

The Representation of Arab Women in English-Language Newspapers: A Comparative Analysis of Arab and Western Media Post-Arab Spring

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the portrayal of Arab women in both Arab and Western newspapers in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. It aims to uncover concealed ideologies, concepts, and beliefs held by Arab and Western societies regarding Arab women. Employing Fairclough's three-dimensional Approach to Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework, the analysis considers the dimensions of discourse fragment (text), discursive practices, and the power dynamics inherent in discourse. Additionally, the study adopts a qualitative approach for collecting and analysing the selected data. Four prominent newspapers, namely the Washington Post, Daily Mail, Arab News, and Gulf Times, were chosen for the study. The findings reveal notable disparities in the depiction of Arab women in Arab and Western media. In Arab newspapers, Arab women are often portrayed as empowered, respected, skilled, educated, and capable contributors to economic and social life. They are occasionally depicted as businesswomen and leaders. Conversely, some Western media tend to portray Arab women as oppressed, subjugated, veiled, plagued by inequality, hidden from view, and restricted by religious rules concerning marriage and dress. They are even referred to as literal odalisques. The study concludes that these varied depictions stem from distinct ideologies prevalent in Arab and Western media. The insights derived from this research regarding the diverse portrayals of Arab women and the influence of different ideologies in Arab and Western media can be valuable for academics, government officials, and community organizations seeking innovative perspectives on women's media representation and active participation in society.

Keywords: Arab women; Arab Spring; Western media; Arab media; Critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

It is widely accepted that each community embraces a fairly stable notion about the appropriate characteristics and behaviours for men and women. There exists a consensus on what is deemed most suitable for individuals of each gender to feel, say, do, or like. Based on this understanding, various societies formulate and maintain frameworks that encompass the majority of women and men, regardless of their unique personal features (Popova, 2010). Consequently, gender is viewed as socially developed behaviours, dictating how individuals ought to conduct themselves within a particular society.

Media is argued to be one of the pillars that mirror, influence, produce, or reproduce the roles of gender, as well as the gender stereotypes prevalent in society. The impact of media in shaping and perpetuating perspectives on a particular culture, and, of course, in creating and re-creating stereotypes of cultural groups within society, should not be underestimated (Hajimohammadi, 2011). The influential power of media in establishing and renewing patterns of life is evident across cultures, transcending time and space. Indeed, media in general, and newspapers in particular, function as agents of socialization, transmitting certain beliefs and behaviours from one generation to the next.

Moreover, when reporting on critical political and social issues, newspapers are well-known for employing specific language patterns in their discourse to mediate ideas, ideologies, and, at times, hidden agendas (Van Dijk, 1993). The manner in which events and social actors are described plays a crucial role in the mass-media industry, as it significantly shapes and guides readership mentality (Elyas & Abdulrahman, 2020). Consequently, the language used in newspapers can have a profound impact on readers and the targeted society from various angles and perspectives. Beyond the fundamental roles of entertainment, education, and information dissemination, media is said to shape and reshape beliefs about a particular society, particularly with regard to women subgroups (Espinosa, 2010). Consequently, the presentation and selection of content in specific media outputs contribute to the production and reproduction of specific statuses, assumptions, and roles about women within their cultural contexts (Solomon, 2006). Gender stereotypes are commonly employed to describe such roles and assumptions.

Gender stereotyping, the process of perpetuating gender roles in individual socialization with preconceived notions arbitrarily assigning characteristics based on sex (Brodolini et al., 2013), is closely linked to media portrayal. Media portrayal encompasses the coverage of news and events through various outlets such as newspapers, television, radio, and online platforms (Fajoye & Omipidan, 2023). Involving the presentation of individuals, groups, and ideas through diverse media outlets, media portrayal reflects a specific ideological standpoint (Shang, 2015). Gender stereotypes contribute to shaping media portrayals, influencing beliefs about the psychological characteristics and suitable activities for men or women (Ellemers, 2017; Shamsuddin & Hamid, 2017).

