

Gender issues in Albanian's Prime Time TV shows



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INTRODUCTION

The main focus of the project

There were chosen three prime-time TV-Shows: Top Show, Xing with Ermal and Real Story, respectively in Top Channel, TV Klan and Vizion Plus. All of these TV-shows are directed by men moderators. In one of them, there is a female co-moderator, who has a peripheric function.

The monitoring took place during the period of April-June 2019. In this study, from the above-mentioned TV Shows, there are analyzed 26 series of them in total.

Before the monitoring process started, in this project were engaged 3 monitors who were familiar with the reporting format, during a short training session, they have analyzed one of the emissions specifically, using this experience as a test for the upcoming monitoring process.

Monitoring focus:

The monitoring format was standardized for all the analyzed programs, with the main focus on measuring and analyzing these elements:

- Participation (in quantitative terms) of women on prime- time TV-shows on Albanian televisions.
- Participation (in qualitative terms) of women on prime- time TV-Shows on Albanian televisions.
- Comparative analysis of the shows moderators' approach towards the invited male and female guests, was concretized with specific questions regarding both groups or the differentiated attitude towards them.

There are many findings from the study:

- It gives a full panorama about women's participation, access and space in prime-time Tv-shows and features of this participation.
- It gives a clear picture of existing mentalities about women position in Albania, normalized and reinforced even by the narrative of these programs. Inel, TV Klan and Vizion Plus. All of these TV-shows

are directed by men moderators. In one of them there is a female co-moderator, who has a peripheric function.

The monitoring took place during the period April-June 2019. In this study, 26 series of analyzes were analyzed in total from the three emissions considered.

SUMMARY OF MAIN STUDY RESULTS

Participation

- For three monitored TV Shows, there were 26 monitored series and 112 guests in total. Out of these, 33 women and 79 males.
- When it comes to the prime-time TV Shows on Albanian televisions, there is a significantly greater participation of man related to women.
- Women's participation is greater just in those TV shows that are considered more “fun” or “social topics” (Xing me Ermalin and Top Show).
- There is a great lack of women's participation in programs that are perceived to deal with issues of great political and social interest.
- Out of 31 guests in the Real Story program, during the period of April-May, 2019, in total only 2 of the guests are women and 29 of them are men.
- The analysis identified a series of programs which contain in title the name of a man who is invited to the program (p.eg Erion Veliaj, Sandër Lleshaj, Fatmir Limaj, etc.). There is no case when a show holds a woman's name as a title, even when she is invited to the program with a higher status than any other attendees.

Treatment

- The Program's Monitoring identified unequal treatment (both in qualitative and quantitative terms) for women and men participating in the program.
- Usually the moderators give the floor to the men first, even when there is only one woman in the panel, among 4 or 5 other men
- Men are allowed to talk more and stop less. The opposite happens to women who are more often interrupted by both moderators and other men in the panels.
- It is noticed from the monitoring, especially in the Xing me Ermalin show, that interviewed men are mostly questioned on professionalism issues or work experience, while women (even if they might be in the same profession) are asked more about the home roles of as mother, wives, or other issues that can be perceived as feminine.

The biggest focus on analysis has been the show "Xing me Ermalin", also because of the problematic material, nature, and the way the moderator creates his narrative.

In this program it is been identified:

- A great presence of sexist, objectifiable and homophobic narratives.
- Unethical treatment of women who are part of the TV Shows' staff.
- Problematic narrative regarding the vulnerable groups, mainly those with economic focus.
- Inconsideration about the guests and using their presence to create 'scandals' that can bring more audience attention.
- Reinforcement of patriarchal mentality on about gender roles, by reinforcing positive role for men and underlined position for women, in family and society.
- Reinforcement of homophobic mentality.

XING ME ERMALIN – TV Klan



Talk-show by Ermal Mamaqi. Spicy guests, interviews full of humor, LIVE music, movie inserts, surprises and fun.

A talk show where the interviews are intertwined with humor and games moderated by Ermal Mamaqi. Every guest comes differently in front of the public and always in an entertaining and comical view. The guests are the most successful characters of the moment in arts, politics and showbiz. Endless fun with all the guests!

General information:

For this study were monitored 9 shows of the program Xing me Ermalin, respectively on:

April 13th 2019; April 20th; April 27th; May 4th; May 11th; May 18th; May 25th; June 1st and June 8th.

