



# Headlines and Hegemony: Unraveling Ideological Narratives in Arab and Western Media's Portrayal of Arab Women

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the ideologies and strategies used in the news discourse on Arab women. Initially, it aims to analyze the macro strategies and then highlights the micro strategies used to achieve the macro strategies proposed by van Dijk. It also identifies the ideologies of the selected newspapers regarding Arab women. Four newspapers were selected: the Washington Post, Daily Mail, Arab newspaper, and Gulf Times. The findings reveal that the selected newspapers employed four macro-strategies. It was also found that the selected newspapers employed ten micro strategies to achieve the four macro strategies. More importantly, the analysis showed that the selected newspapers had different ideologies. For instance, the ideologies of Arab newspapers include defending the stand of Arab regimes and Islam regarding women's rights. However, the ideologies embraced by Western newspapers encompass the promotion of Arab women's advocacy for enhanced rights, urging Western authorities to impose sanctions on Arab nations that do not uphold women's rights and advocate for their governments to sever diplomatic ties with countries that fail to ensure adequate rights for women.

**Keywords:** Ideology, Macro and Micro Strategies, Van Dijk's Model, Arab and Western Newspapers, Arab Women, Critical Discourse Analysis

## 1. Introduction

Discourse analysis is considered an area of research comprising many heterogeneous approaches, which are mainly qualitative, to the study of relationships between language-in-use and the social world. Researchers generally view language as a form of social practise that indirectly and directly affects the social world (Johnson & McLean, 2020). Van Dijk advocated a model of discourse analysis, that is, the sociocognitive at its core. In his words, 'ideologies are not reduced to their observable uses, discourses or other social practises, but defined as the socially shared underlying representations or resources of members of members that govern such practises' (Van Dijk, 2006: 731). A subbranch of discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), aims to reveal that language has the power to form or change people's views on the events around them.

Moreover, newspapers are well known for employing specific language patterns in their discourse to mediate ideas, ideologies, and sometimes hidden agendas, especially when reporting on critical political and social issues (van Dijk, 1993). Consequently, news editors could have full control of newspaper articles and thus have the power to utilise the 'genre' to disseminate different ideologies. By doing so, they are intentionally 'manipulating' or 'controlling' the minds of the readers. Furthermore, how events and social actors are described is an important factor in the mass media industry because it plays a significant role in shaping and directing the mentality of readership (Elyas & AlJabri, 2020). Therefore, the language used in newspapers can have a great impact on readers and the target society from a variety of angles and perspectives. In other words, the words used in the newspapers can strongly influence people's thoughts and society as a whole. This can affect the understanding, emotions, and opinions of readers and shape what they pay attention to and care about. In addition to the essential roles of entertaining, educating, and informing, the media are claimed to create and shape beliefs towards a certain society and more significant beliefs towards women subgroups in particular societies (Espinosa, 2010). In other words, what is usually read or seen in the media is a choice representing certain views, priorities, and ideological constructs that underlie a society's worldview (Hajimohammadi, 2011). Therefore, its presentation and selection in certain media outputs produce and reproduce women's particular status, assumptions, and roles in their cultural settings (Solomon, 2006).

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This study examines the macro and micro strategies and the ideologies hidden in the news discourses of Arab and Western newspapers regarding Arab women following the Arab Spring. Furthermore, the present study critically analyses and reveals the descriptions, meanings, and ideologies embedded in the news discourse on Arab women and their rights in the Arab world. The findings of this study are expected to be valuable for academics, government agencies, and community bodies concerned with considering new ways and interpretations regarding women's issues in the media and their active participation in society. In general, this study could provide an avenue for understanding the strategies used in the news discourses in Arab and Western newspapers. Studying the strategies used in news discourses can help students and the public become more aware of media biases and influences, fostering critical thinking skills and a nuanced understanding of the news. This knowledge empowers people to question narratives, objectively evaluate information, and recognise how the news media can shape ideologies and societal attitudes. Investigating news discourses related to Arab women in Arab and Western newspapers is significant because it could reflect and uncover hidden Arab and Western ideologies, concepts, and beliefs about Arab women. It is hoped that this study will encourage other researchers to scrutinise the representation of Arab women in the media, as this helps to increase awareness of the roles of Arab women, which are often misunderstood and misinterpreted in Western societies.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The present study adopts van Dijk's (2006) model as a theoretical framework for analysing the study data. Regarding power relations, ideology is considered the main concept of CDA. In fact, the concept of 'ideology' is used to include several beliefs, values, and attitudes that comprise the perceptions of individuals and groups (Taiwo, 2007). In this regard, van Dijk (2006: 730) pointed out that 'ideologies are acquired personally and socially reproduced.' Because they have both political and social functions, they can be considered political ideologies. Van Dijk (2006: 734) provided four macro-strategies called ideological squares to capture the features of ideological discourse. These macro-strategies include the following.

- a. **Emphasizing Our Good Things:** This strategy highlights involves positive aspects, achievements, or attributes associated with one's group or country. It aims to present a favourable image and create a positive perception of one's group while downplaying or disregarding negative aspects.
- b. **Emphasize their negative aspects:** This strategy focuses on the negative aspects, failures, or shortcomings. The intention is to create a negative perception of the target group or country by highlighting flaws, mistakes, or unfavourable actions.
- c. **Deemphasise our bad things:** This strategy involves downplaying or minimising the negative aspects, failures, or shortcomings associated with one's group or country. It aims to reduce the attention paid to negative incidents or actions, thereby maintaining a more positive image.
- d. **Deemphasise their positive aspects:** This strategy aims to minimise or minimise the positive aspects, achievements, or successes. Reducing the attention or significance given to their positive actions or attributes can undermine their positive image or achievements.

