

Discursive Strategies Unveiled: Exploring Arab and Western Media Narratives on Arab Women

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ABSTRACT

This study emerges against the backdrop of increasing global interest in gender representation, focusing on the portrayal of Arab women in media narratives across both Arab and Western contexts. It critically examines the discursive strategies used in the representation of Arab women in Arab and Western media. It employs Reisigl and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach as a theoretical framework for data analysis. Four newspapers: Washington Post, Daily Mail, Arab News, and Gulf Times were selected for this study where a total of 40 news discourses were analysed, with ten news discourses from each newspaper, to reveal how Arab and Western media narratives shape public perceptions and contribute to the discourse on Arab women's rights and societal roles. The findings reveal that Arab newspapers primarily highlight themes of empowerment and societal participation, aligning with national modernization efforts. Their portrayal is largely positive, emphasizing the achievements of Arab women and their significant roles in traditionally male-dominated sectors. On the other hand, Western newspapers present a broader spectrum of narratives. For instance, the Washington Post provides a balanced view that acknowledges both progress and ongoing challenges, while the Daily Mail focuses on sensationalism, emphasizing persecution and cultural conflicts, thus potentially reinforcing stereotypes and advocating Western norms of gender equality. It is revealed that while Arab media aim to project a progressive image of Arab women and align with broader governmental reforms, Western media often highlight negative aspects, influencing international perspectives and policy debates. The study underscores the significant impact of these media portrayals on public opinion and contributes to a deeper understanding of the media's role in shaping and challenging the narratives surrounding Arab women, highlighting areas for further scholarly exploration and policy consideration.

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INTRODUCTION

The portrayal of Arab women in both Arab and Western media has become a central topic of academic research, reflecting wider socio-political processes and cultural interactions in the modern media landscape (Al-Kazi, 2017; Mat Rahim, 2018; Esposito & Sinatora, 2023; Edam et al., 2024). Media narratives not only actively impact and maintain beliefs but also reflect cultural standards, often burdened with stereotypes and cultural prejudices that significantly influence the perception of Arab women, both within and outside their communities. These representations are not mere reflections of reality; they are shaped by various elements, among which political ideologies, cultural norms and economic considerations (van Dijk, 1993; Espinosa, 2010; Elyas & AlJabri, 2020). Arab and Western media often convey contrasting views, with Arab media typically depicting women in traditional roles or as emblems of national identity, while Western media tends to portray them as victims of oppression (Sabah et al., 2023). This contrast not only prompts inquiries about the accuracy and fairness of such depictions but also risks reinforcing harmful stereotypes and overlooking the diversity and complexity of Arab women's experiences.

The dichotomy between Arab and Western media portrayals of Arab women, while revealing, invites a deeper examination to fully appreciate the dynamic and multifaceted nature of these representations. Recognizing the limitations of a simplistic contrast—where Arab media often depict women in traditional roles or as emblems of national identity, and Western media frequently portray them as victims of oppression—this study seeks to expand the discourse (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Terman, 2017; Khadiri, 2020). These portrayals are not just mirrors of cultural perspectives but are also shaped by political economies, the strategic interests of media entities, and global interdependencies (Loza, 2020). Furthermore, these media narratives play a significant role in shaping and reflecting the geopolitical relationships between the Arab world and the West, making the portrayal of Arab women a crucial intersection for negotiating cultural authority and power dynamics (Loza, 2020; Mechehoud, 2024). By proposing a analysis of socio-political contexts, this study aims to examine how these representations influence global understandings of gender, culture and power, encouraging a critical assessment of the role media narratives play in reinforcing or challenging cultural hegemonies. This study analyses the portrayals of Arab women in the Arab and Western media, using Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). In particular, it examines the discursive strategies as proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2015), including nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation, and intensification, to examine the representation of Arab women in a selection of Arab and Western newspapers (Further details are provided in the methodology). This approach offers a thorough understanding of the subtle ways in which language is utilised to create and communicate meanings within particular socio-political settings.

Moreover, the present study examines the interaction between discourse, language and society and how the use of language and social behaviours affect, and are affected by, the larger cultural and institutional frameworks (Johnson & McLean, 2020). It attempts to analyse the discourse around Arab women in Arab and Western media, with a focus on the linguistic and social strategies employed to establish their image. Besides, it examines the ways in which these methods are used to either uphold or question the prevailing social narratives of Arab women, aiming to

uncover the hidden ideologies and power dynamics that shape media portrayals by examining these discursive activities.

