

## **Dimensions of Basra Gulf Cup Football Championship in Iraqi Daily Newspapers Articles: An Analytical Study**

**Lect. Dr. Qasim Hanoon Qasim**

*University of Technology/ Department Media and Government communication /Iraq*

**Abstract.** Since its inception in 1970, the Gulf Cup football championships have not received as much attention as the 25th Gulf Cup in 2023, hosted by the Iraqi city of Basra. This edition garnered significant interest across various political, athletic, social, and other dimensions. Gulf and Iraqi media devoted extensive coverage to this sporting event, including Iraqi sports journalism in all its forms, with a notable emphasis on the journalistic art of opinion articles in its various types.

The significance of this research lies in highlighting the dimensions covered by opinion articles in Iraqi daily newspapers regarding the Gulf Cup in Basra. The researcher selected four daily newspapers for this study, as they consistently covered the tournament, publishing articles and columns across different sections, not limited to sports pages.

The research concluded with several findings, most notably that the opinion articles in Iraqi daily newspapers predominantly focused on political dimensions, emphasizing a significant rapprochement between Iraq and its Gulf neighbors. Additionally, the social dimension was highlighted, showcasing the renowned Iraqi hospitality, with locals opening their homes and extending generous hospitality to visitors. The organizational, competitive, and media dimensions were also prominent. The results indicated that the "opinion columns" ranked highest among other types of articles published across various newspaper sections.

**Key words:** *Gulf Cup football championship, sports journalism, sports opinion articles.*

### **Introduction:**

Sport, and particularly football, has become a global social phenomenon, recognized as the world's most popular game. It has become an integral part of human history due to its significance in deepening common interests and connections within a country and its surrounding region, and in strengthening the bond between its youth and audience. This is evident in the Gulf Cup football championships, which have garnered considerable attention across various political, athletic, social, and media dimensions since their inception in Bahrain in 1970. However, the 25th edition, held in Basra, Iraq in 2023, received exceptional attention on all fronts after a 44-year hiatus since the last Gulf Cup hosted by Baghdad in 1979.

The Gulf football championship received extensive media coverage from all types of media, including sports journalism, which is among the most prominent types of specialized media. It plays a crucial role in educating the community and providing diverse sports information through various journalistic forms, including the opinion article, which is highly valued by newspaper editorial boards. Newspapers allocate substantial space for opinion articles and columns, attracting renowned and talented writers to express their views on various sports issues and events.

Iraqi daily newspapers provided extensive coverage of the Basra Gulf Cup through their diverse pages, featuring numerous articles and columns. This study selected several daily newspapers to analyze their coverage, which encompassed various dimensions, including political, social, economic, and competitive aspects. This research is divided into three sections: the first deals with the methodological framework, the second with the theoretical framework, and the third with the analytical study.

## **Section One: Methodological Framework**

### **1. Research Significance:**

The hosting of the Gulf Cup in Iraq, specifically in Basra, faced significant internal, external, and political challenges that delayed the event for over a decade. Nevertheless, sports played a decisive role when the Gulf Football Association decided to hold the tournament in Basra, an event that united the nation and garnered admiration from international figures and the Arab and Gulf media.

This research aims to uncover the dimensions addressed by the content of opinion articles in the selected Iraqi daily newspapers regarding the Basra Gulf Cup. The importance of this lies in the role that journalistic opinion articles play in presenting writers' ideas and opinions on various sports issues and problems. These articles are also crucial for providing critique and resonating with a wide segment of the sports community, encouraging them to adopt these ideas and find effective solutions to these issues.

### **2. Research Problem:**

The research problem is defined by the following questions: What dimensions did the daily Iraqi newspapers' articles cover in their reporting on the Basra Gulf Cup? Which participating teams in the tournament were most frequently discussed in these articles? What types of articles were included in the Iraqi newspapers' coverage of the tournament?

### **3. Research Objectives:**

This research aims to identify the dimensions addressed by opinion writers and columnists in Iraqi daily newspapers regarding the 25th Gulf Cup in Basra. Additionally, it seeks to determine which teams were most frequently discussed in the daily newspaper articles before, during, and after the Gulf tournament, and to identify the most common types of articles used in these newspapers.

### **4. Research Type and Methodology:**

This research belongs to the category of descriptive analytical studies, analyzing the content of articles and columns published in various sections of Iraqi daily newspapers. The analysis focuses on the different dimensions addressed by the writers and their perspectives on various issues related to the tournament.

The researcher employed the survey method in this study to gather data and information, enabling an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **5. Research Tool:**

The researcher utilized content analysis for comprehensive coverage of the research community, focusing on the articles and columns published in daily newspapers related to the Basra Gulf Cup. The data was analyzed using frequency and percentage statistics.

### **6. Research Scope:**

1. Temporal Scope: The researcher selected a timeframe of 20 days, during which the daily newspaper writers addressed the 25th Basra Gulf Cup. The official tournament dates were from January 6, 2023, to January 19, 2023. However, some articles related to the tournament were published a few days before its start and after its conclusion to cover the complete events.

2. Spatial Scope: The researcher chose a sample from the 21 daily Iraqi newspapers that featured articles or columns discussing the dimensions of the Basra Gulf Cup. The selected newspapers were "Al-Zaman," "Al-Sabah," "Al-Dustour," and "Al-Zawraa." These were chosen for several reasons,

including their longevity, continuity, prominence in the journalistic field, daily issuance, and varied funding sources (governmental, private, and self-funded).

## 7. Research Community:

The research community consists of all articles addressing the Basra Gulf Cup published in various sections of the daily newspapers "Al-Dustour," "Al-Zaman," "Al-Zawraa," and "Al-Sabah." The researcher conducted a survey of these pages, collecting and analyzing the relevant articles in these newspapers.