However, he offered many micro strategies, as mentioned in Table 1 below:

**Table 1:** The ideological micro-strategies proposed by Van Dijk (2006).

Actor description	Authority	Burden
Counterfactuals	Disclaimers	Generalisation
Presupposition	Norm Expression	National Self-Glorification
Polarisation	Example/ Illustration	Irony
Negative Other Representation	Metaphor	Euphemism
Hyperbole	Populism	Positive self-representation
Lexicalisation	Comparison	Victimisation
Categorisation	Comparison	Consensus
Evidentiality	Vagueness	Number Game

Source: Van Dijk (2006)

The interconnectedness between actor description, authority, and burden in news discourse plays a substantial role in shaping the portrayal and comprehension of individuals or groups involved in a given situation. The description of the actor impacts how these actors are characterised and understood, while authority strategies allocate power and credibility to enhance or diminish their influence. The burden category attributes responsibility and accountability, thus shaping the readers' judgments. These categories collectively contribute to the narrative and framing of news stories, influencing readers' understanding, perceptions, and opinions of the actors and events being reported. News articles employ these micro-strategies to shape the narrative and influence readers' interpretations of actors' roles and significance.

The following is a description of the microstrategies identified in the news discourses on Arab women in the selected newspapers. These include presupposition, disclaimer, example/illustration, generalisation, evidentiality, hyperbole, metaphor, national self-glorification, lexicalization, and number games. These strategies are defined according to Van Dijk (2006).

### 3. Micro-Strategies

1. **Presupposition** (or, more accurately, semantic presupposition) is a type of inference that a sentence might have. An example of this type is the sentence, 'Janet quit smoking', which presupposes that Jane used to smoke.
2. **Disclaimer:** a statement that denies something.
3. **Example/ illustration** is concerned with providing examples or illustrations to support an argument or claim.
4. **Generalisation:** Taking something specific and applying it more broadly is a generalisation.
5. **Evidentiality.** To support their opinions and claims and to 'convey objectivity, reliability, and therefore credibility' (Van Dijk, 2006: 736), writers or speakers resort to offering some evidence or proof. This could occur when referring to organisations or authority figures. Additionally, individuals may also mention sources such as personal experiences, reliable speakers, or newspapers to support their arguments.
6. **Hyperbole** refers to a rhetorical device; Using hyperbolic language, individuals may mitigate bad actions or exaggerate others' bad actions and vice versa.
7. **Metaphors** are mostly used to convey unfamiliar and abstract meanings in concrete terms (Kövecses, 2010). This may also have a strong persuasive effect. In ideological discourse, metaphors are useful assets that represent events or people, either negatively or positively.
8. **National self-glorification.** This strategy is the most direct method to show positive self-representation. It could be evident in the form of positive references to one's own country, its history of procedures, and traditions.
9. **Lexicalisation:** Specific lexical elements could be employed to convey certain concepts and ideas.
10. **Number game.** This strategy is primarily utilised to express objectivity and add credibility to what has been argued. Statistics and numbers typically characterise news reports.

Previous studies (e.g., Dezhkameh et al., 2021; Indrawan, 2022) clearly reveal a tendency to use van Dijk strategies because they categorise various kinds of representation. Furthermore, the framework proposed by Van Dijk offers a good categorisation for analysing data of this kind. This framework is suitable for the selected discourses in the present study, as it serves as a reliable tool for highlighting the issues that are of great concern for critical discourse analysis.

### 4. Literature Review

The literature on how women are reported in news media stresses the importance of women's representation in media discourse since the media still differentiates between women and men in stereotypical ways. Therefore, researchers have investigated the issues of women's discrimination, representation, and stereotyping. A thorough investigation of the relevant literature revealed how women's issues in newspapers have been studied in terms of theory and methodology.

Furthermore, Sriwimon and Zilli (2017) showed how CDA can be used as a conceptual framework to study gender stereotypes in political media discourse. Their study showed that CDA could help us make sense of the methods in which the language employed in media conveys meaning and also produces ideologies through linguistic devices. Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020) investigate the significance of Nigerian women's portrayals in the press. The findings of this study revealed that the news stories depicting women were mostly entertaining and domestic. However, Rapitse et al. (2019) examined why the media does not offer a fair representation of women, unlike men, who dominate the headlines of newspapers. Their study found that regular readers desire equal media representation of female and male politicians. Although their study examined the reasons behind the poor participation of women in politics concerning decision-making, it concentrated only on women's political participation.

For example, Al Ali (2008) focused on the changing role of women and gender in one of the Arab countries, namely Iraq, from the 1950s to post-2003, claiming that the notion of diversity in the context of Iraqi women published in the media focuses on religious and ethnic issues. However, she argues that when social and political issues cross ethnic and religious boundaries, the main markers of difference are presented. According to her, women are portrayed as oppressed middle-class women, and also 'Images of heavily veiled women, stories of violence against women, sectarian killings and honour killings are frequently interpreted as 'just another Muslim country oppressing its women' (Al Ali, 2008: 406). Her study does not contain a historical account of the changes in the role of women in the Arab world.

Furthermore, Power et al. (2019) investigated how women are depicted in three top-selling industry magazines in the US and showed the dominant discourses of their coverage, revealing a patriarchal imbalance that clearly threatens women's role in business. In addition, Van der Pas and Aldering (2020) carried out a systematic analysis of 90 studies from the US, covering more than 4,000 women politicians and more than 750,000 coded media stories within a comprehensive theoretical framework. Their findings revealed that gender bias occurred in the amount of gender coverage of politicians. Women politicians lag behind men in terms of media exposure.