The present study is significant because it has the potential to contribute to the continuing conversations on gender and media both in the Middle East and globally. It provides insights into how media, culture, and gender politics engage with each other. The aim is to cultivate a more profound comprehension of how the use of language and discursive strategies in media can shape the way the public perceives and the attitudes society holds towards Arab women. The findings of the present study are anticipated to be useful for scholars, media professionals, policymakers, and advocacy organizations, providing empirically supported suggestions to enhance the portrayal of Arab women in media and foster more comprehensive storylines. The present study seeks to enhance our comprehension of the intricate processes involved in the formation of media narratives concerning Arab women. It uses a theoretical framework which contributes to thoroughly examining and analyzing these discourses critically to form and mirror the social and political situations of Arab women. The theoretical framework employed in this study, Reisigl and Wodak (2015), is significant for critically examining and analyzing the nuanced ways in which Arab women are represented in the Arab and Western media, allowing for a detailed investigation into how discourses are shaped by and reflect the socio-political contexts that Arab women navigate. By dissecting the linguistic and discursive strategies used in media narratives, the framework aids in understanding the construction of Arab women's identities, revealing how these narratives both form public perceptions and mirror the complex social and political dynamics affecting Arab women. This in turn contributes to wider discussions on the media portrayal of Arab women, cultural heritage, and the balance between genders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature emphasizes the importance of women's presence in media discussions, highlighting an ongoing tendency to categorize and stereotype genders. Researchers (Rapitse et al. 2019; Power et al. 2019; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020; Jonah and Nnanyelugo, 2020; Karolak & Guta 2020) have thoroughly investigated the issues of women's discrimination, representation, and stereotyping on different media platforms. An extensive examination of relevant literature reveals a strong academic emphasis on the theoretical and methodological approaches to women's concerns in newspapers.

For instance, Al Ali (2008) analyzes the changing roles of women in Iraq from the 1950s to post-2003. The study emphasizes that media often emphasize religious and ethnic differences, especially in situations where social and political problems go beyond these divisions. Al Ali argues that these narratives often portray Iraqi women as repressed and disadvantaged. The media frequently sensationalizes their situation by using images of veiled women and accounts of gender-based violence, so reinforcing a conventional image of suppression in Muslim countries. Significantly, her research lacks a historical progression of the changing positions of women in Iraq.

In addition, Sriwimon and Zilli (2017) illustrate the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a paradigm for analyzing gender stereotypes in political media discourses. Their findings clarify how media language not only communicates certain meanings but also builds ideas through different linguistic mechanisms. Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020) also examine the representation of Nigerian women in the media and find that these portrayals mainly conform to

traditional and entertaining roles. Besides, Raptise et al. (2019) criticize the media's unfair portrayal of women, especially when compared to the greater attention given to men. Their study highlights the need for equal representation of female and male politicians in response to popular demand. However, it largely focuses on women's involvement in politics and does not discuss their responsibilities in society at large.

Furthermore, Power et al. (2019) examine the representation of women in prominent U.S. industry periodicals, revealing a prevailing narrative that reinforces traditional male-dominated beliefs and diminishes the significance of women in the corporate field. Van der Pas and Aaldering (2020) expand on this investigation by examining the political sphere, scrutinizing a large collection of media narratives to uncover notable gender biases that put women politicians at a disadvantage in terms of media exposure. In addition, Karolak and Guta (2020) contend that Arab media presents Arab women in a favourable and dynamic manner, whereas Western media frequently portrays them as passive victims, perpetuating stereotypes and misunderstandings about Arab society.

The past studies highlight a significant emphasis on political representation and media depiction of women, with a smaller number of studies providing a comparative examination of discursive strategies utilized in Arab and Western news media regarding Arab women. This gap highlights the necessity for more thorough examinations of how various media environments shape and communicate the identities and roles of Arab women, employing Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach as a theoretical framework for data analysis. The aim is to cultivate a more profound comprehension of the cross-cultural narratives found in media discourse, particularly by examining the nuanced ways Arab and Western media portray Arab women. Such investigation is critical in that it addresses a significant gap in current research, which often overlooks the comparative analysis of discursive strategies across different media environments. By employing Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) approach, this study seeks to uncover how these portrayals contribute to the shaping of identities and societal roles of Arab women, thus enhancing our understanding of cross-cultural communication and the global implications of media representation.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the methodology adopted in the present study as follows:

STUDY DESIGN

The current study employed a qualitative approach for selecting and analysing the data of the study. This approach provides the benefit of simplifying the collection and examination of data so as to achieve the objectives of the study. Furthermore, the data was analysed using content analysis and textual analysis to identify the discursive strategies employed by the selected Arab and Western newspapers in the light of the adopted theoretical framework i.e. Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach. The content analysis and textual analysis are described below in the methods of data analysis.

CORPUS OF THE STUDY

The data was gathered from a total of four newspapers, with two being of Arab origin and the remaining two being of Western origin. The collected data consisted of news discourses that specifically focus on Arab women, including both news headlines and news articles. The Arab newspapers that have been selected include Arab News, a newspaper from Saudi Arabia, and Gulf Times, a newspaper from Qatar. These two Arab newspapers are selected for multiple reasons. For instance, these two newspapers have a wide distribution. For instance, Arab News boasts a daily circulation exceeding 51,481 copies and a strong online presence (Saudi Arabia, 2012), while Gulf Times circulates is placed as 12th most influential Arabic newspaper in 2020 (Industry Arabic, 2023), serving both local and expatriate audiences in Qatar. These figures highlight the substantial impact and wide distribution of both newspapers, making them pivotal sources for analysing the representation of Arab women in media. Besides, their published news is stored in their websites, making it readily available.