The total number of issues in the study community for the newspapers was 60, as shown in Table (1). The highest percentage was for "Al-Zaman," "Al-Sabah," and "Al-Dustour," with these newspapers publishing 6 days a week, excluding Fridays, which are off for their staff. "Al-Zawraa" publishes only 5 days a week, excluding Fridays and Saturdays as days off for its staff. The total number of articles and columns published in newspapers covering tournament events was 202 articles, with "Al-Zaman" ranking first, followed by "Al-Sabah" and "Al-Dustour," and finally "Al-Zawraa." Some issues of the newspapers did not include any articles related to the tournament. The total number of diverse pages, including sports pages, where these articles were published, was 10 pages in "Al-Zaman" out of 12 pages, and in "Al-Sabah," it was 13 pages out of 16 pages, sometimes 24 pages.

Male columnists outnumbered female columnists, with 120 male writers compared to only 5 female writers. Among them, 3 writers were from Arab countries participating in the tournament, while the female contribution consisted of 5 writers, including one journalist from Egypt who wrote for "Al-Dustour." "Al-Zawraa" stood out from other newspapers as the only one where sports journalist Hadi Abdullah wrote a daily column titled "Direct Column: Basra Gulf... the Return of Spirit" in the sports section. Other columnists had weekly columns in the sports pages, published on a weekly basis.

**Table 1: Research Community Overview**

No.	Newspapers	Issues	Total Pages	Pages of Published Articles	Number of Articles	Authors of Articles		
						Repeat	Male	Female
1	Al-Zaman	16"7473- 7459"	8	10	89	57	56	1
2	Al-Sabah	16 5579-5596"	16	13	56	35	33	2
3	Al-Dustour	16 5465-5482"	12	5	42	28	26	2
4	Al-Zawraa	12"7870-7884"	12	3	15	5	5	
<b>Total</b>		<b>60</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>5</b>

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

### 1. The Sports Journalism Article:

Journalism, through its various channels including daily newspapers, relies heavily on the journalistic article, which is considered one of the most prominent journalistic forms and holds great importance. Newspapers allocate a substantial space in their various pages for articles because they express ideas, opinions, and issues, even if this expression is oppositional in content.

A journalistic article is a type of intellectual piece that deals with current events, phenomena, issues, and developments. It addresses general and current topics with a significant degree of comprehensiveness and depth, using methods of presentation, analysis, evaluation, and conclusion (Abdel Hamid, 2013, p. 152). A journalistic article is defined as "an idea that the writer captures from his surrounding environment and is influenced by" (Abu Araja, 2011, p. 33).

The journalistic article is considered a form of journalistic tool that directly expresses the newspaper's policy and the opinions and ideas of some of its writers regarding current daily events and issues that concern public opinion, both internal and external, explaining, interpreting, and commenting on them (Mahmoud and Al-Khatib, 2016, p. 51).

A sports journalism article is defined as one of the arts of sports journalism that expresses the issues and events in the sports world that capture public attention, whether on a local or international level (Al-Mukhtar, 2021, p. 97).

Every journalistic article requires selecting a topic to write about, usually derived from current news or what matters to the community. This could include the arrival of a significant sports event, the sudden brilliance of an athlete in a particular game or a team, the dismissal of a coach, an athlete's involvement in a scandal, injury or death of a fan at a stadium, or highlighting unsportsmanlike or racist behavior of a group of fans. Any of these events and others provide rich material for journalists to write specialized articles (Andrews, 2015, p. 170).

### **Specifications of a Journalistic Article:**

A journalistic article in a daily newspaper is characterized by the following specifications (Youssef, 2017, p. 28):

1. Addressing interests or events that concern the readers.
2. Considering the element of timeliness.
3. Ensuring that the content and presentation are accessible to both the general and specialized reader, whether the treatment is general or possesses a degree of specialized handling.
4. Exhibiting vitality through the writer's varied approach to topics.

### **Types of Sports Journalistic Articles:**

Sports journalistic articles are divided into several types and forms, the most prominent of which are:

1. **The Editorial Article:** This is an opinion piece published by the newspaper on the front page or the opinion page, sometimes related to an important and current sports issue or event, and it expresses the newspaper's viewpoint (Kanaan, 2014, p. 10).

The primary purpose of the editorial or main article is to present an opinion, often commenting on the latest news or current events. The writer of the editorial article must maintain continuous contact with distinguished experts in various fields. The newspaper publishes this article as long as it aligns with its policy and expresses its purpose (Hamza, 2020, p. 242).

2. **Column Article ("Opinion Columns"):** This genre is based on recording the personal impressions of certain writers on various sports matters. It is published regularly, either daily or weekly, under a fixed title which is the signature of the editor (Oweis & Abdel-Rahim, 1998, p. 179). This type of article follows the standard pyramid structure when discussing a single topic, comprising three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. However, if the column includes a set of paragraphs on different subjects, the writer is not bound to this structure.

3. **Analytical Article:** This is one of the most influential types of articles as it involves in-depth analysis of events, issues, and phenomena that concern the sports community. It examines events in detail, links them with other occurrences, and derives opinions and directions from them as deemed appropriate (Abdel Hamid, 2013, p. 166).

4. **Issue Article:** This type of article discusses a sports-related issue that is the subject of prolonged debate and discussion. It is based on the interaction between the writer and current or live events that reflect the concerns of the sports community (Oweis & Abdel-Rahim, 1998, p. 182).

5. **Biographical Article:** This article is a self-narrative about a player's, coach's, or even manager's life and career, making them the focus of the news. The length of this type of article can range from several short paragraphs to longer pieces. The main idea often revolves around the individual's participation in a specific event (Andrews, 2015, p. 176).

6. **Commentary Article:** This type of article highlights current sports news and events that are characterized by ambiguity or need to be elucidated from different perspectives. It may serve as a prelude to certain repercussions and involves explaining the events and expressing opinions on their details (Mohammed A., 2022, p. 376).

7. **Scientific Sports Article:** This article relies on the use of theories, figures, and scientific terms related to the sports field. It is characterized by abundant information provided by consulting specialists in sports, contributing to increasing sports awareness and culture among readers. Modern

journalism lacks this type of article due to the scarcity of researcher-journalists after modern technological techniques entered the sports field.