However, this study focuses on women's participation in politics, neglecting other aspects of community participation. Additionally, the literature (e.g., Karolak & Guta, 2020) proposes that Arab media present the achievements of Arab women in a positive light and portray these women as active figures, Western media still portray Arab women as oppressed and passive; the representation of Arab women in Western media generally exhibits fears, generalisations, prejudices, and a lack of knowledge about Arabic culture and society (Karolak & Guta, 2020). However, the current study aims to identify the specific macro- and micro-strategies used in news discourses about Arab women in selected Western and Arab newspapers and highlight the underlying ideologies embedded within these discourses.

In terms of using van Dijk's (2006) model for data analysis, a thorough investigation of the relevant literature revealed that it is used to examine media discourses, but in other fields. For example, Dezhkameh et al. (2021) used this model to investigate news discourse related to COVID-19. Their study compared strategies used in Iranian and American newspapers. However, Dezhkameh et al. (2021) specifically compared the number of macro and micro strategies employed in both newspapers. However, the present study mainly focuses on explaining the application of these strategies in news discourses related to Arab women and the ideologies hidden in these news discourses.

Furthermore, most studies have focused on women's representation, their participation in the political domain, and the types of language used by newspapers to describe them. Therefore, there is still a lack of studies that compare macro- and micro-strategies used in news discourses on Arab women in Arab and Western newspapers. Although there is a wide range of international research on gender inequality and women's representation in the political context (O'Neil & Domingo, 2015; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020), there has been a lack of research on news discourses in Arab and Western newspapers related to Arab women and the ideologies behind such news discourses.

## 5. Methods

This section describes the methodology used in this study. It sheds light on research design, study corpus, data selection, and data analysis.

### 5.1 Research Design

The present study used a qualitative approach to select and analyse study data. This approach is useful because it facilitates the collection and analysis of data to achieve the objectives of this study. Furthermore, textual analysis and content analysis are used for the analysis of data to identify macro and micro strategies, as well as ideologies in news discourses related to Arab women in Arab and Western media. These kinds of analysis (i.e., content and textual analyses) are valuable as they contribute to investigating the chosen newspaper content on the subject matter. Using such types of analysis, the current study offers a comparative analysis of macro and micro strategies and the hidden ideologies in Arab and Western newspapers about Arab women.

### 5.2 Corpus of the Study

The study data were collected from four Western and Arab newspapers, two of which are Western, while the other two are Arab. The Arab newspapers chosen included Gulf Times (a Qatari newspaper) and Arab News (a Saudi newspaper). The two Arab newspapers were chosen for several reasons. For instance, they are highly circulated, and most significantly, the news published by these two newspapers is archived on their websites and is, therefore, easily accessible.

As far as Western newspapers are concerned, two newspapers are chosen, namely, the Daily Mail (a British newspaper) and the Washington Post (an American newspaper). These two newspapers are principally chosen because they are issued from the most influential countries in the West, i.e., the UK and the USA. Furthermore, both are highly circulated and prevalent in academic settings (Karolak & Guta, 2020). These newspapers are also widely read and, consequently, strongly influence Western readers (Bashatah, 2017). British newspapers, such as The Daily Mail, and American newspapers, such as The Washington Post, have varying readership and influence. Although British newspapers cater to diverse audiences and maintain significant circulation, American newspapers like The Washington Post have a substantial readership, but it is important to consider factors such as population size and media consumption habits when comparing their reach and impact. This study covered news published during the years from January 2010 to January 2023. This period was selected to determine the changing trend in Arab women's rights after the Arab Spring.

### 5.3 Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analysed based on van Dijk's (2006) model. On the basis of this model, there are four macro-strategies and several other micro-strategies. Further details regarding this model are presented in the theoretical framework. This model was used for data analysis because it helped to achieve the objectives of the study.

The collected data were coded and qualitatively analysed on the basis of the adopted model. The present study used coding, content analysis, and discourse analysis based on the theoretical framework adopted to analyse the collected data. Such an analytical approach follows a moderate level of interpretation and abstraction, since interpretation is indispensable in carrying out qualitative data analysis and uncovering study findings (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Data analysis involved several steps. First, news articles about Arab women were chosen from newspapers. These articles were gathered and analysed based on van Dijk (2006). In this regard, Creswell (2003) claimed that documentation and initial coding should be used to collect and analyse data. The lead headlines and paragraphs were accessed by keying words such as Arab women, women's rights, etc. Creswell (2003) proposed a general data analysis approach to qualitative methodology, which is a mixture of general and specific research strategy steps.

The process of selecting news articles related to Arab women was conducted methodically, encompassing both Arab and Western newspapers. The selection criteria used were precise, with a defined time period (January 2010 to January 2020) and a focus on reputable newspapers renowned for their coverage of women's issues. The coding procedure implemented an established framework based on van Dijk (2006), utilising categories and themes derived from the literature and subsequently fine-tuned through iterative discussions within the research team.

To ensure the reliability of the study, reliability checks between coders were performed, in which multiple coders independently analysed a subset of the data and resolved any disparities through consensus. To ensure a complete analysis, a varied selection of news articles was chosen as an example, representing various newspapers, regions, and viewpoints. The chosen examples did not exclusively focus on affirmative reporting by Arab newspapers and negative reporting by Western newspapers, but rather encompassed a wide range of discursive strategies employed by both Arab and Western newspapers in their coverage of Arab women. This methodology aimed to circumvent any preconceived notions and provide an impartial analysis of the discourses that surround Arab women in different newspaper contexts.