Regarding Western newspapers, two specific newspapers are selected: the Washington Post, an American newspaper, and the Daily Mail, a British newspaper. The selection of these two newspapers is based on their origin from the most influential countries in the Western world, namely the USA and UK. In addition, both are widely disseminated and prevalent in the academic context (Karolak & Guta, 2020). The Washington Post and the Daily Mail were selected for their extensive reach, with the Washington Post having a daily circulation of approximately 139,232 (Majid, 2023), and the Daily Mail circulating about 1,134,184 copies daily (Mayhew, 2020). Both newspapers are not only influential in their respective countries but also widely cited in academic research, confirming their significant impact on both public and scholarly discourse. These newspapers have a significant impact on Western readers due to their large readership (Bashatah, 2017).

In the study, the data collection process involved accessing the digital archives of these newspapers, focusing on articles and headlines that specifically discussed Arab women, ensuring a relevant and focused corpus. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select a balanced set of forty news discourses, ten from each selected newspaper, which were, then, thoroughly reviewed. Data cleaning involved the manual removal of extraneous elements such as advertisements and reader comments to isolate the editorial content for analysis. This prepared corpus was, then, subject to qualitative content analysis and textual analysis, with data segments exemplifying specific discursive strategies identified by Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach being extracted and analysed to explore the nuanced portrayal of Arab women across different media landscapes, ensuring the methodological rigour and relevance of the findings of the current study.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data was examined based on the Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach which classifies the discursive strategies into five types, namely, nomination and referential strategies, predication, argumentation, perspectivization and framing, and intensification. These discursive strategies are described in this section below with examples from the collected data.

This approach is suitable for the present study because it allows for a detailed comparison of how Arab women are portrayed differently in Arab versus Western media. It examines the specific language used to describe Arab women, the types of arguments made about their roles and rights, the perspectives from which these narratives are presented, and the intensity of the

discourse. This approach offers insights into how Arab women's identities are constructed and represented in different cultural contexts. In terms of data analysis, qualitative content analysis was conducted to identify and interpret how specific discursive strategies—like nomination, predication, argumentation, and framing—appear in media texts, focusing on their context rather than mere occurrence, to understand their role in constructing meanings about Arab women. Concurrently, textual analysis examined the language use, rhetorical devices, and narrative structures of these texts, interpreting how these elements influence perceptions of Arab women. This approach allows for a nuanced investigation of how media narratives shape public perceptions of Arab women, effectively using interpretive methods to highlight the complexities of media discourse within different cultural contexts.

In addition, discursive strategies were analyzed using Reisigl and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach, focusing on nomination and referential strategies, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and intensification. Each strategy was examined as follows:

1. **Nomination and Referential Strategies:** These strategies involve how social actors, objects, phenomena, processes, and events are named and categorized. For example, the Washington Post uses nomination to present 'Lalla Essaydi' as an individual challenging stereotypes, while the Daily Mail highlights a 'Saudi housewife,' emphasizing her bravery and contextualizing her actions within societal norms.
2. **Predication:** This strategy pertains to the attribution of qualities, properties, or states to social actors. For instance, the portrayal of Arab women in the Gulf Times as participants in a digital Hackathon uses predication to describe them as actively engaged in modern, technological roles, thereby challenging traditional stereotypes.
3. **Argumentation:** This involves the use of arguments that justify or legitimate particular viewpoints. In the Arab News, the achievements of 'Saudi Arabia's first female golf coach' are not just mentioned but used as an argument to support broader claims about the progress and empowerment of women in Saudi society.
4. **Perspectivation and Framing:** This strategy refers to the presentation of information from specific perspectives or frames that guide the interpretation. An example could be the Gulf Times focusing on women's leadership in innovative fields, framing Arab women as key drivers of modern initiatives and technological advancement.
5. **Intensification or Mitigation:** This involves the use of linguistic means to intensify or mitigate the force of the statements made. For example, using adjectives like 'brave' or 'first' intensifies the role of these women, enhancing the emotional engagement of the audience and emphasizing the groundbreaking nature of their achievements.

Each of these strategies was systematically applied to the corpus of forty news discourses, with textual instances extracted and analyzed to uncover how the media constructs the identities and roles of Arab women in various contexts. Using Reisigl and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (2015), this study employed a structured coding scheme tailored to identify specific indicators for each discursive strategy such as nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and intensification or mitigation. For example, nomination in the Gulf Times highlighted participants in a digital hackathon as "pioneers," reflecting an innovative and non-traditional role for Arab women. Similarly, the Arab News used terms like "groundbreaking" to describe the achievements of Saudi women in sports, intensifying the perception of their impact

on society. By employing these strategies, the study reveals the nuanced and complex ways in which media narratives either uphold or challenge the prevailing social narratives of Arab women.

To ensure the reliability of the qualitative analysis in the study, several measures were implemented. Intercoder reliability was established by having two researchers independently code a subset of the data, with Cohen's kappa statistic used to assess agreement levels. Regular team meetings were held to address discrepancies in coding, and an audit trail was maintained to document all research decisions, enhancing the confirmability and allowing for potential external auditing. In the current study, the intercoder team consisted of two researchers skilled in media discourse analysis. A comprehensive coding manual was prepared, detailing each discursive strategy with definitions, examples, and rules for ambiguous cases, ensuring consistent application across the data. This manual, included in the Appendix, served as a guideline for the coders. This team brought various perspectives to the analysis, crucial for examining media portrayals from both Arab and Western sources.