This study primarily focuses on the portrayal of Arab women in Arab and Western media following the Arab Spring. Given the significance of the Arab Spring and the pivotal role played by women in the Arab revolutions, it is crucial to illuminate this specific time period. The term "Arab Spring" encompasses the revolutions in several Arab countries, including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria, which commenced on December 17, 2010, in Tunisia. Due to the overuse of the term 'Arab Spring,' asserting that women have specific experiences with it is also commonplace. Women actively participated in the demonstrations during the Arab Spring, subsequently becoming political candidates, martyrs, and bloggers dedicated to the pursuit of democratic reform (Arieff, 2011). In this context, Al-Ali (2012) argued that women marched alongside men in Arab Spring protests and that "some also opposed the revolutions, reminding readers that women do not always behave in solidarity with one another" (p. 27). Despite Arab women's active involvement in the Arab Spring and their critical roles during this period, Western media often oversimplify all Arab women as submissive, oppressed, passive, and fearful (Karolak & Guta, 2020).

The representation of Arab women in newspapers is an issue worthy of investigation to provide empirical evidence regarding trends in women's representation. This research aims to fuel discussions on the necessity of positive representation of women in news discourses as reported in

newspapers. It is noteworthy that a close examination of the literature reveals a considerably limited number of studies that have investigated the representation of Arab women in contemporary media (Bashatah, 2017). This scarcity of accurate analytical perspectives, particularly about Arab women, is primarily due to the restricted visibility of literature providing different experiences of Arab women (Afshar, 2016). Moreover, most studies that explored the representation of Arab women (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ayotte & Husain, 2005; Jiwani, 2006) approached the topic from an Orientalist perspective using framing theory. The foundation of framing theory is that the media pays considerable attention to certain events and people, subsequently framing them with specific meanings.

Therefore, this study scrutinizes how Arab women are represented in both Arab and Western media and examines the differences in discourses regarding the representation of Arab women between Arab and Western media coverage. It is also devoted to critically analysing the construction of gender stereotypes, assuming that media permeates beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour, influencing the perception of the roles of Arab women in society. The intention is to unveil the descriptions and meanings embedded in the news discourse about Arab women. Furthermore, this study analyses media portrayals of Arab women in the Arab media and contrasts these portrayals with those of Arab women in Western media.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is intended to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To ascertain how Arab women are portrayed in the selected Arab and Western newspapers after the Arab Spring.
2. To investigate how gender ideologies regarding Arab women are reproduced or reflected in the news discourses of the selected Arab and Western newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN MEDIA DISCOURSE

Recent literature underscores the pivotal role of media discourse in shaping societal perceptions of gender, highlighting the persistent stereotypical differentiation between women and men. This body of work delves into the intricacies of women's representation, stereotyping, and discrimination within media narratives, employing both theoretical and methodological lenses to scrutinize these phenomena. For instance, Al Ali (2008) examines the evolution of women's roles and gender perceptions in Iraq from the 1950s to the post-2003 era, illustrating how media depictions often reduce Iraqi women to oppressed figures ensnared in religious and ethnic strife, overshadowed by imagery of veiling, violence, and honour killings, thereby perpetuating a monolithic view of Muslim countries' treatment of women.

In contrast, Sriwimon and Zilli (2017) employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to dissect gender stereotypes within political media discourse, suggesting that CDA offers valuable insights into the ideological underpinnings conveyed through linguistic choices. Similarly, Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020) explore the portrayal of Nigerian women in the press, noting a predilection for stories that confine women to entertainment and domestic spheres. Besides, Rapitse et al.

(2019) question the media's equitable representation of women, particularly in political contexts, highlighting a reader's desire for parity in media portrayals of female and male politicians, albeit with a narrow focus on political participation.

Power et al. (2019) investigate the representation of women in top U.S. industry magazines, identifying a patriarchal bias that undermines women's roles in business. Recent studies, such as those by Labidi (2022), Bajri and Alqurayqiri (2022), and Elyas et al. (2022), observe shifts in the depiction of Arab and Saudi women in media, moving from submissive portrayals to ones emphasizing independence and affluence, albeit with noted disparities in representation strategies between British and Saudi publications. Farooq et al. (2021) critique post-9/11 print media portrayals of Muslim women in 'The Washington Post,' arguing for an ideologically charged narrative that casts Muslim women as threats to Western civilization. Conversely, Hamid et al. (2021) and Kasirye (2021) document more nuanced representations in Arab media, which challenge Western stereotypes by portraying Arab women as capable of self-actualization and societal contribution.

The literature collectively reflects a keen interest in women's representation across various media platforms and political domains, utilizing diverse linguistic and visual narratives. However, a notable gap persists in comparative studies on the portrayal of Arab women in Arab versus Western media discourses, particularly concerning the influence of gender ideologies on these representations. Despite extensive Western research on gender inequality and political representation, the specific status and media portrayal of Arab women remain underexplored, pointing to a broader need for research that addresses the complex interplay of discursive practices and societal views on women.

