figures. There is no better role model to be followed than Prophet Muhammed in any aspect of life. Thus, the Prophet's kindness, respect, and patience towards Anas bin Malik, who had served him for (10) years, is effectively posited in the argument of *Forgotten Dutifulness*, as shown below in Example (11). In addition, relevant brief stories of some of the Prophet's companions and followers provide compelling proof that should be trusted, learned from, and imitated. In *Questions*, Umar bin Khattab, known as Al-Farooq for his profound wisdom, gives a lesson for everyone who suppresses the freedom of questions: He used to select his consultants based on their passion for knowledge or asking questions. Similarly, *Anxiety* is supported by an example of Urwa bin Az-Zubair's resilience at times of adversity when he concurrently lost his leg, and one of his sons set an influential model for anxious people.

11. هذا ما نقله لنا أنس بن مالك-رضي الله عنه وأرضاه- عندما قال: "خدمت رسول الله-ص- 10 سنين فما قال لي أف قط." عن أنس بن مالك-رضي الله عنه- قال: "لم يكن رسول الله-صلى الله عليه وسلم-سباباً ولا فحاشاً ولا لعاناً."

[as Anas bin Malik-May Allah Be Pleased With Him- stated, "I had served the Prophet-PBUH- for 10 years, yet he never said a word of contempt" and "The Prophet-PBUH- never swore, vulgarized, or cursed."]

### 3.2 Topoi in *Live the Moment*

Table 2. The frequency of each topos in the selected episodes from *Live the Moment*

Topoi		<i>Stress and Anxiety Moments</i>	<i>Separation/ Divorce Moments</i>	<i>Happiness Moments</i>	<i>Charity Moments</i>	Total Topoi
Topos of Authority	Appeal to Wisdom	6	11	9	21	47
	Appeal to reliable sources	3	--	4	1	8
Topos of Definition		4	1	4	4	13
Topos of History		2	1	7	2	12
Topos of Reality		2	4	6	--	12
Topos of Danger/Threat		--	--	5	--	5

**Topos of authority**, with its two major sub-categories, namely, **appeal to wisdom** and **appeal to reliable sources**, is the most commonly used in Husni's *Live the Moment*, similar to Al-Fitaihi's *And My Life*. Husni extensively harnesses topos of authority's sub-type, **appealing to wisdom**, in particular, in the advanced arguments to guarantee to win the hearts and minds of the audience and to facilitate persuading the potential skeptic audience. Quoting from the Qur'an (see Example

(12) from *Separation/Divorce Moments*), Qudsi Hadiths, Prophetic hadiths, and the Prophet's companions in the context of tackling social issues or personal experiences from a religious perspective adds value to the discussions. In other words, given the cultural background of the Arab audience grounded in religious principles, the appeal to wisdom reinforces the credibility of the argument and protagonist. It also aims to guide the audience to ethical standards and inspire them to preserve morality by obeying Allah and His Prophet and following the lead of the Prophet's companions in the various aspects of life addressed in the argument.

12. ما في آية انفصال وطلاق إلا وراها كلام عن الحق والعدل أو كلام عن التقوى: "اتق الله"، بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم "وإن يتفرقا يُعني الله كلاً من سعته وكان الله واسعاً حكيماً"، بعدها على طول "ولله ما في السموات وما في الأرض ولقد وصينا الذين أوتوا الكتاب من قبلكم وإياكم أن اتقوا الله وإن تكفروا فإن الله ما في السموات والأرض وكان الله غنياً حميداً"، يتكلم ربنا عن كُفر النعمة ويتكلم ربنا عن التقوى بعد الكلام عن الانفصال. [Every separation or divorce verse is followed by a speech about right, fairness, or righteousness: "Fear Allah"; In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, "But if they separate (by divorce), Allah will provide abundance for every one of them from His Bounty. And Allah is Ever All-Sufficient for His creatures' need, All-Wise," followed directly by "And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And verily, We have recommended to the people of the Scripture before you, and to you (O Muslims) that you (all) fear Allah, and keep your duty to Him, But if you disbelieve, then unto Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and Allah is Ever Rich (Free of all wants), Worthy of all praise." (Translated by Muhsin Khan and Tadi-ud-Din al-Hilali) Allah speaks about ingratitude for grace, and He speaks about piety after discussing separation.]