Throughout the coding process, the team convened weekly to discuss coding progress and resolve discrepancies. Initial coding of 10% of the data yielded a Cohen's kappa of 0.75, indicating substantial agreement. Continued refinement of coding practices improved this measure to 0.85, reflecting excellent intercoder reliability by the end of the study. These meetings and the systematic approach to coding and recalibration not only heightened the reliability of our analysis but also ensured the mitigation of potential biases, reinforcing the credibility and reproducibility of our findings regarding the media representation of Arab women. These steps strengthened the reliability of this study and mitigated potential biases in the qualitative content and textual analysis. The following section presents the obtained findings of the current study.

In conclusion, it is crucial to indicate that Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) DHA enables a deeper understanding of how power structures and social processes shape media narratives. This approach enhances the robustness of the analysis of the current study, as the researchers employ qualitative content analysis and textual analysis to cross-validate findings. A key element of DHA is its focus on historicity, which necessitates considering how current portrayals of Arab women are influenced by historical discourses and contexts, providing a longitudinal perspective on gender representation. The approach also highlights the pragmatic functions of language, how it operates within real-world settings to empower or marginalize, challenging or reinforcing stereotypes. As explained above, the use of DHA contributes to providing a deep analysis of the analysed data in the current study and also ensures a critical evaluation of discursive practices within the selected media discourses.

FINDINGS

This section provides the analysis of data and the obtained findings of the present study. The analysis of data is presented based on the proposed discursive strategies of the adopted model, namely, nomination and referential strategies, predication, argumentation, perspectivation and framing, and intensification. The analysis of the news discourses below using Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) involves understanding how various discursive strategies work to construct and challenge perceptions of Arab women in media representations as follows:

NOMINATION AND REFERENTIAL STRATEGIES

This subsection provides an analysis of the nomination and referential strategies employed by the four selected newspapers.

TABLE 1. Nomination and referential strategies by the four newspapers

Newspaper	News Discourse
Washington Post	"Artist Lalla Essaydi challenges stereotypes of women in Islamic cultures." "These women have become literal odalisques"
Daily Mail	"A brave Saudi housewife has reached the final of the Arabic version of the X Factor after lashing out at hardline Muslim clerics on live TV" "Syrian Arab women battle IS, social stigma".
Arab News	"Saudi Arabia's first female golf coach" "Jameel Jeddah highlights the experiences of Saudi women"
Gulf Times	"Arab girls invited to compete in Doha digital Hackathon." "The Arab International Women's Forum (AIWF) will hold its 'Young Arab Women Leaders'"

The discourses used by The Washington Post in Table 1 employ nomination and reference strategies that both identify specific individuals and make generalizations about groups, thus creating a sophisticated framework for understanding Arab women. The newspaper acknowledges Lalla Essaydi, a renowned artist who challenges stereotypes of Islamic women, as an individual whose work critically examines long-established societal beliefs. In addition, the mention of "literal odalisques" makes use of historical references to question current prejudices, by contrasting old perceptions with present-day realities. This method not only recognizes the intricate nature of Arab women's identities but also actively participates in reframing them within a global framework.

The Daily Mail used specific designations such as "Saudi housewife" and "Syrian Arab women" to highlight both nationality and gender, thereby situating these women within distinct cultural and conflict-related frameworks. This referential strategy aims to emphasize their behaviour within the context of society norms and limitations. An example of this is when someone is described as a "brave Saudi housewife". This term not only indicates their nationality and marital status, but also highlights their conduct within these parameters as particularly daring. These nominations draw attention to the ability of individuals to take action and question the dominant beliefs of being passive and subordinate in countries affected by violence.

Arab News highlights submissions that emphasize the accomplishments and positions of Saudi women, presenting them as trailblazers and ambassadors in their respective industries. The newspaper emphasizes the pioneering impact of persons like "Jameel Jeddah" by explicitly mentioning their positions, such as "Saudi Arabia's first female golf coach." These references establish a coherent account of advancement and authority, so questioning earlier generalizations that frequently portray Arab women as mostly submissive or limited to conventional positions.

The Gulf Times utilizes nomination strategy that highlight the active engagement of Arab women and girls in contemporary, forward-thinking endeavours such as leadership and technology. The newspaper showcases the active participation of Arab girls in the Doha digital Hackathon and emphasizes their association with forward-thinking and innovative environments by mentioning the engagement of the Arab International Women's Forum. The deliberate utilization of nomination serves to redefine the view of Arab women, promoting an image that is synonymous with empowerment and contemporary values.

The nomination and referential strategies utilized by these media have a significant impact on shaping and occasionally questioning the attitudes of Arab women. By nominating individuals and highlighting their unique roles or acts, the media can both mirror and perhaps change the conversation on Arab women. This can lead to a more nuanced comprehension of their identities and contributions in different societal contexts.

PREDICATION

This subsection presents an analysis of the predication strategy employed by the four selected newspapers.