MULTI-REPRESENTATIONS OF ARAB WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

The academic discourse on the portrayal of Arab women in media underscores a pervasive disparity between Arab and Western narratives. Western media frequently casts Arab women as victims, devoid of agency and enmeshed in oppressive patriarchal systems. Oumlil (2016) and Aburwein (2003) describe these women as being depicted in unflattering, concealing attire, suggesting a lack of self-worth and an identity overshadowed by male dominance. Kasirye (2021) further notes the problematic portrayal of Arab women as terrorists, often based on their choice of dress, such as the *niqab*, which is misinterpreted as a sign of radical religious adherence and submission to patriarchal control.

This representation significantly impacts non-Arab perceptions, fostering stereotypes rooted in misconceptions about governance, corruption, and patriarchal oppression in Arab societies (Rahman, 2012). Western media's association of Islam with gender oppression exacerbates these stereotypes, ignoring the complexities of cultural and religious contexts (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mishra, 2007; Navarro, 2010;). Bashatah (2017) attributes these misrepresentations to Western media's lack of factual grounding, insufficient understanding of cultural differences, and inadequate recognition of Arab women's roles in various spheres of life.

Such portrayals not only distort the reality of Arab women's lives but also serve geopolitical interests, justifying policies and actions of Western countries towards Arab nations (Bashatah, 2017; Khalili, 2010). The critical examination of women's representation in news media is essential, given its influence on public perception and the construction of gender narratives. Al-Saraaj (2010) emphasizes the media's responsibility in promoting women's significance and improving their status across societal levels. The current discourse reveals a pressing need for

studies that investigate shifts in the media representation of Arab women, aiming to rectify misconceptions and foster a more nuanced understanding of their roles and identities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study utilizes a qualitative approach to select and analyse the study's data. This method offers the advantage of facilitating the collection and analysis of data to achieve the study's objectives. Furthermore, content analysis and textual analysis are employed to analyse the data and determine the representation of Arab women in Arab and Western media based on the adopted theoretical framework. These types of analyses, namely content and textual analyses, prove useful as they assist in examining the selected newspaper contents on the subject matter. Through such analyses, the present study aims to provide a comparative analysis of the representations and portrayals of Arab women in Arab and Western newspapers.

CORPUS OF THE STUDY

The data were collected from four newspapers, two of which are Arab, and the other two are Western. The collected data include feature articles where both news headlines and sections regarding Arab women are selected. Forty news articles were purposively chosen to create a representative and statistically significant sample, considering resource constraints and aiming for qualitative depth in the comparative analysis of how Arab women are portrayed in prominent Arab and Western newspapers following the Arab Spring. The selected English-language Arab newspapers include Arab News (a Saudi newspaper) and Gulf Times (a Qatari newspaper). These two Arab newspapers are selected for several reasons. For example, they are highly circulated, and most importantly, the news published by these two newspapers is archived on their websites and, thus, easily accessible.

In terms of Western newspapers, two newspapers were chosen, namely, the Washington Post (an American newspaper) and the Daily Mail (a British newspaper). These two newspapers are particularly selected as they are issued from the most influential countries in the West, i.e., the USA and the U.K. Besides, both are highly circulated and common in the academic setting (Karolak & Guta, 2020). These newspapers are also widely read and thus have a strong influence on Western readers (Bashatah, 2017). This study covers twelve years: from 2010 to 2022. This duration was particularly chosen to determine the changing trend in the representation of Arab women in the selected newspapers in the consecutive years of the Arab Spring. By selecting this period, the study captures the socio-political changes and media responses. This timeframe facilitates an examination that takes into account changes in societal attitudes, gender dynamics, and media representations throughout the twelve-year span. For that purpose, the selected news discourses are chronologically presented in the analysis. The data are presented as follows:

TABLE 1. Research Data

Newspaper	No. of articles	No. of words
Gulf Times	10	3715
Arab News	10	4430
The Washington Post	10	4670
The Daily Mail	10	8320
Total		21135

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed based on the three-dimensional Approach of Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1989). According to this model, Fairclough proposed three dimensions for Critical Discourse Analysis.