Observations:

From a brief analysis made to the content of the shows, we see that there were 23 guests on the show, out of which 8 guests were man and 15 women. This is an interesting finding compared to other monitored TV-Shows for this study, where in most politically or debate-related shows dealing with interest issues to society such as education, health, politics, current affairs, etc., most of the guests are men. While, in this show, which by description is funny, most of the guests are female.

But even in this show, there are many differences related to the background from which the guests come. The male guests for our monitoring period are from the fields of: medicine, art (violinist), singing, acting and politics (a local election candidate). Female guests for the monitoring period belong to the fields: acting, television presentation, singing and the showbiz.

The difference is that if for male guests we are not limited to the showbiz, for female guests, this limitation is visible. Most female guests are selected from those areas that are perceived as related to women. The consequences are the strengthening of thinking that woman (even successful), belong only within these areas. Meanwhile, even though a female guest has had a career in the showbiz, but for the moment she holds another job position (the case of Valbona Selimllari, currently part of the mayor's

cabinet), the whole interview focuses only on her past as Miss Albania, her experiences within the television world, and her job that is related to local government is never mentioned.

This show has a sexist narrative which is highlighted the most in the questions the moderator makes to his guests. Some of the examples are:

- When it comes to female patients, do you see them in bikini or ...?
- Do you notice those women, because they have become all the same? (Question from Facebook)
- Why are you so peachy (sexy in Albanian slang) (Facebook question)
- When women come to have a nose job, do they have any other job (question from Facebook)
- You said that today women are unemployed and have purses of 1000 euro, do you mean all the women?
- Did you like this girl? (For the singer, Olimpia). What is Olimpia suitable for?
- For the girl who is coming now, do you have someone from Elbasan for Belinda? Can we tell her that we are going to engage her? (for the ballerina)
- Ledina you think that you are born a peach or you have become?
- 30 times I said to you “beautiful”, you get it as a compliment or ...? Cause when they say she's beautiful, they say she's not good on other things.
- Do you intend to become like your friends full of a silicone? (question from Facebook)
- Do you consider yourself a peach or super peach? (question from Facebook)
- Well, you were a Miss Albania and you still feel the same in your head, do you still want world peace that only makes humanitarian shows?
- Harassment of today's boys is the expression you are a peach, then what fruit did they use to compliment you?
- (The moderator addressing the lady of the public after a dental service) -You Qerime not food but you will eat also your husband.
- (Comment for the ballerina of the show) We do not have it proven, but we know by her word that only the lenses are hers.
- Since we are talking about sausages, what can you tell us about your personal life? (Addressed to the female guest).
- There are some women who look like men (commentary of the moderator)

- While displaying some photos of Flaka Krelani, the moderator comments 'hell of a thigh' what number is your thigh' (min 31:19).
- The moderator addresses to the guest Hasbi Kasaj, "It is interesting when you can buy your wife 2 million lek, because when you buy her just 100,000 lek it is a big shame (Min 38:08).

As it can be seen from these questions, most of them are of a prominent sexist nature. Although some of the questions are attributed to "questions by Facebook" of the viewers - the fact that these questions are chosen (out of a variety of questions), indicates that the one who chooses the questions has this very purpose, so they are of this nature, as are the expectations of the show. Viewers' questions are used as a method to justify the legitimacy of the sexist question that the moderator also makes, suggesting that also the viewers share the same interests with him and to normalize the sexist nature of the questions asked on the show.

Another emerging issue from the analysis, is the fact that if for male guests most of the questions revolve around their professional aspect, for female guests, their professional part is left out. Here is a sample for a group of questions for two guests, one male and the other female, of the same profession:

Questions for the male guests:

- How come your music clips get millions of clicks? Neither Metallica does not get these figures.
- Majk are you or aren't you a part of Baba stars? Or you do not get involved with political groups?
- How do you know Baba Stars?
- What is happening with the Baba Stars group, who has remained in the group? Why do you not get a new character?
- Who is the star of the group you or Getoar? Which of you makes more money?
- What do you want your son to become when he grows up?
- Who is the most talented female rapper in our country?