## **2. Sports Journalism in Iraq**

Sports journalism is one of the most prominent types of specialized journalism, with its origins dating back several decades. The sports page appeared in general political daily newspapers in response to an objective media need reflected in the increasing interest in sports within society at large and among daily newspaper readers in particular.

The emergence of sports news in Iraqi journalism dates back to after 1917, when the daily newspaper Al-Arab published several sports news items in the form of announcements about competitions in various sports and scouting activities (Mohammed A., 2022, p. 252). Meanwhile, Al-Iraq newspaper, in its first issue on June 1, 1920, published a short piece of international sports news about boxing, sourced from one of the global agencies (Al-Iraq newspaper, 1920, p. 1).

And in 1922, Iraq saw the publication of its first sports periodical, the weekly "Sports Games Magazine," on November 22, 1922. This date is considered a landmark in Iraqi sports journalism. The first issue included sports articles, including an editorial by its owner, Mr. Mohammad Al-Sayyid Ali, explaining the magazine's purpose (Al-Ithawi, 2010, p. 26).

After 1921, specialized publications in Iraqi journalism dedicated fixed pages and sections to sports. "Al-Kashaf Al-Iraqi" magazine, launched in June 1924 and aimed at school students, dedicated a page called "Games," which was later renamed "Sports Games" starting from issue four on September 1, 1924 (Mohammad A., 2018, p. 128).

In terms of daily newspapers, "Al-Bilad," which began publication on October 25, 1929, was the first Iraqi newspaper to be issued with six pages. It announced its sports page under the title "Al-Bilad Sports Page" in issue 4339 on May 4, 1955 (Mohammad A., 2018, p. 138).

### **Brief Overview of Study Newspapers:**

1. Al-Sabah Newspaper: "Al-Sabah" was launched after the events of April 9, 2003, as part of the Iraqi Media Network. Its first issue was released on Saturday, May 17, 2003, labeled issue "zero," with Ismail Zayer as the owner and editor-in-chief. Initially published semi-weekly, it transitioned to daily publication on August 2, 2003 (Al-Sabah Newspaper, 2002).

The editorial team of "Al-Sabah" focused on sports from its inception, dedicating a single sports page where Adil Al-Attabi wrote a column. This continued until issue 144 on December 5, 2003, after which the sports coverage expanded to two pages (one local and one international) (Al-Sabah Newspaper, 2023). The newspaper also released its first four-page weekly sports supplement, later becoming the first Iraqi newspaper to issue a daily sports supplement on June 1, 2004 (Al-Sabah Newspaper, 2004).

2. Al-Zaman Newspaper: The first trial issue of the international "Al-Zaman" newspaper was released on January 5, 1998, in London by the Iraqi International Press and Publishing House, with Saad Al-Bazzaz as editor-in-chief. The first Iraqi issue of "Al-Zaman" was published on April 8, 2003, in Basra, labeled "Basra Edition." The "Baghdad Edition" followed on April 29, 2003, later becoming the "Iraq Edition" after the Basra edition was discontinued.

"Al-Zaman" devoted two pages to sports and subsequently released a four-page daily sports supplement from its Baghdad edition on July 2, 2005 (Al-Zaman International Newspaper, 2005). The supplement, initially published by the Baghdad edition, included pages 18 and 19 for the international edition. However, the supplement did not continue, and the newspaper reverted to its previous format with two daily sports pages starting August 11, 2005.

3. Al-Dustour Newspaper: Al-Dustour was established on June 20, 2003, as an independent newspaper with no political or international affiliations, relying on self-financing through advertisements. The owner and editor-in-chief was Bassem Al-Sheikh. Initially, the newspaper was published with eight pages, with one page dedicated to sports. In November, the number of sports

pages increased to two out of twelve pages. The newspaper began issuing a daily sports supplement on October 16, 2004 (Al-Mousawi, 2007, p. 167).

4. Al-Zawraa Newspaper: Al-Zawraa is the first newspaper to be published in Iraq, founded by the governor Midhat Pasha on June 15, 1869. From its first issue, it was published in both Arabic and Turkish, initially with eight pages and then four pages until 1908. Al-Zawraa continued to be published without interruption for approximately 48 years.

Al-Zawraa was a comprehensive newspaper issued twice a week on Saturdays and Tuesdays, and it employed some of Iraq's most prominent writers and thinkers at the time. The newspaper covered various local affairs and issued a total of 2,607 editions, with the last one published on March 13, 1917, after the British occupation of Iraq (Al-Zawraa Newspaper, 2021).

Since then, Al-Zawraa has alternated between weekly and daily publications, finally settling as a daily newspaper with twelve pages. It is published by the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate and holds registration number "1" in the Syndicate. The editor-in-chief is Moaid Al-Lami, the head of the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate. The newspaper pays significant attention to sports, initially dedicating two pages to sports coverage. It later expanded by issuing a four-page sports supplement focusing on local, Arab, and international sports, as well as including opinion columns, before finally settling on two sports pages.

### **3. Arabian Gulf Cup in Football**

The Arabian Gulf Cup in football has garnered significant attention from political, sports, and popular circles in the Gulf region since its inception in 1970 in Bahrain. The idea for the tournament was proposed by Saudi Prince Khalid Al-Faisal in the late 1960s and was adopted by Bahrain under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa, the then-president of the Bahrain Football Association, in 1968. Invitations were extended to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar to participate in the competitions (Al-Joker, 2023, p. 72). The first edition of the tournament kicked off in Bahrain on Friday, March 27, 1970, with four teams participating, and Kuwait emerged as the winner. The tournament has since expanded, with eight teams now participating: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Iraq (which joined in 1976), and Yemen (which joined in 2003).