The first one concerns the discourse fragment, i.e., text. It focuses on scrutinizing the discourse fragment, emphasizing text description and analysis to understand the linguistic features and framing within the selected newspaper articles. The second one represents discursive practices involving processing analysis and interpretation to uncover how the reception and production of text in specific intertextual and situational contexts contribute to the portrayal of Arab women. Intertextual context is concerned with the receivers and producers of the discourse, while situational context is related to the place as well as the time of text production. However, the third dimension is viewed as the 'power behind discourse' or as 'social practices' functioning behind the whole process and governing the power relations in discourse.

These dimensions involve various kinds of analyses; for instance, the first dimension requires "text description or text analysis," the second dimension involves "processing analysis or interpretation," while the third dimension necessitates "social analysis or explanation." This model is employed for data analysis because it is helpful for achieving the objectives of the study. Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional approach to discourse analysis is useful to examine how social actors are represented in news discourse and reveal the attitudes and ideologies behind such representations.

Moreover, it provides a comprehensive framework for analysing textual, contextual, and power dynamics in the portrayal of Arab women. This model is selected to achieve the study's objectives by enabling detailed examinations of linguistic features, discursive practices, and societal power structures influencing media portrayals. The collected data were coded and qualitatively analysed based on the adopted model.

FINDINGS

PORTRAYAL OF ARAB WOMEN IN GULF TIMES NEWSPAPER

HIGHLY-CAPABLE AND EDUCATED

Arab girls are depicted in the Gulf Times as skilled and educated. For example, on September 12, 2019, the news headline "*Arab girls invited to compete in Doha Digital Hackathon*" announced an invitation for Arab girls to participate in this event in Doha, the capital of Qatar. It is observed that Arab women are portrayed as having achieved their rights in terms of education and work in Qatar. The newspaper's ideology is to present a positive image of the Qatari government, emphasizing its attention to women's education and informing Qatari women that the government equally considers women's rights regarding education and work.

On February 03, 2019, the Gulf Times presented a news story stating 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." The newspaper provided data regarding women's education in Qatar. Presenting numbers is seen as a strategy used by the newspaper to inform readers that Arab women are given their rights concerning education, and these numbers inform readers about the real achievements of women

due to the success of the Qatari regime in empowering women compared to other regimes in the region. The newspaper's ideology is to send a message to the world that believes Arab women are not educated.

Moreover, Arab women are described in the Gulf Times as empowered and capable of actively participating in economic and social life, as seen in the news headline "*Women's empowerment in focus at Katara conference*," published on January 19, 2019. Under this news headline, the newspaper explained the topics covered in the conference, including the role of Qatari and Arab women in public life and the challenges they encounter in the job sector. The newspaper added that the conference would also explore new horizons for Arab women's empowerment. According to the news story, the conference came up with recommendations that could increase the participation of Arab women in social and economic life. It is observed that the newspaper depicts Arab women as empowered and able to participate in social and economic life. The newspaper's ideology is to convey a message to Arab women and the world that the Qatari government prioritizes Arab women's empowerment and encourages their active participation in social and economic life. Most importantly, the newspaper aims to counter the prevalent idea among Western communities that Arab women have limited roles in social and economic life, asserting that this notion is not correct.

In this news story, Arab women are also represented as women who have the right to participate in sports, which, according to the newspaper, influences their empowerment. On January 19, 2019, a news story was presented in the same newspaper: "*The exhibition aims to shed light on the impact of sport on the empowerment of Arab women*". The newspaper aims to send a message to the world that Arab women are allowed to participate in sports, which was only restricted to men in the past as this was not allowed based on Arab culture. According to the news story, participating in sports contributes to Arab women's empowerment. The message that the newspaper aims to send to the world is that Arab women now enjoy their full human rights, including participation in sports.

Moreover, Qatari women as Arab women are described in this newspaper as businesswomen who play a role in business life. A news headline was presented in the Gulf Times on October 20, 2015, as follows: "*Conference to highlight the role of Qatari businesswomen*". The newspaper's ideology is to send a message to the world that the Qatari government has already empowered women and increased their participation in business life. Consequently, the conference is intended to highlight the businesswomen's role in Qatar.

LEADERSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ROLES

Furthermore, Arab women are described in the newspaper as leaders. For instance, on October 20, 2015, a news headline was provided in the Gulf Times which stated that "*the Arab and Western Women's Forum would be held to discuss the role of young Arab women leaders*". The newspaper's ideology is to inform the readers that Arab women have their own rights and are given opportunities to become leaders. Under this news headline, the newspaper described Arab women as successful women, as seen in this sentence: "*As Qatar moves towards the realisation of its 2030 Vision, there is no doubt that the role of women will be critical to its success*". In this news discourse, it is shown that the role of women in society is linked to Qatar's 2030 vision. The newspaper aims to convey a message to the world that the Qatari government takes into account women's issues in its 2030 vision, which includes some reforms regarding the support of women in Qatar. Women play a successful role in life based on Qatar's 2030 vision.