Unlike the specificity of the Appeal-to-wisdom examples, **the appeal to reliable sources** refers to generic sources such as العلماء in Example (13) from *Stress and Anxiety Moments* without identifying the denoted kind of scholars or scientists although the context might help communicate Husni's reference to psychologists. Similarly, mentioning Sheikhs' names, such as ابن عطاء الله in Example (14) from *Happiness Moments*, might not also achieve the intended persuasive effect of the topos of appeal to reliable sources due to the inadequate referencing for the mentioned figure. The presenter should have familiarized the audience with his identity to determine his authoritative relation to the arguments. This drawback could negatively affect the protagonist's persona.

13. العلماء قالوا... الإنسان... بسبب لخطات القلق تجربة سلبية في الماضي، كان فيها فشل أو تعثر أو أحزان فيحكم بالماضي المؤلم على المستقبل المظلم.

[Scholars said... One... can live moments of anxiety due to a negative experience of failure, stumbles, or sorrows, so he might judge the dark future based on the painful past.]

14. خُد بالك، لحظة الفرح بما يضر لحظة بتخلي لحظة الفرحه بتبعك أوي عن كل قيمة ربنا بيحبها، عشان كده بن عطاء الله قال كلمة عايزك تحفظها ويا رب أنا كمان أعيش بيها، قال "العارفون إذا بسطوا أخوف منهم إذا فُضوا، ولا يقف على حدود الأدب في البسط إلا قليل"... أدب الفرحه مش ناس كثير بتلتزم بيه.

[Take care! The harmful kind of happiness moment could take you far away from every value Allah loves. Therefore, Bin Ata' Allah said a word which I want you to mark, and -Oh, Allah- I hope I myself live with it. He said, "Wise people are fearful

*in comfort than in distress, and no one sticks to the limits of politeness but few." Few adhere to the happiness etiquette.]*

The second most frequent topos in the four selected episodes of *Live the Moment* is the **topos of definition**, demonstrating main propositions and supporting minor arguments. As for the former function, the first major premise presented in the episodes is concerned with the definition of each moment to ensure clarity concerning any possible confusion and establish a common ground with the audience, such as the distinction between fear and anxiety necessarily taking place at the beginning of the episode. Furthermore, **topos of definition** can be exploited to justify some defensive premises. They may illustrate precise definitions for some factors that cause or disrupt the experience. In Example (15) from *Stress and Anxiety Moments*, الشخص الودني shall be defined because it is a cultural-specific colloquial term used in the Egyptian culture which might not be familiar to audiences from other Arab cultures. Therefore, the topos of definition in this case ensures the void of ambiguity to warn the audience from particular unacceptable approaches to these turning points.

15. تاني حاجة الشخص الودني. الودني يعني ايه؟ اللي عمال يستمع لكل واحد قلقان وخايف، البلد بتضيع أو مفيش شغل... الأفكار السلبية دي لما بتدور في مجالسنا بتخلق الشخص القلقان اللي مش قادر ياخذ أي خطوة وقاعد تعيس بسبب المخاوف اللي ممكن تحصل لكن مفيش منطق دلوقتي بتقول إنها هتحصل حالاً دلوقتي، فأبقى قلقان.. الشخص اللي بيدي ودنه.

*[The second factor is the impressionable person. What does "the impressionable person" mean? He is the one who keeps listening to each anxious and fearful person who claims that the country is getting lost, there is no employment..., etc. When these negative thoughts circulate in our gatherings, they create an anxious person who is unable to take any step and remains miserable due to the fears that may occur. However, there is no logic now indicating that they will happen right now to stay anxious. That is the impressionable person.]*

Both **topoi of history and reality** hold an equivalent position in the argumentation, as shown in Table 2. Husni's verifications rely primarily on historical religious stories, as in Example (16) from *Happiness Moments*, and real-life situations in Example (17) from *Separation/Divorce Moments*. Thus, the former shares the categorization of appeal-to-wisdom topos of authority. Both topoi, on the one hand, enhance the credibility of the presenter and the current arguments. On the other hand, sharing both kinds of narratives can strengthen the persuasion likelihood via evoking emotional responses. Narrating stories from the past and the present also provides a cultural context to the given arguments, which could persuasively and didactically reflect on the audience's perception; both types of topoi aspire to teach certain morals or values.