The political dimension, with all its ramifications, complexities, and influences, has been one of the main challenges facing the Arabian Gulf Cup since its first edition. Some believe that one of the key reasons behind the resilience and continuity of the Arabian Gulf Cup is its deep-rooted connection to the hearts of the people of the Gulf region. The tournament has strong defenders who are committed to its fate, along with official support from the highest leadership levels in the region, which has kept it resistant to all calls for cancellation, reduction, or changes from its original purpose (Shadhan, 2017).

The football associations of Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar have each hosted the Arabian Gulf Cup four times. The United Arab Emirates and Oman have hosted it three times, Iraq twice, and Yemen once. The Kuwaiti national team leads the list of most successful teams in the tournament's history with ten titles since its inception in 1970. Iraq follows with four titles, while Qatar and Saudi Arabia have each won three times. The UAE and Oman have won the title twice, and Yemen has yet to secure a championship.

#### **Iraq's Participation:**

Iraq's national team first participated in the Arabian Gulf Cup during the fourth edition, held in Qatar from March 25 to April 15, 1976. This participation increased the number of competing teams to seven. Experts and observers agree that the 1976 Gulf Cup in Doha was the most technically successful edition due to Iraq's debut, as Iraq was considered a major football power in the region (Al-Joker, 2023, p. 92). Iraq continued to participate in subsequent editions until its last participation in 1990. Iraq was barred from the 1992 Gulf Cup in Doha due to political circumstances following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Iraq returned to the competition in the 17th edition, hosted by Qatar in 2004, after a 14-year hiatus, following the change of regime in Iraq (Al-Joker, 2023, p. 129).

## **Gulf Cup in Basra**

Iraq hosted the Gulf Cup football championship twice in its history. The first tournament took place in its capital, Baghdad, hosting Gulf Cup 5 from March 23 to April 8, 1979. The Iraqi national team succeeded in winning the title for the first time, breaking Kuwait's domination in the previous four editions. However, Iraq did not host the tournament again due to various security, political, logistical, and infrastructural challenges. The Iraqi Football Association submitted a request to host the tournament in Basra, but it faced fluctuating positions due to security, political, logistical, and infrastructural reasons. Hosting was delayed more than once. Gulf Cup 23 was scheduled to take place in Basra in 2017, but FIFA's decision to ban play in Iraq prevented this. The dream was realized when the Gulf Football Association announced its hosting in Basra in 2023 after lifting the ban on holding matches in Iraq. The sports community interacted with the return of the Gulf Arab Cup to Iraq, represented by the province of Basra, indicating that sports are the language of peoples for love and peace, as sports unite and politics divide (Al-Joker, Shabtini Gulf Cup, 2023, pp. 164-193).

### **Challenges of Gulf Cup in Basra**

The 2023 Gulf Cup hosted in Basra faced numerous challenges, divided into two levels according to Dr. Hadi Abdullah (Al-Aithawi, Football Between Cultural and Diplomatic Identity, 2024, pp. 19-20):

#### **Section 1: Major External Challenges Faced by the Tournament:**

- A. The negative mental image portrayed by the media about the city of Basra in the minds of Gulf residents.
- B. Lack of confidence in the capabilities of Iraqis to accomplish the required steps to host the tournament.
- C. Political tension between Iraq and its Arab neighbors.
- D. The city's infrastructure deficiencies compared to Gulf cities that previously hosted the tournament.
- E. Sanctions from the International Football Federation (FIFA), including football bans on Iraq.

#### **Section 2: Major Internal Challenges:**

- A. The city witnessed demonstrations with political and service demands, and the potential for renewed protests.
- B. Widespread poverty at the individual and service levels in the city.
- C. Lack of confidence in the Iraqi Football Association by the media and a significant portion of the public.
- D. Lack of confidence in the Gulf Football Association due to delays in hosting the tournament in Basra.
- E. Shortage of highly qualified personnel and accumulated experience in the field of organization.
- F. Pervasive perception of financial corruption affecting every aspect of the state, which reflects on every step.

Basra overcame these challenges thanks to the great efforts made by governmental and local authorities and sports institutions, in close cooperation with the Gulf Football Association, which led to the successful hosting of the tournament in the governorate. This reflects the role of sport in enhancing communication and understanding between peoples across borders and promoting the values of peace and love.

### **Section 3: Results of the Analytical Study:**

The researcher identified the main and subsidiary categories of dimensions covered in the articles in the daily Iraqi newspapers under study. The analytical study focused on these dimensions, in light of the questions posed by the researcher.

**Q1: What dimensions were addressed by the articles published in the daily Iraqi newspapers?**

**Table 2: Dimensions Covered by Articles in Iraqi Newspapers**

Dimension	Al-Dustour	Al-Zaman	Al-Zawraa	Al-Sabah	Total
Political	46(23.83%)	56 (22.58%)	23 (17.69%)	45 (20.93%)	170 (21.63%)
Social	26 (13.47%)	65 (26.21%)	21 (16.15%)	35 (16.28%)	147 (18.70%)
Competitive	29 (15.03%)	36 (14.52%)	15 (11.54%)	28 (13.02%)	108 (13.74%)
Organizational	25 (12.95%)	26 (10.48%)	18 (13.85%)	32 (14.88%)	101 (12.85%)
Media	18 (9.33%)	17 (6.85%)	11 (8.46%)	26 (12.09%)	72 (9.16%)
Historical	15 (7.77%)	12 (4.84%)	23 (17.69%)	11 (5.12%)	61 (7.76%)
Economic	17 (8.81%)	13 (5.24%)	4 (3.08%)	17 (7.91%)	51 (6.49%)
Cultural	8 (4.15%)	5 (2.02%)	8 (6.15%)	10 (4.65%)	31 (3.94%)
Security	6 (3.11%)	10 (4.03%)	4 (3.08%)	6 (2.79%)	26 (3.31%)
Tourism	3 (1.55%)	5 (2.02%)	1 (0.77%)	3 (1.4%)	12 (1.53%)
Technical	-	2 (0.81%)	1 (0.77%)	-	3 (0.38%)
Psychological	-	1 (0.4%)	-	2 (0.93%)	3 (0.38%)
Scientific	-	-	1 (0.77%)	-	1 (0.13%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>193 (100%)</b>	<b>248 (100%)</b>	<b>130 (100%)</b>	<b>215 (100%)</b>	<b>786 (100%)</b>