Questions for the female guest of the same profession, singer:

- I believe that you love Kosovars?
- How long have you been with your husband?
- Do you still love your husband like the first day?
- So, your husband has not yet become like a brother?
- How did you get acquainted with your husband?
- How come you artists get married in Kosovo, what have the Albanians less?
- As a housewife that you are, how many cleaning ladies do you have?
- Since you are doing very well when it comes to finances, what did you get as a present from your husband, something that you would never forget?
- Are you doing business? I've heard that you recently opened a beauty salon.
- Who is your favorite kid and who is giving you more struggle to raise?
- Do your kids speak Albanian?
- Ledina, do you think that "a peach" is born or made? (question from the dancer)
- We can surely say that you have been showing an extravagant look, but the transparent dress you wore on that festival is still being discussed. Was that dress symbolizing the motto of the national festival on RTSH, which is about transparency this year?
- What did your husband say to you after coming back from the festival?

Even if we should mention that the guest singer has been living abroad for some time, still if we would do a full analysis of the narrative questions, we can clearly understand their focus. It seems like the moderator is interested into showing the male singer as a professional, while on the other side the female singer is portrayed as a wife, a mother, shadowing all her opinions when it comes to music and her profession.

By analyzing the questions we can understand better the role that the moderator of the show and the content play in feeding the idea of gender roles, that seem to have been cemented in the Albanian society, and that at the same time create a false perception when it comes to the role that the woman should play in the society. Focusing mostly on the questions about the family life, the moderator emphasized the 'primary role' of the man:

Concrete examples of the above-mentioned cases we can see in the questions below:

- You have previously considered yourself as a traditional bride, do you clean your husband's feet?
- Like every other Albanian mom, have you found a bride for your son?
- You girls, don't you feel ashamed by kissing random men?
- Was your family happy when you got married, because sometimes people are forced to get married just for the sake of their family. Have you done this for your family?
- If you had to live with your in-laws under the same roof, would you kiss your husband in front of them?
- If you had to live with you in-laws under the same roof, how would you manage with the night sounds? Would you try to limit noise and sounds inside your house?
- If you would find out that you husband would be also chatting with other women, what would you put on his head? (What would you do to him?)
- Whom of you two, liked the each-others partner?
- What are the expectations of your family about the groom?
- While he invites the dancer to ask a question for the guests (min 45:22), the moderator comments that "Belinda is also single and all the good-looking ladies are "left alone"."

Such questions, even if they can be considered as "innocent" or funny by many, in fact they strengthen misperceptions about the inferiority of women in society and family relations, normalizing these misperceptions. The above mentioned questions are built based on hardened societal beliefs regarding women: traditional brides should clean their husbands' feet, Albanian moms should find a bride for their sons, you cannot kiss your husband or wife in front of your parents etc. Even if the moderator intends to create a funny situation with such quotes, the questions and answers that follow are presented as a normal interview and there isn't much done when it comes to emphasizing the invalidity of such beliefs.

The show has also a clear homophobic stance. In a specific case, with one of the guests, all questions were directed towards the guests sexual orientation.

The questions asked/ comments made for the guest:

- We don't want to know about directories, we want to know if you have pierced any ass Valer? (considering his profession as a doctor)
- Does your wife ever get jealous that you're more "peach" than her? (question made by the dancer)
- Do you get cheated by men?
- Can you confirm the rumor that you impregnated your wife? How did it happen?
- Now that you are becoming father again, will you renounce debates and nudity?

- Where do you fix your eyebrows so perfectly? (question from the Facebook page)
- Why do you behave as a woman? (question from the Facebook page)

Also on this case, the moderator uses the questions made from fans on Facebook as a way to present his idea or message about the guest.

Also in the game that the guest has to play, the whole narrative is focused on sexuality, and enforces the misperceptions and beliefs about the sexual orientations of the guest. The game is called “Find the missing word”, where some words are blanked and they have to be guessed by the guest. The sentences used for this game were the following:

When I a lot, I get wet between my thighs from

A friend of mine inserted into me, and now I want everyday

A very big escaped, so big that my tore.

The moderator is playing along, with similar sentences, but the focus is always on the answers given by the guest and not by the moderator.

We should also mention the fact that the wife of the guest is invited on this show, but just as an additional person to complete the figure of the male guest. It is also stated explicitly on the show by the moderator that: “... we have invited you for your husband, so we’re gonna deal with him now.” Another obvious fact is when the moderator asks the other guest: “What do you do for a living, as a profession?”, something that shows lack of interest about her and that she’s been invited there just as an addition.