TABLE 2. Predication strategy employed by the four newspapers

Newspaper	News discourse
Washington Post	"The women, she says, were 'never seen as human beings on their own'. "Many women in the Arab world are demanding stores that cater to their own modern tastes"
Daily Mail	"Wearing a black burkha, mother-of-four Hissa Hilal delivered a blistering poem against Muslim preachers." "Black women, some of whom are African migrants, suffer a double discrimination, activists say."
Arab News	"The stubborn, deep, and free-spirited main character illustrates the dominant individuality of Saudi women and their diversities." "Women in Saudi Arabia continue to pursue their passion and make progress in various industries."
Gulf Times	"Women's empowerment in focus at Katara conference" "Opportunities galore for women entrepreneurs"

The narratives presented in Table 2 above aim to create a depiction of Arab women as active and influential, which challenges the common prejudices that portray them as mostly submissive or limited to traditional roles. The Washington Post, for example, portrays Arab women as possessing attributes of autonomy and contemporary thinking. The assertion that women "were 'never seen as human beings on their own'" and the observation that many are "demanding stores that cater to their own modern tastes" imply that these women are actively challenging old beliefs that fail to acknowledge their autonomy. This predication strategy not only emphasizes their aspiration for acknowledgment as autonomous persons but also presents them as proactive advocates for transformation, aligning with contemporary consumerist and individualistic principles.

The Daily Mail highlights the various identities and resiliency of its subjects through the use of specific features. The newspaper underscores Hissa Hilal's position as a mother of four and her powerful poem denouncing Muslim preachers, so emphasizing her place within conventional family dynamics and her active defiance against repressive narratives. Moreover, the reference to "Black women, including African migrants, experiencing dual discrimination" offers an intersectional viewpoint, acknowledging the compounded difficulties encountered by these women as a result of both their race and migratory status.

Arab News use predication strategy to depict Saudi women as a multifaceted and forward-thinking group. Characterizing a person as "stubborn, deep, and free-spirited" not only attaches intricate and favourable features to them, but also implies that these traits are indicative of larger portions of Saudi women. Moreover, asserting that "Women in Saudi Arabia persistently pursue their passions and achieve advancements in diverse sectors" attributes these women with determination and accomplishment, challenging any uniform or stereotyped portrayals of their societal positions.

The Gulf Times focuses on the empowerment and entrepreneurial spirit of women in its articles. Expressions such as "Women's empowerment in focus at Katara conference" and "Opportunities galore for women entrepreneurs" ascribe active and forward-thinking positions to women, depicting them as key participants in economic and social arenas. This not only showcases their ability but also establishes them as prominent participants in the public and commercial domains.

These newspapers develop narratives that portray Arab women as agents of change and persons with multifaceted identities by strategically using predication. This depiction defies conventional stereotypes and advocates for a more intricate comprehension of their roles in both the personal and societal spheres.

ARGUMENTATION

This subsection offers an analysis of the argumentation strategy employed by the four selected newspapers.

TABLE 3. Argumentation strategy employed by the four newspapers

Newspaper	News discourse
Washington Post	"Just over a week ago, Tunisia became one of the only countries in the Arab world to allow Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men, flouting centuries of tradition" "'Hijab grab' defense: As reports of hate crimes spike post-election, Muslim women turn to self-defense"
Daily Mail	"My goal is to liberate women from the oppression of Daesh (IS), but also societal oppression," says Hevi Dilirin, an Arab woman. "Violence against women hurts Arab economies, UN says"
Arab News	"Al-Tuwaijri said that the Kingdom is achieving the highest level of women's participation and rights in the region" "GCC to adopt joint mechanism for women's issues"
Gulf Times	"As Qatar moves towards the realization of its 2030 Vision, there is no doubt that the role of women will be critical to its success" "The conference would discuss different topics concerning Qatari and Arab women and come up with proposals to enable their increased participation in social and economic life"

The Washington Post utilizes argumentation to emphasize noteworthy societal changes and the adaptive reactions of Muslim women in demanding circumstances. An example of this is the assertion that Tunisia's decision to permit Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men, despite centuries of custom, demonstrates a notable change in legal and societal standards, highlighting advancements in gender and religious parity. Furthermore, the inclusion of 'Hijab grab' defense training after a surge in hate crimes subsequent to the election highlights a story of strength and proactive protection against prejudice, thereby promoting consciousness and intervention against these offenses.

The Daily Mail employs argumentation strategy to emphasize both individual endeavours and wider socio-economic consequences. Hevi Dilirin's declaration regarding her objective to "free women from the oppression of Daesh (IS), as well as societal oppression," situates her endeavours within a broader framework of combating both radical and structural oppression. This personal testimony is employed to advocate for the significance of tackling these dual concerns. Moreover, by referencing the UN's assertion that "Violence against women hampers Arab economies," the argument utilizes economic facts and authoritative sources to contend that gender-based violence

is not solely a matter of social justice, but also a financial burden. Consequently, this underscores the need for comprehensive reforms.

Arab News use argumentation strategy to portray governmental and regional policies as advantageous and pioneering in the realm of women's rights. The newspaper asserts that Saudi Arabia is making great progress in women's rights and is portrayed as a leader in gender reform in the Arab world by quoting Al-Tuwajiri, who believes that the Kingdom is attaining the highest level of women's involvement and rights in the area. The GCC's adoption of a collective system for addressing women's issues Moreover, it reinforces this claim by emphasizing cooperative regional initiatives that strive to promote women's rights, portraying the GCC countries as proactive and united in their pursuit of gender equality.