Table (2) illustrates that there are 13 dimensions covered in the articles and columns of the newspapers studied. The "Political Dimensions" category topped all articles in the newspapers with a percentage of "21.63%", dominating in columns of both Al-Sabah and Al-Dustour newspapers, as well as Al-Zawraa which shared the top spot with historical dimensions. Most of these columns were in the daily pages other than sports. "Social Dimensions" ranked second among the remaining dimensions with a percentage of "18.70%", predominantly in Al-Zaman newspaper with the highest frequency of 65 occurrences among all other dimensions. This was expected due to the generous hospitality demonstrated by the Iraqi society, especially the residents of Basra during the tournament, which impressed the Arab Gulf delegations and their fans. Topics related to this dimension were second in Al-Sabah and Al-Zawraa newspapers, and third in Al-Dustour. The remaining dimensions varied in terms of ranking. The "Competitive Sports Dimension" ranked third with a percentage of "13.74%", predominantly in Al-Dustour and Al-Sabah newspapers. The "Organizational Dimension" ranked fourth among the other dimensions, primarily due to the impressive opening and closing ceremony of the tournament. Meanwhile, the "Technical, Psychological, and Scientific Dimensions" ranked lowest, as newspapers focused on political, social, organizational, and competitive dimensions, given the tournament's return after a long absence of 44 years since Baghdad hosted Gulf 5 in 1979.

**Sub-categories under the Political Dimension:**

**1. Political Dimension:**

**Table (3) indicates the topics covered under the political dimension in newspaper articles:**

Political Dimensions	Newspapers				Total
	Al-Dustour	Al-Zaman	Al-Zawraa	Al-Sabah	
1. Arab National Identity	14( 30.44%)	16( 28.57%)	5 (21.47%)	11 (24.44%)	64(27.06%)
2. Enhancing Iraq's Image	11 (23.91%)	12 (21.43%)	6 (26.09%)	10 (22.23%)	39(22.94%)
3. Escalation and Tension Policy	9 (19.57%)	6 (10.71%)	2 (8.69%)	4 (8.89%)	12(12.35%)
4. Emphasizing National Identity	4 (8.7%)	5 (7.14%)	5 (21.74%)	5 (11.11%)	19(11.18%)
5. Lifting FIFA Ban on Iraq	3( 6.52%)	7 (12.5%)	-	6 (13.34%)	16(9.41%)
6. Supporting Political Figures	1 (2.17%)	4( 7.14%)	4 (17.39%)	3 (6.67%)	12(7.06%)
7. Presence of Political Figures	3 (6.52%)	4 (8.93%)	-	2 (4.44%)	9(5.29%)
8. Opening to Gulf Cooperation	1 (2.17%)	2 (3.57%)	1 (4.35%)	2 (4.44%)	6(3.53%)
9. Government Decision on Gulf Entry	-	-	-	2 (4.44%)	2(1.18%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>46(100%)</b>	<b>56(100%)</b>	<b>23(100%)</b>	<b>45(100%)</b>	<b>170(100%)</b>

Newspaper articles analyzed in the study accorded significant priority and importance to the political dimension across all their pages, which ranked first among the other dimensions, particularly emphasizing the category of "Arab National Identity," as indicated in Table (3), with a leading percentage of "27.06%". This highlights Iraq's reintegration into the Arab fold after a prolonged

absence of Gulf and Arab football presence in Iraqi cities for over a decade. An example of this sentiment is articulated as, "The new year 2023 presents to all Arabs and the world through vibrant Arab Iraqi Basra, the finest lessons of Arab love for Arabism, where the unprecedented welcome extended to their Gulf Arab brothers, sports teams, and fans..." (Al-Salami, The Great Basra Lesson, 2023, p. 4).

The category "Enhancing Iraq's Image" followed closely in second place with "22.94%", aiming to dispel the blurred image of Iraq. For instance, hosting in Basra provided an opportunity to showcase a different side of the country often portrayed negatively in media as a hub of wars, political conflicts, and rampant corruption (Saeed, 2023, p. 6).

The category "Policy of Escalation and Tension" secured third place with "12.35%", exemplified by Kuwait's delegation withdrawal during the tournament's opening ceremony. Reflecting on this, it was noted, "There was much controversy and tension surrounding the stance of one Gulf delegation. To those provoked and pressured from both sides, still haunted by the events of the nineties, we have reaped nothing from the policy of escalation and tension but wars and destruction" (Dagher, 2023, p. 8).

## 2. Social Dimensions :

**Table (4) illustrates the topics covered under the social dimension in Iraqi newspaper articles.**

Social Dimensions	Al-Dustour	Al-Zaman	Al-Zawraa	Al-Sabah	Total
1.Hospitality and Generosity	17(65.38%)	47(72.31%)	14(66.67%)	22(62.86%)	100(68.03%)
2.Gulf Reunion	9 (34.62%)	18(27.69%)	7(33.33%)	13(37.14%)	47 (31.97%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 (100%)</b>	<b>65 (100%)</b>	<b>21 (100%)</b>	<b>35 (100%)</b>	<b>147 (100%)</b>

Table (4) indicates that this dimension received significant attention in Iraqi newspaper articles. The category of "Hospitality and Generosity" ranked first with a percentage of "68.03%." This feature distinguished the Gulf Cup in Basra from its predecessors by warmly welcoming Arab Gulf audiences and extending hospitality to them in areas they frequented in the city of Basra. For example, "The echoes of Basra's hospitality reached the world before the tournament began, and everyone rushed to invite their Gulf brothers to their homes and hospitality. This gesture reflects the generosity of the people of Basra, the descendants of Hasan al-Basri" (Hassan, 2023, p. 3).