The present study implemented various methods to increase the reliability of data analysis. In addition to utilising a preexisting coding framework, the researchers conducted intercoder reliability checks, wherein multiple coders independently analysed a subset of the data. Regular meetings and discussions resolved any inconsistencies in coding decisions by consensus. Furthermore, the methodology adopted a lucid and well-defined approach with precise definitions and guidelines provided to the coders. These measures were implemented to ensure consistency and precision in the data analysis process.

## 6. Data Analysis and Findings

This section provides an analysis of the study data based on Van Dijk's (2006) model. Based on this model, macro- and micro-strategies are presented and discussed as follows:

### 6.1 Emphasise Our Good Things

This section discusses the macro-strategies 'emphasise on our good things' of the selected newspapers, as well as the ideology followed by the newspaper.

**Table 2:** 'Emphasise our good things' strategy.

News	Newspaper
'The Islamic religion clearly appreciates women and their role in life and work. In fact, Islam does not advocate the old rigid social customs and outdated traditions that relegate women to the status of second-class citizens'.	Arab News January 23, 2010
'We can see that there is increasing interest in all sports for women in the Arab world. This is very important because it is time to recognise that there is no difference between male and female athletes – both are able to be talented and hard-working,' said Essam.	Gulf Times October 12, 2022
'Opinion:'	Washington Post Jan 19, 2023
'Footage shows about 3,000 people brave heavy rains in central London to protest against the Iranian government, pressing home demands for more freedom, democracy and women's rights.'	Daily Mail Jan 10, 2023

Source: Collected from the newspapers

The analysis of the data reveals that this macro-strategy, that is, emphasising our good things, is employed by the four selected newspapers to convey certain ideologies. For example, Arab News, as seen in the excerpt presented in Table 2 above, emphasises that Islam respects women and their role in work and life, which is considered a good aspect of Islam. The ideology behind using this macro strategy is to deny some news from international news outlets that claim that Islam does not respect women. Additionally, the Gulf Times presents a news programme on sports for Arab women. This news discourse is intended to send a message to the world, especially Western communities, that Arab women have their rights protected and are free to exercise their activities freely. According to this news discourse, there is no difference between Arab male and female athletes-both can be hard-working and talented. These macro-strategies are used to defend the Qatari regime and to send a message to readers that the Qatari regime respects the rights of Arab women, so that this regime will not be criticised by Western regimes and the media for not respecting women.

In terms of Western newspapers, both selected newspapers employed this macro-strategy. For example, the Washington Post presented a news speech stating that Biden's administration must fight for women's freedom around the world. This news is intended to inform readers that one of the values of the American people is to

protect and defend women's rights around the world. Thus, Biden's administration should work hard to ensure that women's rights are protected around the world. The ideology behind this strategy is to send a good message to the world about Americans regarding their role in protecting and defending women's rights. In a similar vein, the Daily Mail provided a news discourse related to a protest of people in central London that demanded more freedom and rights for Iranian women. The news reports that, although it was raining heavily, people in central London participated in the protest because of the importance of women's rights to them. The newspaper was intended to send a message to the world that Westerners respect women's rights and do not forgo defending women's rights, not only in the West but also in all parts of the world. The ideology behind using these macro-strategies is also to send a message to the world about the values of the British people and the extent to which they respect and defend women's rights.

## 6.2 Emphasise Their Bad Things

This section discusses the macro strategy to 'emphasise they're bad things' by the selected newspapers, as well as the ideology behind their selection by the editorial line of the selected newspaper. In other words, it describes and analyses how both Western and Arab newspapers emphasized the negative aspects of other communities.

**Table 3:** 'Emphasise your bad things' strategy.

News	Newspaper
"A German woman narrates her storey of how she came to Dubai for an assignment, but with a prejudiced mind against Arabs. She became impressed with the teachings of Islam and became a Muslim.'	Arab News Mar 13, 2015
'Shireen Abu Akleh, who was killed Wednesday while covering clashes in the occupied West Bank, was one of the most prominent figures in the Arab media and widely hailed for her bravery and professionalism'.	Gulf Times 12 May 12, 2022,
"No regime that imprisons and tortures peaceful advocates for women's rights should be treated as an ally by the United States.	Washington Post Jan. 26, 2019
'Saudi police penalised a woman filmed driving a car, a spokesman said Monday.' 'The Gulf kingdom was the only country in the world that prohibited women from driving, a ban seen globally as a symbol of repression.'	Daily Mail October 9, 2017 September 27, 2017

Source: Collected from the newspapers

The findings of the present study show that the four selected newspapers used this strategy, that is, 'emphasise your bad things'. For example, Arab News presented a news discourse that narrated a German woman's story of the bad picture she had of Arabs and Islam. According to her, because Western news outlets convey bad news about Arabs and Islam regarding women's rights, she came to Dubai with a prejudiced attitude toward Arabs. It is noticed that this news discourse is intended to inform readers whether Arabs or Westerners believe that Western news outlets destroy the reputation of Arabs and Muslims in the West, as these Western news outlets inform readers in the West that Arabs and Muslims do not respect women's rights and, consequently, Arab women are not given their rights in Arab countries. The ideology behind this news discourse is to debunk Western media and defend the position of Islam and Arab regimes regarding women's rights and freedom. In addition, The Gulf Times featured a news report on Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian journalist who tragically lost her life at the hands of the Israeli army in 2022. Israel enjoys the support of Western nations; therefore, the condemnation of such an incident would be expected from most Western countries. Surprisingly, however, the responses from Western governments were largely insufficient. Despite Western claims to uphold women's rights and freedom of speech, this event has received inadequate attention from both Western media outlets and governments. The underlying ideology of the newspaper aims to inform readers about the existence of double standards within Western governments when it comes to advocating for Arab women's rights.