The Gulf Times use argumentation strategy to underscore the pivotal role of women in attaining Qatar's national objectives, including its 2030 Vision. The assertion that "the role of women will be crucial to its success" emphasizes the imperative of women's involvement in all sectors as essential to the advancement of the nation. Moreover, the discussions at the conference regarding the promotion of women's greater involvement in social and economic activities make a case for deliberate inclusion as crucial for the overall development of society. This perspective presents it not only as a matter of fairness but also as a strategic means of advancing the nation. The selected newspapers employ reasoning to develop narratives that promote changes in policies, societal attitudes, and legal frameworks pertaining to women's rights and participation. These arguments not only emphasize the continuing difficulties but also propose the proactive actions being taken by people, states, and regions as successful solutions. The deliberate utilization of reasoning serves the purpose of both educating and convincing readers about the crucial significance of policies and individual actions in influencing progressive transformations in the position of women in the Arab world.

PERSPECTIVATION AND FRAMING

This subsection presents an analysis of the perspectivation, and framing strategy used by the four selected newspapers.

TABLE 4. Perspectivation and framing strategy employed by the four newspapers

Newspaper	News discourse
Washington Post	"Artist Lalla Essaydi's exhibit at the National Museum of African Art questions the barriers imposed on Arab women"
Daily Mail	"5 striking photographs that challenge stereotypes of Arab women" "Women leaders in an Arab world still plagued by inequality"
Arab News	"Cairo named riskiest megacity for women, worse since Arab spring" "Growing role of women players highlighted at Aramco Saudi Ladies International event"
Gulf Times	"To her, women making strides in various industries under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 comes as no surprise" "Women leaders in an Arab world still plagued by inequality" "Cairo named riskiest megacity for women, worse since Arab spring"

Through the implementation of the discursive strategy of perspectivation and framing, every newspaper moulds the narrative around Arab women by employing distinct perspectives and angles. Consequently, this influences readers' perceptions of the roles, challenges, and accomplishments of Arab women in different circumstances. For instance, the Washington Post utilizes perspectivation and framing strategy to situate Arab women within the realms of creative expression and activism. Lalla Essaydi's exhibition and other photography works defy

conventional narratives by portraying Arab women as multifaceted individuals who actively resist cultural and societal constraints. This framing not only highlights their ability to take action but also changes the way they are seen from being passive to being active contributors in questioning and reshaping prejudices. The decision to prioritize artistic pursuits emphasizes the significance of art in critiquing and empowering society, thereby portraying these women not just as subjects of art but also as its makers and storytellers.

The Daily Mail portrays the Arab East as a consistently difficult environment for women, emphasizing the continued presence of discrimination and unique dangers. The headline "Women leaders in an Arab world still plagued by inequality" and the reference to Cairo as the "riskiest megacity for women" create a narrative that highlights the challenges experienced by women. This viewpoint not only highlights the challenges but also evaluates the speed and efficacy of efforts to achieve gender equality. The Daily Mail shapes the conversation by emphasizing the negative aspects, prompting a careful evaluation of the cultural and political responses (or lack thereof) to these concerns.

Arab News takes on an optimistic and future-oriented perspective, emphasizing the progress of women as a natural and celebrated result of recent governmental developments, especially under Vision 2030. This framing presents a story of advancement and hope, highlighting women's achievements in different sectors as a part of a larger national change. Arab News presents these developments as anticipated and praised, which not only makes women's active participation in Saudi society seem ordinary but also connects it with the country's development plans, thereby supporting the government's reform efforts as successful and advantageous.

The Gulf Times, much like the Daily Mail, presents the Arab world as confronting substantial obstacles in terms of women's rights and safety. The framing of the essay underscores the challenges that continue to exist despite greater advances, by restating viewpoints on inequality and hazards, specifically within the context of Cairo. This strategy establishes a storytelling style that emphasizes the challenges and hardships, implying a critical perspective on the region's advancements in gender equality. Such framing functions to maintain the prominence of women's safety and equality in public discussions, urging for ongoing focus and efforts.

These newspapers create various narratives about the lives and roles of Arab women by strategically using perspectivation and framing techniques. Whether emphasizing difficulties, commemorating progress, or utilizing art as a platform for societal critique, each framing method influences public perception in distinct manners. This strategy not only provides information to readers, but also stimulates their emotions and intellect, encouraging them to reevaluate their perspectives on Arab women and the wider social environments in which they operate.

INTENSIFICATION

This subsection presents an analysis of the intensification strategy used by the four selected newspapers.

TABLE 5. Intensification strategy employed by the four newspapers

Newspaper	News discourse
Washington Post	"This Arab country is allowing Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men. That's the good news" "The young girl growing up in a harem in Morocco is sitting alone in an abandoned house surrounded by olive trees"
Daily Mail	"Ambition: To start her own plumbing business, called Challenge, in a community where many women don't work outside the home"

Arab News	"The Thomson Reuters Foundation survey found that Cairo ranked as the worst city when it came to protecting women against potentially harmful cultural practices" "I'm beyond proud that more than 80 percent of the cast are female and almost 50 percent of the crew is female, which is something so rare."
Gulf Times	"Saudi women prove that 'We Can Do It' as their participation in military grows" "Al-Kaylani noted that 'women in Qatar are amongst the most educated in the Arab region with more than 70% holding a degree and 36% now working outside of the home, with this percentage expected to rise to 42% by 2016.' "Because women in this region have started late compared to the well-established businessmen in other countries, thus, allowing women limited experience in the business"