The category "Gulf Reunion" ranked second with a percentage of "31.97%." An example includes, "The most beautiful comments on Gulf Cup 25 came from elderly Basra women who said to the Gulf people, 'You are the hosts and we are guests, welcome to the sons of uncles and cousins'" (Abdul-Majeed, 2023, p. 6).

## 3. Competitive Dimension:

**Table (5) shows the topics covered under the competitive dimension in Iraqi newspaper articles.**

Competitive Dimensions	Al-Dostour	Al-Zaman	Al-Zawraa	Al-Sabah	Total
1.Match analysis and results	15(51.73%)	8(22.22%)	5(33.33%)	9(32.14%)	37(34.26%)
2.Boosting morale of the Iraqi team	4 (13.79%)	9 (25%)	1 (6.67%)	5(17.86%)	19(17.59%)
3.Promotion of sports personalities	2 (6.9%)	8(22.22%)	3 (20%)	2 (7.14%)	15(13.89%)
4.Fair competition among teams	2 (6.9%)	2 (5.56%)	3 (20%)	4(14.29%)	11(10.19%)
5.Focus on stars	3 (10.34%)	3 (8.33%)	2(13.33%)	1 (3.57%)	9 (8.33%)
6.Presence of FIFA President	3 (10.34%)	4(11.11%)	-	2 (7.14%)	9 (8.33%)
7.Emphasis on sportsmanship	-	2 (5.56%)	1 (6.67%)	5(17.86%)	8 (7.41%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>29(100%)</b>	<b>36(100%)</b>	<b>15(100%)</b>	<b>28(100%)</b>	<b>108(100%)</b>

Most newspaper articles focused on the competitive and sports dimension, as shown in Table (5), particularly emphasizing the category of "Match Analysis and Results," which ranked first with a percentage of "34.26%". Examples include, "We know that pressures were high on our players during the past period and played a negative role in their technical decline, but the new coaching staff

professionally managed to address the mistakes and gradually raised the team's ambitions without rushing into flashy statements" (Zain Al-Abidin, 2023, page 6). The category of "Boosting the Morale of the Iraqi National Team" ranked second with a percentage of "17%". An example includes, "We recall Gulf Cup '5' as motivation to boost the morale of our national team to win Gulf Cup '25' in the vibrant Basra" (Mustafa A., 2023, page 6). The points of the remaining categories were closely aligned.

#### 4. Organizational Dimension:

**Table (6) Topics of the Organizational Dimension in Iraqi Newspaper Articles**

Organizational Dimensions	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
1.Spectacular Opening and Conclusion of the Tournament	14 (56%)	17(65.39%)	5(27.78%)	10(31.25%)	46(45.55%)
2.Fan Attendance at the Tournament	9 (36%)	2 (7.69%)	8(44.44%)	13(40.625%)	32(31.86%)
3.Tournament Organization	2 (8%)	7 (26.92%)	5(27.78%)	9(28.125%)	23(22.77%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>25 (100%)</b>	<b>26 (100%)</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>32(100%)</b>	<b>101(100%)</b>

The table (6) shows competition between two categories in this dimension, with the advantage going to the "Spectacular Opening and Conclusion of the Tournament" category, topping the scoring with a percentage of 45.54%. It held a prominent place in the articles of Al-Dustour and Al-Zaman newspapers. For example, "The opening was splendid and magnificent, competing rightfully with the best openings witnessed in over half a century of following sports events worldwide" (Dagher, 2023, p. 8). On the other hand, Al-Sabah and Al-Zawraa newspapers highlighted "Fan Attendance at the Tournament," which ranked second in the articles with a percentage of 31.68%. For instance, "Gulf Cup in Basra broke records with a massive audience attendance in its first edition, with 427,492 spectators and an average of 35,000 spectators per match" (Abdullah, Gulf Cup in Basra... Revival of Spirit, 2023, p. 6). Finally, the "Organization" category achieved a percentage of 22.77%.

#### 5. Media Dimension:

**Table (7) Topics of the Media Dimension in Iraqi Newspaper Articles**

Media Topics	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
1.Media Coverage	10 (55.56%)	12(70.59%)	5(45.45%)	9(34.62%)	36(50%)
2.Media Praise	2 (11.11%)	4 (23.53%)	3(27.27%)	8(30.77%)	17(23.61%)
3.Highlighting Social Media Platforms	4 (22.22%)	-	2(18.18%)	5(19.23%)	11(15.28%)
Attracting Gulf Media	2 (11.11%)	1 (5.88%)	1 (9.09%)	4(15.38%)	8 (11.11%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 (100%)</b>	<b>17 (100%)</b>	<b>11 (100%)</b>	<b>26 (100%)</b>	<b>72 (100%)</b>

"The media coverage dominated all sub-categories of the media dimension, as indicated by Table (7), occupying the first place with a percentage of 50%. An example includes, 'The media made Gulf Al-Basra its standout material, not just in sports media, but also in political, artistic, and all fields of media, especially mobile media where various Arab and even some non-Arab YouTube channels highlighted tournament events prominently' (Abdullah, Gulf Al-Basra: Revival of Spirit, 2023, p. 6). The category of 'media praise' came second with a percentage of 23.61%, showcasing commendations for media outlets. An example includes, 'As a journalist and media professional, I must mention Khaled Jasim, host of the Cup program: You were a model of success, and all Iraqis thank you for representing Iraq, its people, and its generosity...' (Al-Ali, 2023, p. 2). The categories 'highlighting social media platforms' and 'attracting Gulf media' ranked lower in the table."