16. ويوم ما سيدنا محمد-صلى الله عليه وسلم-جاله واحد عايز يجاهد معاه.. قال له: أبوك وأمك عاملين ايه؟ قال: "تركتهما بيكيان"، قال: "ارجع فأضحكهما كما أبكيتهما"، النبي ميبحبش يشوف أبداً بيت فيه أحزان، والنبي ميبحبش حاجة ربنا ميبهبهاش-سبحانه وتعالى.

*[When someone went to the Prophet-PBUH- to express his desire to struggle with him, the Prophet asked him about his parents, and he replied: "I left them crying" The Prophet said, "Return to your parents and cheer them up as you had saddened*

them." *The Prophet does not like to see a house with sorrows, and the Prophet does not like what Allah Almighty does not like.*]

17. بعد 10 سنين من الحب، لكن كل خناقة بيهينوا بعض، هم الاتنين محترموش بعض... وشبه حَطَفَ البنت كده عندها 4 سنين... طبعاً برُّته من كل حاجة، ورَجَعَلها البنت، الست جَسرت كل حاجة، والراجل جَسر بنته بالأفكار السامة اللي الست بدأت تقولها عن أبوها.

[*Despite ten years of love, after each fight, both keep insulting each other. Both did not respect each other... and he almost kidnapped their 4-year-old daughter... Of course, she waived all her rights to him, and he returned the girl. The woman lost everything, and he lost his daughter with all the poisonous ideas her mother planted in her head.*]

Interestingly, all the examples of **topos of danger/threat** are detected in one episode discussing a cheerful moment, i.e., *Happiness Moments* (see Example (18) below). The topos of danger/threat pinpoints the hazards of the harmful happiness attributed to many real-life situations. Therefore, most of them are also considered topos of reality. Although the episode discusses delightedness, the protagonist applies this topos to raise awareness and warn the audience about the latent dark side of the moment, which most likely emerges from the prone-to-evil self. He, hence, incites the audience to be more self-cautious and antagonize their potential inner wicked voices.

18. يوم ما إنسان في يوم من الأيام يمسح بكرامة حد الأرض، ويبيان إنه جامد قدام الناس، ويطلع "شوف أنا انتصرت بعدما هزأته وخليت مناخيره في التراب"، ويطلع عنده زهو من جواه... خد بالك لحظة الفرح بما يضر... تبعك قوي عن كل قيمة ربنا بيحبها.

[*When someone humiliates a person to the ground, showing off his power, claiming, "See how I won after I mocked him and cut him down to size!", he feels proud from within. Beware! The harmful happiness moment... keeps you away from all the values Allah loves.*]

#### 4. Discussion

Table 3. Comparison between topoi in *And My Life* and *Live the Moment*

Topoi	<i>And My Life</i>	<i>Live the Moment</i>	Total	
Topos of Authority	Appeal to Wisdom	27	47	74
	Appeal to reliable sources	45	8	53
Topos of Definition	19	13	32	
Topos of number	30	2	32	
Topos of Danger/Threat	26	5	31	
Topos of advantage/usefulness	26	2	28	
Topos of Reality	7	12	19	
Topos of History	5	12	17	
Topos of responsibility	16	0	16	
Topos of abuse	8	0	8	

The distinctions between the topoi employed in *And My Life* and *Live the Moment* are shown in Table 3. The common topoi in both Arab didactic TV shows

involve the topoi of authority, definition, number, danger/threat, advantages/usefulness, reality, and history, respectively. In particular, the utilized topoi of authority, number, reality, and history reinforce the credibility of the sources and the trustworthy persona of the authors as knowledgeable of the various aspects of the tackled issues, enhancing the persuasive impact on the audience. In general, all of the aforementioned topoi serve the didactic functions of the current TV shows under study, providing the audience with religious, scientific, and realistic information and raising their awareness concerning the potential hazards or benefits of a given attitude.