Apart from this specific case, the moderator many times has made homophobic comments, through his direct questions, statements and reactions to the answers given by his guests and he didn’t react when homophobic comments were made by other people on the show.

- The moderator commenting with the male guest – there are many more cases when other men are hitting on us, hope it never happen to me.
- On the minute 16:10, after the dancer asks Valbona Selimllari if she has ever kissed another girl, the guest’s (Selimllari) reaction was a physical shaking as form of disgust and shock and she answers NO. The moderator starts laughing and says: We understood the answer by your body language, and after that he also uses the word “hope it never happens”.
- (After he asks his doctor guest, Skerdi Faria if he does gender reassignment surgery and his answer is no, he states – Important is that you don’t do it, so those interested can go somewhere else.

In one of the shows (8th June, Guest:Valbona Selimllari) there has been a discriminatory narrative from the moderator about the social classes and economic situation of some people, where he strengthens negative misperceptions about people in need:

(Min.39:05) The moderator talks about the case of a flooded family that was helped by a church. The pastor had gifted them sofas and that a family member had accused the pastor of stealing one piece from the set. The moderator states – **We must say that these people are not very intellectual.** The guest then answers that there are ungrateful people in some cases. Until the min 41:20 they continue talking about similar cases of vulnerable individuals, who live in poor economic conditions and also lie or are ungrateful when help is offered to them. On minute 41:21 the moderator says: **With such people something should be done, from the level of study to the way how they should behave, because we might help them but they still go at level zero.**

It should be emphasized that such expressions and quotes aren't tendentious from the moderator, but a result of ignorance and the simplifying that he tries to do to such delicate topics.

When it comes to provincial affiliation, some statements might be considered discriminatory, especially with guests who are originally from Northern parts of Albania:

- Another "mountain" man who says Bravo! Bravo!
- Apart from doctor, you're also a mountain man, and as such did you shoot with a gun in the air when your son was born?
- As a mountain man, why don't you grow a moustache and twist it?

Another aspect of this show is also the attitude of the moderator towards the female dancer or singer, who are part of the show. In some cases the language he uses is pure sexist and objectifying. Examples:

- (asks the male guest)- Did you like this girl?(directed to the singer Olimpia)
- What is Olimpia suitable for?
- Now a girl will come, whom you can meet with someone, maybe from Elbasan. Do you know someone for Belinda?
- Did we tell her that we're engaging her with someone? (directed to the dancer)
- ...take her in my arms and throw her out of the studio (the moderator's comment for the dancer), - with slaps dude (the male guest's comment)
- (Koment per velinen e emisionit)-Me prove nuk e kemi por me besë dimë qe vetem lentet i ka te vetat. (A comment for the dancer) We don't have any proof, but we have been told that the only original thing she has is her contact lenses.
- **Without make-up she looks like.... better with make-up on** (comments for the dancer)

- Minute 49:00, the moderator tries to intimidate the dancer (his co-presenter) by saying **it's the third time you're trying to ask the same simple question**. After the female guest says not to embarrass her, he answers (according to him as a joke): **We don't embarrass, we break glass bottles over heads**.
- While he invites the dancer to explain the next game (min 1:22:22), he comments **Belinda is just beautiful, she's not doing anything else**.

This language is also used towards members of the public:

- The moderator comments a recent dental procedure done by a lady who is sitting in the public: You, Qerime, will be able not only to eat bread now, but now you're also going to eat your husband.

Another interesting thing we have analyzed is the role that the female dancer plays, while asking the guests of the show. The nature of this questions, enforces the opinion that the public is supposed to have about her, as a very beautiful birl, but not a very wise one. Such thing is continuously mentioned by the moderator in his comments, where he mentions the things stated above. Examples of the questions she usually asks to the guests:

- Majk, when was the last time you wet your bed?
- Does your wife ever get jealous, because you're more of a "peach" than her?
- Ledina do you think that a "peach" is born or made?
- My question is: Have you ever kissed another woman? May I be the first one?
- Could you allow your husband to come at my place and fix my lamp, since it's broken?

Real Story, Sokol Balla, Vizion Plus



The main political form of the prime time in Vizion Plus, conceived and moderated by renowned journalist Sokol Balla, is another ambitious challenge for a renowned journalist who has a long managerial experience in the field of information. Every Monday and Thursday at 9 pm, journalist Balla brings to the public the most current and stronger topics for the public, generating debate, ideas, interviews, discussions, inside and beyond the news. At this time of the fake news, the new journalistic effort of the journalist Balla will be in the function of reality and truth.