#### 5. Historical Dimension:

**Table (8) Topics of the Historical Dimension in Iraqi Newspaper Articles**

Historical Dimensions	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
1. Linking History to the Present	7 (46.67%)	8(66.67%)	10(43.48%)	5(45.46%)	30(49.18%)
2. Recalling Arabian Gulf Cups	5 (33.33%)	2 (16.67%)	4 (17.39%)	2(18.18%)	13(21.31%)

3. Recalling Prominent Personalities	2 (13.33%)	1 (8.33%)	7 (30.43%)	3(27.27%)	13(21.31%)
4. Focus on Basra's Historical Aspect	1 (6.67%)	-	2 (8.7%)	1 (9.09%)	4(6.56%)
5. Absence of Former Basra Football Stars	-	1 (8.33%)	-	-	1(1.64%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 (100%)</b>	<b>12 (100%)</b>	<b>23 (100%)</b>	<b>11 (100%)</b>	<b>61(100%)</b>

The Gulf Cup in Basra was an occasion for commemorating history in all its details, not limited to the competitive sports aspect. The category "Linking History with the Present" topped all studied newspaper articles in this dimension, as indicated by Table (8), with a percentage of "49.18%". An example includes, "It's not surprising that Basra, the rightful heir of Sumerian civilization and the cradle of agriculture discovery and the starting point of writing, opens its warm embrace and extends its arms with utmost generosity to the guests of Gulf 25 on its soil" (Al-Ghareeri, 2023, p. 2). The categories "Recalling Arab Gulf Championships" and "Recalling Basra Personalities" shared the second place in various specialties with a percentage of "21.31%", followed by the categories "Focusing on the historical aspect of the city of Basra" and "Absence of former Basra football stars" standing in the last places.

## 6. Economic Dimension:

**Table (9) Topics in the Economic Dimension in Iraqi Newspaper Articles**

Economic Dimensions	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
1. Construction of infrastructure and sports facilities	5(29.41%)	9(69.23%)	2(50%)	8(47.06%)	24(47.06%)
2. Emphasis on economic and marketing aspects	5(29.41%)	3(23.08%)	2(50%)	4(23.53%)	14(27.45%)
3. Investment in sports	4(23.53%)	1 (7.69%)		5(29.41%)	10(19.61%)
4. Financial corruption	3(17.65%)				3(5.88%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>17 (100%)</b>	<b>13 (100%)</b>	<b>4 (100%)</b>	<b>17 (100%)</b>	<b>61(100%)</b>

The category of "Construction of infrastructure and sports facilities" ranked first in this dimension, as shown in Table (9), with a percentage of "47.6%". The columns discussed the construction of sports stadiums in Basra that impressed Gulf delegations and audiences attending the championship. An example includes, "The Gulf Cup has contributed to witnessing an urban revolution in Iraq by constructing several international stadiums in Basra, Kut, Najaf, and Karbala" (Abdul-Majeed, 2023, p. 6).

The category "Emphasis on economic and marketing aspects" obtained second place with a percentage of "27.45%". An example is, "If the opportunity of the Gulf Sports Championship is missed without addressing it in terms of economic, investment, developmental, and commercial perspectives, it would signify more than just a superficial setback" (Abdul-Salam, 2023, p. 12). The category "Investment in sports" ranked third, and finally, "Financial corruption".

## 7. Cultural Dimension:

**Table (10) Topics of the Cultural Dimension in Iraqi Newspaper Articles**

Cultural Dimensions	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
1. Blending sports, art, and literature	4 (50%)	3 (60%)	5(62.5%)	3 (30%)	15(48.39%)
2. Non-attendance of artist Kazem Al-Safer	2 (25%)	1 (20%)		2 (20%)	5 (16.13%)
3. Musical aspect	1(12.5%)	1 (20%)		3 (30%)	5 (16.13%)
4. Cultural diversity	-	-	3 (37.5%)	2 (20%)	5 (16.13%)
5. Sports movies	1(12.5%)	-			1 (3.22%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 (100%)</b>	<b>5 (100%)</b>	<b>8 (100%)</b>	<b>10 (100%)</b>	<b>31(100%)</b>

The category "Mixing sports, art, and literature" ranked first, as indicated by Table (10), with a percentage of "48.39%". This dimension was prominently featured during the opening ceremony with the presence of this trio, and also in the preparations for the closing ceremony. An example includes, "The renowned artist Ahlam and the ancient Basra folklore must lead the closing ceremony of the Gulf Cup 25 in Basra. Inviting art and sports pioneers from Basra to attend is more important than

the attendance of politicians and their protections" (Al-Shatari, 2023, p. 12). The second place was shared by the categories "Non-attendance of artist Kazem Al-Safer", "Musical aspect", "Songs of the tournament", and "Cultural diversity", each with a repeated percentage of "16.13%".

## 8. Security Dimension:

**Table (11) Topics of the Security Dimension in Iraqi Newspaper Articles**

Security Dimensions	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
Establishing Security	6(23.08%)	10(38.46%)	4(15.38%)	6(23.08%)	26(100%)

The table (11) indicates that articles addressed the security situation in Iraq, particularly in Basra, the host city of the tournament, focusing on establishing security which empowered the competitions and contributed to their success by attracting Gulf and Arab audiences, as well as Iraqi families from various cities to Basra. An example includes, "Commendable was the initiative by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to organize a field tour for ambassadors from the Gulf Arab states and Yemen to Basra, where they inspected the stadiums and several hotels, alongside a tour of markets and squares" (Abdul Majeed, 2023, p. 6).

## 9. Tourism Dimension:

**Table (12): Topics of the Tourism Dimension in Iraqi Newspapers**

Dimension of Tourism	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	Total
Highlighting Tourism Aspects	3(25%)	5(41.67%)	1(8.33%)	3(25%)	12(100%)

The articles highlighted the tourism aspect, as shown in Table (12), reflecting on the influx of Gulf audiences to Basra, extending further to visits by Gulf visitors to other Iraqi cities and their exploration therein. An example includes, "Especially since Basra is an attractive winter tourist destination, if its administrators consider the tourism aspect" (Wadi, 2023, p. 2).