On March 07, 2015, a news headline was presented in the Gulf Times: "Opportunities galore for women entrepreneurs." Under this news headline, the newspaper addressed Arab women, especially the youth, informing them about the increased opportunities in business and entrepreneurship in the country, based on the declaration of the Qatar Businesswomen Association (QWBA). The writer of this news story aims to inform readers about the achievements of Arab women in Qatar in terms of business. The newspaper's ideology is to convey a message to the world about the role of the Qatari regime in empowering women and ensuring their participation in business life. The news story then shifted to comparing the achievements of Arab women in Qatar to their counterparts in other regions, stating, "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." The newspaper's ideology highlights the success of the Qatari regime in supporting women compared to other regimes in the region.

PORTRAYAL OF ARAB WOMEN IN ARAB NEWS

VARIOUS ROLES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In Arab News, Arab women are described as individuals who play various interesting roles in their society. On March 20, 2022, Arab News presented a news headline as follows: "Growing role of women players highlighted at Aramco Saudi Ladies International event." This news headline conveys a message to the world that Arab women in Saudi Arabia have now achieved a lot, including their rights to participate in sports, a significant change from cultural rules that previously restricted such participation to men. The newspaper's ideology is to inform readers about the reforms made by the Saudi regime regarding women's empowerment. It also serves as a message to the world that women enjoy their full rights, including the right to participate in sports. On March 20, 2022, a news headline was also presented in Arab News: "*GCC to adopt a joint mechanism for women's issues*". It states that Gulf Cooperation Council countries make reforms regarding Arab women's rights. Under this headline, it was reported that "*Al-Tuwaijri, secretary-general of the Family Affairs Council in Saudi Arabia, said that the Kingdom is achieving the highest level of women's participation and rights in the region, adding that GCC countries are among those economically empowering women at the fastest pace*". The news report explained that the second session is titled "*Gulf women and economic empowerment*" while the third "*will cover the role of Gulf women in security cooperation*". The newspaper's ideology is to send a message to the world that Arab women in Gulf Cooperation Council countries are given much attention, and the adopted mechanism is part of the reforms made by these countries regarding women's issues.

EMPOWERED AND RESPECTED

Arab News also portrayed Arab women as empowered and respected. For example, on March 19, 2022, a news story was presented in the newspaper as follows: "*I'm very blessed to have a forward-thinking director who made sure that all his A.D. department will be women because he doesn't want to direct women wrongfully or depict them inauthentically,*" she added. The newspaper's ideology is to convey a message to readers that Arab women are respected in Saudi Arabia.

Arab women are depicted as those who have their full rights. On March 10, 2022, a news headline was written in Arab News as follows: "*Saudi women prove that they can do it as their participation in military grows*". This news headline informs readers about the achievements of Saudi women regarding their rights to join any job they like. In fact, this job was restricted to men

only in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the newspaper's ideology is to send a message to the world about the reform made by the Saudi regime regarding women's rights. On March 19, 2022, a news story was also presented in the newspaper that *"the region's women are often seen as submissive and controlled in the eyes of Western media; the stubborn, deep, and free-spirited main character illustrates the dominant individuality of Saudi women and their diversities"*. This news story criticizes the portrayal of Arab women in the Western media and contrasts this with the real status of Arab women in the Arab region. It is noticed that Arab women are characterized by dominant individuality and diversity. The newspaper's ideology is to criticize the depiction of Arab women in the international media and provide another portrayal of Arab women.

Moreover, a news story was presented on February 28, 2022, in the Arab News as follows: *"Women in Saudi Arabia continue to pursue their passion and make progress in various industries under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030"*. This news discourse is intended to send a message to the West that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is making reforms regarding women's rights. It also highlights bin Salman's Vision 2030 and how women's issues are considered in his Vision 2030. The newspaper highlights the role played by bin Salman regarding women and how he could contribute to providing women with their full rights. The newspaper's ideology is to convince the non-Arab regimes to support bin Salman in becoming the King of Saudi Arabia after the death of his father, King Salman.