Furthermore, the Washington Post described the Saudi regime as one that imprisons and tortures peaceful advocates of women's rights, and according to the American newspaper, the American authority should not deal with the Saudi regime as an ally as long as it does not respect women's rights. Furthermore, the Daily Mail offered a news report that Saudi police penalised a woman filmed driving a car and criticised the Arab Gulf country, that is, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the only country in the world that bans women from taking the wheel, a ban globally considered as a symbol of repression, according to the newspaper. It can be stated that the ideology of the two Western newspapers is to convince their authorities to bring persecution against Saudi Arabia for not respecting women's rights and to suspend the relations between the Western and Saudi authorities.

## 6.3 De-emphasize Our Bad Things

This section presents an analysis of the macro-strategies 'de-emphasise our bad things' by selected newspapers as well as the ideology followed by the newspaper. In other words, it highlights the use of this strategy in both Western and Arab newspapers.

Table 4 reveals that the four selected newspapers employ the 'de-emphasise our bad things' strategy when discussing the rights of Arab women. For example, Arab News has been shown to de-emphasise the claim of Western communities that Arabs and Islam do not respect women's rights. The newspaper explains the prohibition of shaking hands between men and women, claiming that if Western women know why male Arabs and Muslims do not shake hands with women, they will understand our culture. According to newspapers, Arabs and Muslims

do not allow women to shake hands because they honour women. The ideology of the newspaper is to de-emphasise the issue of women's rights, to respond to Western claims that Arab women have their rights, and most importantly, to defend the stand of their regimes and religion (Islam).

**Table 4:** 'De-emphasise our bad things' strategy.

News	Newspaper
'Many Muslims do not shake hands with other women. It will be embarrassing for a Western woman if she does not know Islamic teachings, so we should explain to her why you did not shake hands with her. We should tell her that we honour her as a woman and that Islam has the principle that we should not touch other women. If we tell her this in a nice way, it will have a big impact and she will understand our culture.'	Arab News Jan 17, 2022
'I have held many meetings and been interviewed by many international media, and some persist in describing Qatar as a desert state, showing their false belief that Arabs have the slave mentality, women have no rights in our countries, and our headdress (Igal) a symbol of being uncivilised', he recalled. "The mental image formed by some Westerners about Qatar, the Middle East, and the Arab world has mostly been built on the views of some orientalists who in the nineteenth century superficially described the men of the GCC countries as travelling nomads, whimsical and impulsive, in addition to being lazy and dissipating their wealth on things of no use," he said.	Gulf Times Dec 12, 2022
"Opinion   The viral dads of Congress know that family policy is not just women's work. Reps. Jimmy Gomez and Joaquin Castro brought their babies to Congress. Next up: refusing to let policies like paid leave be sidelined as women's issues'	Washington Post Nov 26, 2022
'Fitness trainer sparks FIERCE debate after criticising women who say they have been harassed by men at the gym - insisting that that they 'are not victims' just because guys look at or speak to them while they work out'. 'Joey said that there is a difference between someone looking and being a creep'.	Daily Mail Jan 23, 2023

Source: Collected from the newspapers

Furthermore, Gulf Times presented a news discourse that de-emphasises the claim made by the Western media that Qatar is a desert state where people have a slaver mentality, with women having no rights in Arab countries. The newspaper adds that the mental image formed by some Westerners about Qatar, the Middle East, and the Arab world has mostly been built on the views of orientalists about Arabs, as described in the above news report.

This strategy emphasises that our bad things are also used by Western newspapers, as shown in Table 4 above. For example, the Washington Post explained that although Congress was about to sideline women's issues, two congressmen brought their babies to Congress and refused to let policies such as paid leave be sidelined as women's issues. It is noticed that the newspaper aims to emphasise the fact that the American Congress sidelines policies, such as paid leave for women. Although the newspaper aimed to emphasise the fact that the American Congress may overlook policies such as paid leave for women, its underlying ideology conveys a message to a global audience that certain segments of the American population are not in agreement with the decision to sideline the importance of paid leave for women. By framing the issue as a women's problem, the newspaper sought to advocate for women's rights and suggested that the fight for such rights aligns with American values. The ideology of the newspaper is to de-emphasise their bad habits, which is represented by the potential that the paid leave of women might be sidelined by Congress in the US. In addition, the Daily Mail published a news report on an event when a fitness trainer in the United States criticised women who were harassed by men in the gym. The report shows that there was a fierce debate about the actions of fitness trainers. The ideology of the newspaper of the newspaper is that many people condemned the criticism of the fitness trainer of the fitness trainer of women.

#### 6.4 De-Emphasise Your Good Things

This section presents an analysis of the macro strategy 'de-emphasise their good things' by selected newspapers, as well as the ideology followed by the newspapers. In other words, it highlights the use of this strategy in both Western and Arab newspapers.