## 10. Other Dimensions:

Table (2) illustrates that the technical, psychological, and scientific dimensions ranked last, with only brief mentions of the technical aspect through the awe-inspiring use of modern technological techniques observed during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Arab Gulf Cup. This dimension was exclusively addressed by the newspapers "Al-Zaman" and "Al-Zawra". Meanwhile, the psychological dimension was limited to articles by Qasim Hussein Saleh, founder and president of the Iraqi Psychological Association, who wrote, "What is more remarkable is that some people believe that football has become a remedy for the ailments of nations, after it used to provoke mills and wars" (Saleh, 2023, p. 5). Al-Zawraa newspaper limited itself to the scientific aspect by calling for social and political research on the tournament, considering that it deserves the treasures it abounds that go beyond sporting gems (Abdullah Al-Khaleej in Basra: The Return of the Spirit (3) , 2023, p. 6).

## Q2: Which teams were most discussed in Iraqi newspaper articles?

**Table (13) shows the most discussed national teams in Iraqi newspaper articles:**

Teams Discussed	Newspapers				Total
	Dustour	Zaman	Zawraa	Sabah	
1. Iraq	22(44.9%)	29(43.28%)	8(44.44%)	16(45.71%)	75(44.38%)
2. Oman	10(20.41%)	11(16.42%)	4(22.22%)	5(14.29%)	30(17.75%)
3. Saudi Arabia	4(8.16%)	5(7.46%)	1(5.56%)	4(11.43%)	14(8.28%)
4. Yemen	5(10.21%)	6(8.96%)		2(5.71%)	13(7.69%)
5. Kuwait	2(4.08%)	5(7.46%)	2(11.11%)	2(5.71%)	11(6.51%)
6. Qatar	1(2.04%)	3(4.48%)	2(11.11%)	4(11.43%)	10(5.92%)
7. Bahrain	3(6.12%)	5(7.46%)		1(2.86%)	9(5.33%)
8. UAE	2(4.08%)	3(4.48%)	1(5.56%)	1(2.86%)	7(4.14%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>49(100%)</b>	<b>67(100%)</b>	<b>18(100%)</b>	<b>35(100%)</b>	<b>169(100%)</b>

The table (13) indicates that the Iraqi team dominated the articles and columns of the newspapers studied in the tournament involving 8 teams, ranking first with a percentage of "44.38%". This is expected since the tournament took place in Iraq, with extensive coverage and analysis of its matches by writers, primarily in sports pages. Oman came second with a percentage of "17.75%", as it was the only team to face the Iraqi team twice in the group stage and the final of the tournament. Saudi Arabia and Yemen ranked third and fourth respectively, reflecting their matches against Iraq in the same group. The remaining teams occupied lower positions and played their matches in Group B.

### **Q3: What types of articles did the Iraqi newspapers include?**

**Table (14) shows the types of articles published in Iraqi newspapers:**

<b>Type of Article</b>	<b>Newspapers</b>				<b>Total</b>
	<b>Dustour</b>	<b>Zaman</b>	<b>Zawraa</b>	<b>Sabah</b>	
1.Columnist Article ("Op-Ed")	14(33.33%)	34(38.2%)	7(46.67%)	20(37.72%)	75(37.13%)
2.Issue-based Article	11(26.19%)	23(25.84%)	2(13.33%)	9(16.07%)	45(22.28%)
3.Analytical Article	10(23.81%)	14(15.73%)	3(20%)	16(28.57%)	43(21.29%)
4.Commentary Article	7(16.67%)	8(8.99%)	3(20%)	9(16.07%)	27(13.36%)
5.Biographical Article		6(6.74%)		2(3.57%)	8(3.96%)
6.Editorial Article		4(4.5%)			4(1.98%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>42(100%)</b>	<b>89(100%)</b>	<b>15(100%)</b>	<b>56(100%)</b>	<b>202(100%)</b>

Table (14) outlines the types of articles featured in Iraqi newspapers during the study period. The most prominent were the Columnist Articles ("Op-Eds"), accounting for 37.13% of the publications, which expressed opinions and reflections on the Gulf Cup tournament's matches. Following closely were Issue-based Articles at 22.28%, discussing significant societal issues, including controversies like Iran's objection to the Arabian Gulf's name during the tournament, as highlighted in examples such as "What is happening in the Gulf Cup 25 in Basra with its political nature since its inception, Iran's objection to its designation as the Arabian Gulf and summoning the Iraqi ambassador..." (Jabri, 2023, p. 11). Analytical Articles followed at 21.29%, focusing on technical game analyses, predominantly featured in the sports sections. Commentary, Biographical, and Editorial Articles were less frequent and largely confined to Al-Zaman newspaper.

### **Results:**

1. Political dimensions dominated most articles and columns across newspapers, ranking first in "Al-Dustour," "Al-Zawraa," and "Al-Sabah." They emphasized Arab national identity and bolstering Iraq's image.
2. Daily newspaper articles focused on the social dimension of the tournament, especially highlighting "hospitality and generosity," which surpassed all other subcategories within the primary categories with 68.03%. This reflected the Iraqi people's generosity, particularly in Basra, towards Gulf and Arab visitors, extending warm hospitality.
3. Interests varied in subcategories of other primary dimensions. Match analysis took the lead in the competitive sports dimension, alongside coverage of the tournament's opening and closing ceremonies in the organizational dimension. Media coverage played a significant role in portraying a positive image of Iraq and Basra.
4. Article and column writers linked history to the present, discussing Basra's historical significance and its scholarly and literary figures across various disciplines, recalling the Gulf Cup's editions.
5. Articles focused on infrastructure and sports facilities, ranking first in the economic dimension, paving the way for Iraq to host major tournaments.
6. Various types of journalistic articles were published, including daily and weekly columns, with Op-Eds leading among other types in the newspapers. The majority of writers were male, with minimal representation from female writers.

## Recommendations

1. It is essential for daily newspapers to guide column writers towards brevity and focus, especially in lengthy articles, avoiding redundancy and excessive details.
2. Allocate more space to articles focusing on scientific, technological, health, and psychological aspects, as these dimensions are crucial.
3. Encourage and support local female journalists to contribute sports articles in sports pages, which are currently underrepresented and confined mostly to non-sports pages.
4. Conduct scientific, social, sports, economic, and other research on the Gulf Cup football tournament, which holds significant cultural and historical value.

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