It is also noticed that Saudi women are portrayed as lawyers, a profession which was restricted to men only in Saudi Arabia. On March 10, 2022, a news headline written in the Arab News stated that *"Saudi women lawyers celebrate advances in the legal profession"*. This news headline shows how Arab women have achieved their rights regarding their work. The newspaper's ideology is to inform readers about Arab women's achievements in Saudi Arabia and how the Saudi regime ensures the freedom of job selection for Arab women.

PORTRAYAL OF ARAB WOMEN IN WASHINGTON POST

In Arab newspapers, Arab women were depicted as powerful and highly capable. However, Western newspapers took a different approach, reporting on and overgeneralizing this society in a distinct manner.

ENCOUNTERING BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Arab women are often portrayed as facing barriers and challenges. On May 8, 2012, the newspaper described Arab women as encountering oppression and living in restrictive environments. It was mentioned that some live with wealthy men who may not respect women. Additionally, a news headline on October 25, 2012, stated: *"What the Arab Spring has done for women's equality, in one chart: The answer: so far, not too much."* According to this news headline, the Arab Spring has not yet resulted in significant reforms concerning gender equality in the Arab world. The newspaper aims to inform the reader that gender equality remains a challenge in Arab Spring countries despite one of the goals of the Arab Spring being to bring about reforms in this regard. The ideology of the newspaper is also to communicate a message to Arab regimes, encouraging them to consider reforms on this issue.

Arab women are also portrayed as literal odalisques (i.e. beautiful female slaves who were sold in the past). The newspaper criticizes how Arabs deal with women; according to the news story *"These women have become literal odalisques"*, published on May 5, 2012, Arab women

have no rights, and they are not dealt with as human beings. This can be viewed as an insult to Arab women as they are depicted as literal odalisques. The newspaper's ideology is to send a message to Arab regimes to enact laws which protect Arab women. Besides, the newspaper presented the news headline on April 21, 2016, "*5 striking photographs that challenge stereotypes of Arab women*", which describes five photographs of Arab artists women. The newspaper explained that such photos challenge Arab stereotypes of Arab women. The newspaper's ideology is that Arab women have no freedom in terms of dress due to some cultural rules, which is why the photos of some Arab artists are considered so.

WRAPPED AND COVERED

Arab women are portrayed as wrapped in veils and covered in henna calligraphy in this news discourse. "*Essadyi's visits to Morocco resulted in her series "Converging Territories," in which women are depicted wrapped in veils and covered in henna calligraphy, an art she taught herself*". This news story, published on May 5, 2012, indicates that Arab women have no role except to satisfy their husbands' sexual desires. They also have to cover their faces due to religious reasons, i.e. they have no freedom in terms of their dress. The newspaper's ideology is to criticize the way Arab women are dealt with in Arab countries. Arab women are also portrayed as subjugated in the newspaper: "*Frequently it's dismissed as one built upon the subjugation of women, who veiled and hidden from view, are forbidden from travelling, going to school or enjoying many of the "liberties" of women in the West*". In this news discourse published on Jan. 15, 2016, they were described as veiled and hidden from view; they were forbidden from travelling, going to school or enjoying many of the "liberties" of women in other non-Arab communities. The newspaper's ideology is to send a message to the non-Arab governments about Arab women's issues so that they can request Arab regimes to make reforms and provide women more freedom regarding marriage, travelling, and so forth.

On Sep. 22, 2017, the newspaper reported that "*Tunisia became one of the only countries in the Arab world to allow Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men, flouting centuries of tradition*". The ideology of the newspaper is to inform readers that Arab women have less freedom and are confined by religious rules regarding the marriage of non-Muslims. On October 28, 2021, the Washington Post reported that "*Many women in the Arab world are demanding stores that cater to their own modern tastes rather than the traditional lingerie boutiques*". The newspaper ideology is that Arab regimes do not respect women, and less attention by Arab governments is given to their demands.

PORTRAYAL OF ARAB WOMEN IN DAILY MAIL

NO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The Daily Mail portrayed women as those who wear black *burku'* (i.e. black cloth that Arab women use to cover their face) in this news report, published on March 31, 2010, "*Wearing a black burkha, mother-of-four Hissa Hilal delivered a blistering poem against Muslim preachers 'who sit in the position of power' but are 'frightening' people with their fatwas, or religious edicts*". This indicates that women are confined by the cultural rules regarding women's dress. The newspaper's ideology is that Arab women do not have rights regarding the dress they like to wear due to Islamic and cultural beliefs. According to the news story, only women who can fight for their rights are depicted as brave women. The ideology of the newspaper is to convey a message to the reader and

the decision-makers in the world that Arab women are not given their rights due to religious factors, and thus, the non-Arab governments should push Arab governments to give Arab women their full rights like their counterparts in the other communities.