**Table 5:** 'De-emphasise your good things' strategy.

News	Newspaper
'Many Muslims do not shake hands with other women. It will be embarrassing for a Western woman if she does not know Islamic teachings, so we should explain to her why you did not shake hands with her. We should tell her that we honour her as a woman and that Islam has the principle that we should not touch other women. If we tell her this in a nice way, it will have a great impact and she will understand our culture.'	Arab News Jan 17, 2022
'I have held many meetings and was interviewed by many international media, and some persist in describing Qatar as a desert state, showing their false belief that Arabs have the slave mentality, with women having no rights in our countries, and our headdress (Igal) a symbol of being uncivilised,' he recalled. 'The western values cannot be imposed on Arabs, and our values and our way of life deserve to be honoured and respected by others,' he stressed.	Gulf Times Dec 12, 2022

News	Newspaper
'What?'. The short answer: so far, not much.	Washington Post Oct 25, 2012
'Many women fear that they are still easy prey for conservatives in a nation where male 'guardians' have arbitrary authority to make decisions on their behalf.'	Daily Mail Oct 9, 2017

Source: Collected from the newspapers

Table 5 shows that the four newspapers used this strategy, that is, de-emphasising their good things when talking about Arab women. For example, Arab News presented the news discourse described and analysed in Table 4. Apart from what has been discussed regarding this news discourse, it intends to de-emphasise Western women's rights. In other words, news discourse links the act of Western men shaking hands with women to the notion of honouring women. The newspaper appears to narrow the scope of women's rights and respect by focusing primarily on the shaking of hands between men and women. However, it disregards Western women's broader range of rights compared to Arab women. This discourse raises questions about the newspaper's framing and the potential limitations in addressing the complexities of women's rights. By reducing the discussion to a single gesture, the newspaper's perspective may overlook the multitude of rights and freedoms Western women enjoy, compared to their Arab counterparts. It is crucial to approach the topic of women's rights with a comprehensive understanding of the diverse dimensions involved, including legal, social, economic, and political, rather than reducing it to a singular act of physical contact. In addition, Gulf Times presented a news report, which is described and analysed in Table 5 on how Western media represented Qatar and the Arab world in the West. The newspaper stated that Western values could not be imposed on Arabs. This means that the newspaper deemphasises Western values regarding women's rights because, according to the newspaper, Arabs do not accept these Western values.

Similarly, both Western newspapers deemphasised the improvement in Arab women's rights. In this regard, the Washington Post stated that the Arab Spring has done nothing for women's equality, although Arab women have achieved many rights at the social and political levels. It seems that the American newspaper emphasised the huge achievements of women after the Arab Spring. In a similar vein, the Daily Mail ignores the distance Arab countries have travelled from women's rights. According to newspapers, many Arab women fear that they are still easy prey for conservatives in a nation where male 'guardians' have arbitrary authority to make decisions on their behalf. The newspaper described Arabs as conservatives who made decisions on women's behalf, ignoring that Arab women have been increasingly achieving more rights at different levels. The ideology of the two Western newspapers is to encourage Arab women to demand more rights.

## 6.5 Micro Strategies Identified in the Selected Data

This section provides an analysis of the micro-strategies employed in news discourses related to Arab women. The micro-strategies identified in the news discourses of the selected newspapers included the following:

### 1- Presupposition

This micro-strategy is employed by three newspapers, namely the Daily Mail and the Washington Post, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6:** Presuppositions used in selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'Saudi Arabia's King Salman announces that women will FINALLY have the right to drive, as it becomes the last country in the world to lift the ban'.	Daily Mail Sep 27, 2017
'This Arab country is allowing Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men.' That is the good news.	Washington Post Sep 22, 2017

Source: Collected from the newspapers

Table 6 shows that the Daily Mail presented a news discourse in which Saudi Arabia's King Salman announces that women will be given the right to drive, as it becomes the last country in the world to lift bans. This news discourse presupposes that Saudi women were not allowed to drive and were deprived of their rights concerning car driving. The word 'finally' is written in capital letters to indicate that this decision, ie, allowing women to drive, is taken after long years of the driving ban. The newspaper described the Arab country as the last country in the world to lift this ban. In a similar vein, the Washington Post presented a news discourse in which it was stated that an Arab country, Tunisia, allows Muslims to marry non-Muslim men. This presupposes that Arab women are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men, which, according to the newspaper, is one of their rights. However, marrying non-Muslim men is not considered one of the rights of women in the Arab and Muslim world because Islam prohibits it for religious reasons.

### 2- Disclaimer

These micro-strategies are employed by two newspapers, Gulf Times and Arab News, as shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7:** Disclaimers used in selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'Al-Mudhaka said that in addition to these negative images fostered by historical factors, when politics becomes involved in sport, accusations and propaganda for certain purposes would start to ruin otherwise good goals of sport'.	Gulf Times Dec. 12, 2022

News	Newspaper
"In reality, Islam treats men and women as equal in many ways. As the Qur'an says, "O mankind! We created you all from male and female and made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know each other. Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. And Allah has complete knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)".	Arab News Jan. 23, 2010

Source: Collected from the newspapers.

Table 7 provides evidence of the use of a micro strategy by Arab newspapers to challenge and refute claims made by the West regarding Arabs and Islam, particularly regarding Arab women's rights and sports. An illustrative example is observed in the Gulf Times, where Westerners' negative perceptions of Qatar are attributed to accusations and propaganda driven by specific motives. The newspaper explicitly rejects accusations made by Western media, including the allegation of a lack of respect for women's rights in Qatar (refer to Table 4 for a comprehensive list of accusations). Similarly, Arab News engages in news discourse aimed at refuting the Western notion that Islam does not uphold women's rights. This scholarly analysis highlights the strategic approach used by Arab newspapers to counter the prevailing narratives propagated by the West. By challenging accusations and negative stereotypes, these newspapers aim to present a different perspective and assert that Arab countries, such as Qatar, uphold women's rights and that Islam, as a religion, respects women. These efforts contribute to the broader discourse surrounding Arab women's rights and challenge the prevailing Western narratives that often depict them in a negative light.

### 3- Example/ Illustration

The findings show that this microstrategy was utilised by the four selected newspapers. This strategy is explained in the following section.