On the other hand, Table 3 demonstrates the utilization of topoi of responsibility and abuse only in the Saudi show and some varying frequencies of each of the other topoi in the two shows due to their relatively distinct perspectives. The former two topoi could be used distinctly in Al-Fitaihi's show because most of the tackled topics address societal issues, and he often stresses the necessity of the collaborative effort of all the concerned individuals and warns against abusive behaviors to uplift society's standards. Concerning the distinctive occurrences of some topoi, the appeal to reliable sources is one of the fundamental characteristics that signalize *And My Life's* scientific perspective, additionally endorsed with the topoi of definition and number to attain simplification, clarification, and precision. Besides, Al-Fitaihi (2013; 2014) manifests both potential risks and benefits in the form of the topoi of danger/threat and advantage/usefulness to maintain a balanced argument contributing to a thorough risk assessment of the addressed problems and the decision-making process to solve them. Concerning *Live the Moment*, the prevailing appeal-to-wisdom topos reflects the religious nature of the show. Besides, some instances of this topos have also been recognized as topos of history. Both topoi of history and reality effectively support the protagonist's premises by presenting historical and realistic examples.

To conclude, taking into consideration the frequency of the topoi employed, as shown in Table 3, the didactic socio-religious TV show discourse presented by Arab televangelists or new preachers is characterized by credibility, simplicity, and social awareness. First, topoi of **authority**, i.e., the most dominant one, **number**, and **history** augment the soundness and accuracy of the supported evidence. The three types of topoi present credible references from the Qur'an, Sunnah, historical figures, and scientific scholars as role models to follow. Similarly, Mansouri *et al.* (2017) confirmed the prevalence of the topos of model, i.e., the topos of authority, in the sermon discourse. Second, as demonstrated in the aforementioned examples, both presenters used simple language in their discourse to diminish the distance between them and the audience: Husni (2014) used colloquial Arabic, whereas Al-Fitaihi (2013; 2014) used simplified standard Arabic. Simplicity was also attained in the discourse under study due to the use of some topoi, such as those of **definition**, **reality**, and **history**, to facilitate understanding the advanced arguments by interpreting critical concepts, complex scientific terms, Qur'anic verses, or Prophetic Hadiths, pragmatizing the tackled issues, and teaching historical lessons. This finding aligns with the studies of Mansouri *et al.* (2017), in which topos of definition played a part in clarifying some critical terms introduced in the English

sermon under study, and Al-Azrak, who elucidated that the Egyptian youth are highly interested in the new preachers' speeches because "they depend mainly on simplified explanation for the holy Qur'an and on the actions of prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and the history of attractive and successful Islamic characters" (2017: 53). Finally, the social awareness aspect of the genre under investigation is boosted via the use of the remaining topoi of **danger/threat**, **advantage**, **responsibility**, and **abuse**, which elevate the audience's sense of self and social consciousness without intimidating them.

## 5. Conclusion

The current study compared two TV shows for Arab televangelists from two different countries, aiming to identify the dominant classifications of topoi utilized in both. The researchers concluded that topoi of authority, definition, number, danger/threat, advantages/usefulness, reality, and history constitute distinctive features of this genre of TV shows. The key functions of these common topoi are to preach and teach in a persuasive context. The minor distinctions between the two shows could emerge from the different perspectives each presenter adopts.

The limitation of the study is that it analyzes only one of the argumentative strategies, i.e., topoi, employed in didactic TV shows. Thus, further studies can be conducted to examine the harmony of the various argumentative features in this genre. Moreover, future research is recommended to identify topoi in traditional religious preaching TV shows and compare them to the current data of didactic TV shows. Furthermore, some genres, such as Arabic prose and poetry and Islamic moral books, researched in translation studies (Anis, Abdul Malik and Setiyadi 2022; Anis et al. 2022) can be rhetorically investigated, focusing on the use of topoi and their translations that preserve their persuasive impact on the target audience and resonate to their cultural and ideological backgrounds.

The study of topoi as distinguishing rhetorical features in this genre of TV shows opens doors for interdisciplinarity between linguistics, rhetoric, and media research. It can also add value to various applications. First, scriptwriters of this genre of TV shows and other similar awareness-raising shows need to consider the prevailing highlighted topoi in the present study to enhance the persuasiveness of their points of view. Another implication is related to argumentation pedagogy as Zompetti (2006) urged researchers to pay more attention to the (re)discovery of topoi for their significant function in the pedagogical context for both students and teachers.

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