Arab women are not portrayed as individuals with the freedom to pursue any job. According to a news report published on October 22, 2016, traditional gender roles designate men as the primary breadwinners, limiting most women to specific occupations. Additionally, Arab women are depicted as still grappling with inequality. A news story published on November 22, 2016, revealed that the anticipated increase in opportunities for women after the Arab Spring five years ago has largely not materialized. Many Arab women, according to the newspaper, remain outside the workforce, encountering obstacles when attempting to establish businesses, such as plumbing enterprises. They are also portrayed as facing oppression in Arab communities, as the legal system in Arab countries values a man's testimony twice as much as a woman's (Obermeyer, 1992).

DISCRIMINATION AND OPPRESSION

The Daily Mail characterizes Arab women as lacking liberation and facing oppression. In a report on Feb 10, 2017, Arab women are presented as being prohibited from certain jobs due to cultural factors. The newspaper highlights that Arab women are not permitted to join the army because some believe this job is exclusively suitable for men. Consequently, female relatives are threatened with disownment if they pursue a military career. Moreover, Arab women are exposed to risks in Arab countries following the Arab Spring. A news story reported, "Cairo named riskiest megacity for women, worse since Arab spring." The newspaper's ideology is to convey a message urging the protection of women against potentially inappropriate cultural practices, emphasizing the responsibility of Arab governments.

The Daily Mail also addresses discrimination against black women in Arab societies. On Jun. 23, 2020, the newspaper reported that black women, some of whom are African migrants, experience double discrimination in the Arab world. Additionally, on May 5, 2021, Arab women are portrayed as lacking a voice. The newspaper aims to illustrate how Arab women are treated in Arab societies.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on what has been discussed above, the portrayal of Arab women in Arab and Western media can be summarized as follows:

TABLE 2. Portrayal of Arab women in Arab and Western media

Positive portrayal of Arab women in Arab newspapers	Negative portrayal of Arab women in Western newspapers
They are empowered, skilled, educated and able to participate in economic and social life.	They are literal odalisques, subjugated, veiled, hidden from view and confined by religious rules regarding marriage.
They are businesswomen and leaders.	They encounter barriers and face challenges, have less freedom, and are treated unequally by men.
They are empowered, respected and able to participate in sports and business life.	They are plagued by inequality, oppressed and confined by cultural and religious rules regarding dress.
They have their full rights and can have their preferred job	They face criticism from hardline Muslim clerics, are not allowed to work outside the home, encounter challenges to

start their plumbing business, suffer from double discrimination, have no say and face risks due to potentially harmful cultural practices

As indicated in Table 2 above, it is evident that Western media hold misconceptions about Arab women, and several factors may contribute to this misperception. One possible explanation is the lack of knowledge and understanding of Arab culture and society. Western media often rely on stereotypes, perpetuating negative views about Arab women. Another contributing factor could be the historical and political context of the Middle East, which has experienced instability and conflict, leading to biased reporting. Lastly, the Western media tends to focus on specific topics related to Arab women, such as women's rights, veiling, and oppression, resulting in a one-dimensional portrayal.

In certain instances of news discourse, Arab women are represented neutrally, highlighting their experiences and achievements without reinforcing stereotypical narratives. In accordance with Fairclough's three-dimensional model, these examples align with the first dimension, the "discourse fragment (text)," as they involve a neutral description of events or statements (e.g., "Cardiac problems make Arab women more depressed than men"). An article in the Gulf Times addressing cardiac problems affecting Arab women presents a neutral perspective on a health issue. The Washington Post's mention of Essaydi attending high school in Paris ("When Essaydi was 16, she left Morocco to attend high school in Paris") and Arab News covering a mother discussing her son's sports involvement maintain a neutral tone by focusing on factual information without overtly shaping perceptions ("My son also joined the junior team, and was the first of his age group here in Saudi, in Egypt and Oman, Al-Essawi said"). The Daily Mail quote from Hissa Hilal emphasizes a message of love and compassion ("My message to those who hear me is love, compassion, and peace," Hissa Hilal said).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that Arab women are portrayed differently in Arab and Western media, reflecting distinct ideologies. In the Gulf Times, Arab women are depicted as empowered, skilled, educated, actively participating in economic and social life, and holding roles as businesswomen and leaders. The newspaper also emphasizes the consideration of women's issues in Qatar's 2030 vision, serving a specific agenda to convey the message that the Qatari regime has implemented reforms concerning women's rights.