**Table 8:** Example/Illustration employed in the selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'The Arab world in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, is rich in storeys that demonstrate the crucial role women play in our daily lives, business, society, education, healthcare and beyond', said Jomana Alrashid, SRMG's CEO.	Arab News March 08, 2021
'When Sara Essam joined the English club Stoke City in 2017, she became the first Arab to play in the Women's Super League.'	Gulf Times 13 Oct, 2022
"Ms al-Hathloul was arrested this year at King Fahad International Airport. Although no official reason for her detention was given, it is believed to be related to her ongoing work on human rights. '	Daily Mail Feb 11, 2021
'An American woman's unique path from Disneyland to finalist of 'Arabs Got Talent'.	Washington Post Dec 9, 2013

Source: Collected from the newspapers.

Table 8 reveals that Arab News presented a news discourse that states that there are many stories that demonstrate the significant role played by Arab women in daily life. The speaker is a Saudi Arabian female, Jomana Al-Rashid, who works as the CEO of the SRMG. She is considered one of the most successful women in Saudi Arabia; she illustrates that many women are also successful like her. In a similar vein, Gulf Times provided an example of a successful woman who became the first Arab woman to play in the Super League. Both Arab newspapers presented examples of successful women, indicating that Arab women have protected their rights. In contrast, Western newspapers provided some examples to criticise Arab regimes for not providing women with their rights. For example, the Daily Mail presented the name of Ms. al-Hathloul as an example of an Arab woman who was exposed to oppression and deprivation of rights. Furthermore, the Washington Post provided an example of a successful American woman who participated in Arab Got Talent and reached the finalist stage. It can be stated that the newspaper, that is, the Washington Post, aims to highlight the opportunities and successes that American women can experience, regardless of cultural or geographical boundaries, compared to Arab women.

### 4- Generalisation

The findings show that this Microstrategy is utilised by one newspaper, namely, the Washington Post. The use of this MicroStrategy is explained and discussed in the following:

**Table 9:** Generalisation strategy used in the selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'What. The short answer: so far, not much'.	Washington Post Oct 25, 2012

Source: Collected from the newspaper

Table 9 shows that the generalisation strategy is employed by one newspaper, namely the Washington Post. The Washington Post newspaper asserted that the Arab Spring has yielded inadequate progress in terms of women's equality in the Arab world. In fact, this is not true for all Arab Spring countries, as many women have had significant roles as their male counterparts. Examples include Tawakul Karman, a Yemeni activist and journalist who won the Nobel Peace Prize as the first woman in the Arab world.

## 5- Evidentiality

The analysis of data reveals that this micro-strategy is used by three newspapers: Arab News, Gulf Times, and Daily Mail. This strategy is explained in the following section.

**Table 10:** Evidentiality strategy employed in the selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
"Jomana Alrashid added: "Simultaneously, we pay tribute to distinguished Arab women who play an important role in the public and private history of our countries and communities. We are delighted and privileged to witness the unwavering commitment and steadfast support of Saudi Arabia's youthful and visionary leadership to women's causes. More than ever, Saudi women have now become an integral part of the growth, prosperity and advancement of our country. We at SRMG are fully prepared to play our part. "	Arab News March 08, 2021
'Qatari mountaineer Sheikha Asma al-Thani has climbed Mount Manaslu, the eighth tallest mountain in the world, and has also become the first Arab woman to climb an 8000er (eight thousander) without oxygen.'	Gulf Times 08 May 08, 2022
'Saudi police have penalised a woman filmed driving a car, a spokesman said Monday, warning against violations of a ban on female drivers set to be lifted next June.' 'My family will kill me': A Saudi woman, 24, fleeing to Australia to 'escape a forced marriage' makes a desperate plea for help after being held in the Philippines for 13 hours and deported. '	Daily Mail October 9, 2017

Source: Collected from the newspapers

Table 10 shows that evidentiality is used in three newspapers to provide proof or evidence about issues related to Arab women. For example, Arab News presented evidence of the success of Arab women who enjoyed their rights as Arab women. The newspaper quoted from the speech of Jomana Alrashid, written in Table 10 above, informs the readers that Arab women have their rights protected. Likewise, Gulf News provided a report on Qatari mountaineer Sheikha Asma al-Thani, who became the first Arab woman to climb an 8,000-foot (eight-thousander) without oxygen. The newspaper presented this report as evidence that Arab women were allowed to practise their favourite hobbies and activities. In contrast, the Daily Mail presented two news reports on Arab women penalised as evidence that Saudi police did not respect women's rights. One of these women was penalised for driving a car, while the other woman escaped a forced marriage, both of which are presented as evidence of violating women's rights in Saudi Arabia.

## 6- Hyperbole

The findings of this study show that this micro-strategy is employed by one newspaper, namely the Daily Mail. This strategy is explained in the following section.

**Table 11:** Hyperbole strategy used in the selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'Saudis fear that there will be 'no more virgins' and people will turn gay if the female drive ban is lifted.'	Daily Mail Dec. 1, 2011

Source: Collected from the newspaper

It is shown that hyperbole is employed by the Daily Mail, in which it is stated that Saudi Arabia fears that there will be no more virgins and people will turn gay if the female driving ban is lifted. This strategy is used to exaggerate other negative actions, such as the female drive ban in Saudi Arabia.

## 7- Metaphor

The data analysis shows that these micro-strategies are utilised by one newspaper, namely, the Gulf Times. This strategy is explained in the following section.

**Table 12:** Metaphor strategy employed in the selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
Sheikha Asma continued, "We started our summit push, and all I could remember was @moethani's words (Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulla al Thani's) words 'Don't forget to look up at the stars.'	Gulf Times Sep. 28, 2021

Source: Collected from the newspaper

Table (12) above shows that metaphor is a micro-strategy used by the Gulf Times to convey a message to readers that Arab women have achieved a great deal of their rights. The metaphor 'don't forget to look up at the star' is presented to inform readers that the Qatari regime supports women and grants them their full rights.