Everything will take place in a new studio open to anyone that will provide the depth of the analysis, but will also satisfy the need for public opinion to resolve the many questions of the Albanian reality.

General information:

For this study, 8 Real Story programs were monitored, respectively on April 15th, 2019, April 22nd, April 29th, May 9th, May 16th, May 20th, May 23rd, and May 30th, 2019.

Topics that are handled in the show (as shown in titles during each show):

- Kosovo
- The new party
- Opposition
- Fatmir Limaj
- European elections
- Bamir Topi

In total, the monitored programs had 31 guests, of whom 29 male and 2 female (there was also one case where a female guest was contacted with skype).

In some issues there were also 5 guests and no one female. Consequently, the access of women invited to this show is totally absent.

Interesting is the fact that both women guests Arta Dade and Teuta Vodo, on various shows, have been invited for the topics: Kosovo and the European Elections.

None of the topics is perceived as related to Albanian reality or actuality, so non interest on commenting what happens inside our country, but what happens outside of Albania.

Observation:

Even when there is only one invited woman to the show, still, the show moderator gives the floor to one of the male guests first.

Naming of the guests

One of the most important elements to the program narrative, it is the denomination; the way we refer to persons in terms of their titles. There is a significant difference in how the show moderator, addresses towards the male and female guests:

Mr. President ... why this book, why did you decide to break the silence today? (question to Bamir Topi)

(Following the second question to Bekim Çollaku, addresses to Arta Dade): Mrs. Dade?

The addressing manner toward the woman guest, simply as "Mrs., Dade", although she has held the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, which is same important as the "President" status, is a title that the person holds even after the end of the office term as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In the case of the other female guest, that is, two in total of the whole monitored series of 8 shows, the moderator claims that he has invited her, not because of her job or position held but:

"Good evening Mrs. Vodo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Party and former Deputy Minister of Justice. But here also called today to the quality of voter, since Mrs. Vodo has Belgian citizenship ...".

The reinforcement detail is that the identifying subtitle says: Teuta Vodo - a voter in Belgium. Instead of writing the current post as Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

So, the fact that the guest is a woman, has held high leadership positions, has political experience and can contribute to the debate with of her experience, is not emphasized as an important element from the moderator. He emphasizes only the fact that the guest has a foreign citizenship and this probably helps him to bring a novelty into the program or an additional element. This is perhaps the reason why this woman was chosen to participate in the show alongside men of politics.



Tuesday, 22:00

Top Show is a Talk Show format program, directed by journalist Alban Dudushi.

General information:

For this study were monitored 10 Top Show programs, respectively on dates: March 26th, 2019; April 2nd; April 9th; April 16th; April 23rd; April 30th; May 7th; May 14th; May 21st and May 28th.

Topics covered in the show (as shown in titles during each show):

- (No) Food Safety
- Notre-Dame Fire
- War continues
- War Continues (II)
- The Battle for Europe
- The Pact for the University
- Erion Veliaj
- The Minister of Internal Affairs
- Do portals deceive?
- Dilemmas of June 30th

Observations:

From a short analysis that can be made to the content of the shows, we see that in 4 TV-Shows; this one did not have any female guest to the panel. In two of them, were invited only a politician-related male character: Erion Veliaj and the Minister of Internal Affairs Sandër Lleshaj. Meanwhile, there is no show where the main guest was only one woman. Even in the event dedicated to the “Pact for the University”, where was invited the Minister of Education, Besa Shahini, she was alone in front of a panel with seven men.

Programs that did not have any woman guest were related to these topics: War Continues (II); Dilemmas of June 30th. It seems that these topics make difficult to have women's presence in them.

Meanwhile, no shows had larger female presence than men. Men have always been the most numerous.

In total, there were 58 guests, from April to May, 2019.

Out of these, 42 were men and 16 women.

It is important to underline that some of these shows, hold the name of the male character who is invited, as in the case of Erion Veliaj or Minister of Internal Affairs, Sandër Lleshaj. Meanwhile, is not the same with the Minister of Education, Besa Shahini. The show in which she is the main guest, does not hold her name as an identifying subtitle of the program where she is invited.