Similarly, Arab News portrays Arab women as empowered, respected, and able to participate in sports and business, even pursuing professions such as lawyers. The newspaper underscores the consideration of women's issues in bin Salman's Vision 2030, aiming to showcase reforms in women's rights in Saudi Arabia and garner support for bin Salman's rule.

Contrary to Arab newspapers, Western newspapers present a different narrative. The Washington Post portrays Arab women as literal odalisques, subjugated, veiled, and restricted by religious rules regarding marriage. The Daily Mail characterizes Arab women as facing inequality, oppression, and challenges, confined by cultural and religious dress codes, criticized by hardline clerics, and lacking a voice.

The study's findings align with existing literature, suggesting that Western media often perpetuates stereotypes, portraying Arab women as oppressed, veiled, and submissive. The variance in representations can be attributed to the differing ideologies of newspapers, with

Western media often criticizing Arab regimes and culture in terms of women's rights, while Arab media defends the rights of Arab women and emphasizes reforms.

This disparity in portrayals underscores the influence of societal power structures and underlying beliefs on media representations. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding these dynamics for academics, government entities, and community organizations aiming to challenge stereotypes and promote accurate representations of Arab women in media.

In fact, the findings of the present study, juxtaposed with those from previous research (e.g., Abu-Lughod, 2002; Aburwein, 2003; Kasirye, 2021; Mishra, 2007; Navarro, 2010; Oumlil, 2016; Rahman, 2012), offer a comprehensive perspective on the evolving portrayal of Arab women in media across different cultural contexts. The current study reveals a dichotomy in the depiction of Arab women: Arab media, specifically outlets like the Gulf Times and Arab News, portray Arab women as empowered, skilled, and actively engaged in various sectors, including business and leadership. This representation aligns with the agendas of their respective countries, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, to publicize reforms and advancements in women's rights as part of broader visions for national development (Qatar's 2030 Vision and bin Salman's Vision 2030).

Contrastingly, Western media outlets such as The Washington Post and The Daily Mail present Arab women as subjugated, veiled, and oppressed, adhering to a narrative that emphasizes restriction, inequality, and victimhood. This divergence underscores the influence of ideological and societal power structures on media narratives, where Western media often scrutinizes Arab cultures and regimes through a critical lens, while Arab media aims to defend and highlight progress in women's rights.

These findings resonate with the themes discussed in earlier studies, which collectively underscore the media's role in shaping perceptions of gender and culture. Previous research has consistently pointed out the stereotypical portrayal of Arab women in Western media as oppressed and veiled, reflecting a lack of nuanced understanding and appreciation for cultural differences (Aburwein, 2003; Asl, 2018; Kasirye, 2021; Oumlil, 2016). This portrayal has been criticized for perpetuating stereotypes and failing to recognize the complexity of Arab women's lives and the diversity of their roles in society.

Moreover, studies have highlighted the importance of media discourse in influencing societal perceptions, with Western media often criticized for its oversimplified and negative portrayal of Arab women, rooted in broader geopolitical narratives and a lack of substantive engagement with the realities of Arab societies (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Mishra, 2007; Navarro, 2010; Rahman, 2012). The emphasis on oppressive narratives serves to justify Western perspectives and policies towards Arab nations, neglecting the agency, diversity, and achievements of Arab women.

In contrast, the nuanced representations found in Arab media, as documented in recent studies and the present research, challenge these stereotypes by portraying Arab women as empowered individuals actively contributing to their societies. This shift towards more positive portrayals reflects ongoing societal and cultural changes within Arab countries, as well as strategic efforts to challenge Western narratives and promote a more balanced view of Arab women's roles and rights.

The disparity in portrayals between Arab and Western media underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the factors influencing media narratives and the importance of challenging stereotypes to promote more accurate and diverse representations of Arab women. Both the current study and previous research highlight the critical role of media in shaping gender constructs and emphasize the need for ongoing scrutiny of media practices and ideologies to foster a more inclusive and equitable representation of women across cultural divides.

The study's findings can be valuable for academics, government entities, and community organizations seeking new approaches to challenge stereotypes and foster accurate representations of Arab women in media. By shedding light on the diverse portrayals, the study contributes to a better understanding of Arab women's roles and encourages further research to raise awareness and correct misconceptions about Arab women in various societies.

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