## 8- National Self-Glorification

The results of the study reveal that this micro-strategy is employed by two newspapers: the Gulf Times and the Washington Post. This strategy is explained in the following section.

**Table 13:** National self-glorification strategy used in selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'In her intervention, she said that Qatar has taken very positive and strong steps toward women's rights.'	Gulf Times March 14, 2019
'Why has the new Congress inspired me to reclaim my American identity?'	Washington Post Jan. 8, 2019

Source: Collected from the newspapers

Table 13 shows that this strategy is employed by the Gulf Times to manifest positive self-representation by providing a quote in which it is stated that Qatar has made very positive and strong steps towards women's rights. In addition, the Washington Post shows how the new Congress inspired women to reclaim their American identity. The Washington Post highlights how the new Congress inspired women to reclaim their American identity, indicating a potential shift in representation and political power. This serves as inspiration for women to actively participate, challenge gender roles, and advocate for gender equality within the broader social context.

## 9- Number Game

Data analysis reveals that this micro-strategy is used by three newspapers: the Gulf Times, Daily Mail, and Arab News. This strategy is explained in the following section.

**Table 14:** Number of game strategies used in the selected news discourses.

News	Newspaper
'Ignoring a frank and honest debate on this very important subject, however, has led to the exclusion of women from playing an active and effective role in the development of Saudi Arabia, especially when women comprise half of society.'	Arab News Jan. 23, 2010
"During her opening speech, HE Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN Ambassador Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, affirmed the importance of the 65 <sup>th</sup> session of the women's commission, which highlights women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".	Gulf Times March 18, 2021
'The Gulf Kingdom was the only country in the world that prohibited women from driving, a ban seen worldwide as a symbol of repression.'	Daily Mail October 9, 2017

Source: Collected from the newspapers

Arab News described women as half-societies to inform readers that Arab women are respected and their rights are protected in Arab countries. Likewise, the Gulf Times indicated that the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the Women's Commission was held. The 65<sup>th</sup> number is used to indicate the number of sessions held to highlight and discuss women's issues. The newspaper aims to send a message to readers that Arab women's issues are receiving a lot of attention from the Arab government. However, the Daily Mail mentioned that Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world that prevents women from driving. The word 'only' is used to add credibility with respect to the disrespect of women's rights by the Saudi regime.

## 10- Lexicalisation

Table 14 shows that the Daily Mail described the Saudi regime as a 'symbol of repression'. Similarly, the same newspaper considered Arabs 'conservatives', as shown in Table 5. It can be said that these lexical items express negative connotations about Arabs and Arab regimes. The newspaper aimed to criticise the deprivation of the rights of Arab women in Arab societies.

To conclude, the findings reveal that ten micro-strategies were employed in the selected newspapers. It is also noted that micro-strategies are employed to achieve the four macro-strategies proposed by van Dijk (2006). More importantly, the ideologies of the micro-strategies in the selected Arab newspapers include defending Arab regimes and Islam regarding the rights of Arab women. However, the ideology of Western newspapers is to encourage Arab women to demand more rights and freedom, to urge their Western governments to impose persecution on Arab countries that do not grant Arab women more rights, and to destroy the Arab reputation in the West.

## 7. Discussion and Conclusions

The findings revealed that the selected newspapers employed the four macro-strategies proposed by van Dijk (2006). It was also found that these newspapers employed 10 micro-strategies to achieve the four macro-strategies explained in the theoretical framework of this study. More importantly, data analysis has shown that newspapers have different ideologies. For example, the ideologies of Arab newspapers include defending the standing of Arab regimes and Islam regarding women's rights. However, the ideologies of Western newspapers include encouraging Arab women to demand more rights, convincing their Western authorities to impose persecution on Arab countries that do not provide women with more rights, and urging their governments to suspend relations with countries that do not provide women with more rights. The findings of the present study are in agreement with those found by Karol and Guta (2020), who claimed that Arab women are represented positively in Arab media and negatively in Western media.

Furthermore, one significant aspect that should be discussed in the conclusion of this study is the conflict between political Islam and liberal democratic principles of Western Europe. Political Islam, which involves the integration of religion and politics, often challenges Western conceptions of secularism, individual rights, and gender equality. This clash of ideologies becomes evident in the representation of women's rights in the media. For example, selected Arab newspapers take an ideological position that supports Arab regimes and interprets women's rights through an Islamic perspective. On the contrary, the chosen Western newspapers advocate for increased rights for Arab women, promoting their own liberal democratic values, and urging their governments to take action against countries that do not adequately protect women's rights.

It can also be argued that the international press, such as selected Western newspapers, serves as a platform for disseminating information and shaping global narratives. The portrayal of Arab women in media coverage not only reflects but also reinforces the broader discourse surrounding political Islam and liberal Western democratic ideals. As previously discussed, Western media tends to portray Arab women in a negative light, emphasizing their oppression and perpetuating stereotypes about Islam. On the contrary, the Arab media portrays these women more positively, highlighting cultural authenticity and challenging Western narratives. This study has contributed to a deeper understanding of these portrayals and their implications, which are crucial to comprehending power dynamics and ideological struggles between various actors in the media landscape.

In conclusion, the present study shows that van Dijk's (2006) model is useful in identifying the strategies employed by newspapers to express their ideologies. This finding is consistent with that of Dezhkameh et al. (2021). Based on the findings obtained, the current study recommends that future studies use van Dijk's (2006) model to identify the strategies used by newspapers on other issues, as the present study is limited to discussing the issues of Arab women.

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