Through the discursive strategy of intensification, every newspaper magnifies specific elements of the narratives around Arab women, highlighting their challenges, accomplishments, and changes within society. For example, the Washington Post employs intensification to emphasize the differences between advancements and persistent cultural obstacles encountered by Arab women. This Arab nation has granted permission for Muslim women to enter into marriages with men who do not practice the Islamic faith. The newspaper highlights a notable change in society norms, highlighting the progressive nature of this shift. This is considered positive news. The amplification of positive information serves to enhance the significance of this progress. Moreover, the portrayal of a "adolescent female maturing in a secluded residence within a Moroccan harem, presently occupying a desolate dwelling encircled by olive trees" heightens the feeling of seclusion and the poignant predicament of the girl, evoking emotional involvement from readers and emphasizing the harsh truths that continue to confront numerous individuals.

The Daily Mail exacerbates both the aspirations and the cultural obstacles confronting Arab women. The story of a woman endeavouring to establish her own plumbing enterprise in a community where female employment is infrequent not only highlights her drive but also underscores the societal obstacles she intends to surmount. Similarly, the statement that "Cairo was ranked as the most deficient city in terms of safeguarding women from potentially harmful cultural practices" use intensification to underscore the gravity of the problem, emphasizing the pressing necessity for reform and the safeguarding of women's rights.

Arab News utilizes intensification strategy to commemorate and magnify the accomplishments of Saudi women. The usage of phrases such as "I am exceedingly proud that over 80 percent of the cast consists of females and nearly 50 percent of the crew is comprised of females, which is an exceptionally uncommon occurrence," use powerful emotional language to emphasize the remarkable and forward-thinking nature of these numbers within the film business. Furthermore, the phrase "Saudi women prove that 'We Can Do It' as their participation in military grows" employs a historical allusion to women's liberation in order to enhance the importance of their involvement in historically male-dominated sectors.

Gulf Times employs intensification strategy to highlight the educational and professional accomplishments, as well as the difficulties encountered by women in the region. The statement highlights the remarkable educational attainment and labour force engagement of women in Qatar, with over 70% possessing a degree and 36% currently employed outside their homes. These numbers underscore the great accomplishment of women in Qatar in terms of education and workforce involvement. The additional anticipation that this percentage will increase enhances the storyline of advancement. On the other hand, the acknowledgment that women have entered the business world later than established male entrepreneurs emphasizes the ongoing obstacles, use intensity to draw attention to the gaps that require closing.

Intensification, as a discursive strategy, effectively emphasizes the intricate interaction between development and problems in the narratives of Arab women. The selected newspapers improve the emotional and cognitive impact on readers by emphasizing specific components of these narratives, which fosters a greater knowledge and engagement with the presented concerns.

DISCUSSION

The examination of the discursive strategies employed by the four newspapers unveils an intricate and diverse representation of Arab women that greatly influences public opinion and conversation. These strategies emphasize the difficulties and accomplishments of Arab women, demonstrating the variations in cultural, political and societal circumstances. This finding is congruent with those found in (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2011). In the current study, Arab News and Gulf Times, for instance, prioritize the topics of empowerment, progress, and the active involvement of Arab women in societal change. These themes are frequently associated with national modernization initiatives such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Qatar's National Vision 2030. Their coverage primarily employs positive portrayal and framing, highlighting Arab women as knowledgeable, trailblazing, and impactful, particularly in industries previously controlled by men. This portrayal is not only viewed favourably by the local audiences who might see these changes as progressive, but also potentially shapes international perceptions positively, presenting Arab cultures in a dynamic and reformative manner. Arab News use intensification and positive framing strategies to highlight the notable policy innovations and accomplishments of women, connecting them to wider governmental and developmental objectives.

On the contrary, Western newspapers like the Washington Post and Daily Mail offer a wider range of depictions. The Washington Post presents a comprehensive perspective by recognizing both progress and persistent obstacles, maintaining a fair and unbiased stance. In contrast, the Daily Mail tends to emphasize instances of persecution, cultural clashes, and sensational narratives. Their narratives employ the use of intensification and dramatic prediction to emphasize the challenges and opposition faced by Arab women in their fight against systemic obstacles and conservative customs. The framing frequently highlights disparities between the circumstances of Arab women and Western norms of women's rights, promoting the need for transformation and criticizing the sluggish rate of advancement.

Arab newspapers strive to accurately represent and advance political and societal reforms, creating a forward-thinking image that appeals to both local and international readers. In contrast, Western newspapers tend to be more inclined towards criticizing the existing state of affairs and emphasizing negative elements. This tendency might potentially strengthen stereotypes or promote specific political agendas in Western societies. Arab media have a role in promoting a narrative that emphasizes the ability of individuals and communities to make their own decisions and bring about beneficial transformations within their cultural and national contexts. In contrast, Western media primarily concentrate on uncovering problems and promoting adherence to Western norms of gender equality. They have a significant impact on global attitudes and policy, and occasionally promote narratives of emancipation from repressive circumstances.

This extensive investigation demonstrates that both Arab and Western newspapers have distinct narrative objectives that are customized for their various audiences. These objectives have a substantial impact on how Arab women are shown and influence the way they are seen by the public, both within their local communities and on a global scale. These newspapers employ

discursive strategies to not only provide information about the situation of Arab women but also actively engage in the ongoing discussion about gender equality and women's rights in the Arab world. In doing so, they contribute to a dynamic conversation about the possibilities for Arab women and the obstacles that still need to be tackled. The deliberate manipulation of language and framing in these pieces is crucial in promoting ongoing advancement, emphasizing achievements, and pinpointing areas that require heightened efforts to attain genuine equality.

This portrayal of Arab women across different media landscapes invites a deeper reflection on the role of media as a cultural intermediary. By framing Arab women either as agents of modernization or as victims of societal failures, media outlets not only reflect but also shape societal norms and values concerning gender roles (Eltantawy, 2007). This dynamic is particularly relevant in the context of global feminism and the transnational spread of gender ideologies (Mechehoud, 2024). The obtained findings suggest that media frames do not merely report on reality but actively participate in the construction and perpetuation of social norms (Murugaiah, et al., 2024). The divergent strategies employed by Arab and Western media highlight the complex interplay between cultural identity and media representation, suggesting that the portrayal of Arab women is both a product of and a contributor to ongoing cultural and ideological negotiations. Consequently, understanding these media narratives provides critical insights into the broader societal debates about gender, identity and power, reinforcing the importance of media literacy in fostering a critical awareness of how gender is constructed and contested in the public sphere (Cabbage, 2022; Tan et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study has illuminated the complex ways in which Arab and Western media frame and represent Arab women through various discursive strategies. The analysis, grounded in Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) Discourse-Historical Approach, revealed that while Arab media often portray Arab women as symbols of national modernization and progress, emphasizing their roles in traditionally male-dominated sectors, Western media tend to offer a broader spectrum of narratives that often highlight challenges and adversities, at times reinforcing stereotypical perceptions. The Washington Post's representation contrasts sharply with the Daily Mail's focus on sensationalism, underscoring the diversity within Western media portrayals. Such representations not only reflect the respective socio-cultural and political milieus but also actively shape public perceptions and contribute to ongoing debates about gender and cultural identity. This study underscores the critical role media plays in either reinforcing or challenging existing narratives surrounding Arab women, highlighting the need for media literacy and critical engagement with media discourses to foster a more nuanced understanding of gender issues in global contexts.

Future research should explore the impact of these media portrayals on public opinion and policy, furthering the discourse on media's role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender and cultural identity. Subsequent investigations of the representation of Arab women in media should explore several methodologies to enhance comprehension and expand the potential consequences. Research endeavours could encompass comparative cross-cultural evaluations including various worldwide locations, longitudinal studies to monitor narrative evolutions over time, and research into the influence of social media on influencing these tales. In addition, studies on audience reception would shed light on how different global audiences interpret media portrayals, while analyses that focus on intersectionality could offer detailed insights into how intersecting identities

influence media representations. Further depth could be achieved through comparative research on gender disparities in media, along with an analysis of the demography and decision-making procedures involved in media creation. Examining the influence of media portrayals on public opinion and decision-making around gender equality and women's rights can provide insights into the tangible effects of media narratives on society and policy.

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APPENDIX

CODING MANUAL FOR MEDIA DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Introduction

- Purpose: This manual is intended to guide coders through the process of identifying and analysing discursive strategies in media texts that discuss Arab women, using Reisigl and Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach.
- Scope: The analysis focuses on media from both Arab and Western sources.

Discursive Strategies

1. Nomination and Referential Strategies

- Definition: How social actors, objects, or phenomena are named or categorized in the text.
- Criteria: Look for explicit labels, group categorizations, epithets, and personal names.
- Example: Identify whether individuals are referred to by professional titles, gendered nouns, or cultural identifiers (e.g., "Saudi housewife" vs. "female entrepreneur").

2. Predication

- Definition: Attributes or characteristics assigned to social actors.
- Criteria: Note adjectives, descriptive phrases, and metaphorical language that shapes perceptions of Arab women.
- Example: Descriptions like "empowered" or "oppressed" that contribute to the portrayal of status or roles.

3. Argumentation

- Definition: Structures that justify or legitimate viewpoints within the text.
- Criteria: Identify types of arguments used (e.g., authority citing, cause-consequence reasoning, moral appeals).
- Example: Statements that argue for or against the progress in women's rights based on cultural, social, or legal changes.

4. Perspectivation and Framing

- Definition: The angle or perspective from which information is presented.
- Criteria: Detect the framing of issues through specific lenses such as economics, rights, or cultural traditions.
- Example: Highlight whether the text frames issues as challenges, opportunities, or ongoing conflicts.

5. Intensification or Mitigation

- Definition: The use of linguistic means to strengthen or weaken the statements made.
- Criteria: Look for adverbs, adjectives, and modal verbs that modify the intensity of the discourse.
- Example: Words like "significantly," "merely," or "might" that change the force of the claims about Arab women's roles.

Coding Process

- **Segmentation:** Divide the text into units that can be clearly assigned a strategy based on the above criteria.
- **Annotation:** Mark text segments with codes corresponding to the identified strategy, adding annotations for specific observations or uncertainties.
- **Consistency Checks:** Regularly compare coding decisions among the team to ensure consistency and resolve discrepancies through discussion.
- **Documentation:** Maintain detailed notes on decisions and discussions to create an audit trail.

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