The Representation of Women in Saudi Film: The Case of Amra and the Second Marriage

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Abstract

Female representation in film continues to be a new area of research in Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. Mahmoud Sabbagh, the writer and director of the Netflix film *Amra and the Second Marriage*, has portrayed Saudi women in various ways. His work was recognized with the Best Film award at the Cinematic Festival of Film Across Three Continents in Milan. The current study examines female stereotypes as portrayed in this film, employing a mixed-method approach of quantitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. The study's conceptual framework draws on representation theory and feminist theory to explore the depiction of female stereotypes in this digital Saudi film. A total of 20 females were recruited in this study from the online film. The findings revealed that *Amra and the Second Marriage* represented twenty Saudi female characters, with half of them being mature adults. Approximately 40% of these characters were portrayed as modern, and around 35% were depicted as belonging to the upper class. Less than half of the characters were shown without wearing the hijab. The film also depicted several stereotypes of Saudi women as weak and sacrificial, reinforcing negative stereotypes about Saudi culture as traditional and masculine. Furthermore, the movie showcased both 'religious' and 'gossip' stereotypes that mirror aspects of Saudi culture. Interestingly, the film also explored the theme of 'corrupt women,' a less common portrayal in Saudi culture.

Keywords: Amra and the Second Marriage, feminism theory, representation theory, Saudi film, Saudi women

1. Introduction

The film industry is one of the most globally popular forms of entertainment (Hall & Zwarun, 2012; Sergi & Lovell, 2009), with Conn and Bhugra (2012) noting that "Films are a powerful medium for entertainment" (p.54). Films have dramatically expanded from the West's Hollywood (Wildman, 1995; Kim, 2004) to the remainder of the world, including the Middle East, i.e. Saudi Arabia. Saudi culture is considered the most conservative among Arabic and Islamic countries (Alharbi, 2014; Abdul Cader, 2015; Zayani, 2012), particularly as it places considerable emphasis on the Islamic religion. Denman and Hilal (2011) stated that 'the Islamic religion is considered as much a part of the Saudi identity as the country's longstanding history as part of the greater Arab Peninsula' (p. 304). Therefore, Saudi culture can be viewed as orthodox (Mustafa & Troudi, 2019), with a significant degree of importance given to its social norms and cultural values.

When it comes to the film industry, Saudi Arabia can be seen to diverge from other Middle Eastern countries, with Shesha and Yusuf (2021) noting that, "the launch of cinemas for Arab-speaking audiences in Egypt, Saudi Arabia's film sector emerged in the early 1930s" (p.248). In addition, Ginsberg and Lippard (2020) stated that the earliest film screenings in Saudi Arabia were provided to foreign staff of the California Arab Standard Oil Company (Aramco). According to Shesha and Yusuf (2021), the film of King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud attending the launch of the first oil drill formed one of many documentaries funded by Aramco that proved of cultural significance. In addition, Sakr (2012) pointed out that King Faisal opposed both the foreign nature of films and the fact that movie theatres brought men and women together into a single space.

As a result of its conservative culture, there has for a long time been a general prohibition on cinemas in Saudi Arabia (Janbi, 2018). Sakr (2012) highlighted that Saudi Arabia outlawed public film screenings in 1964, only to reintroduce them in 1970. Sakr (2012) also stated that there was no particular era in which cinema was completely banned in Saudi society, although Chulov (2017) indicated that, "Saudi Arabia is to allow cinemas to

open for the first time in thirty-five years as it continues a push to overhaul its society and image after decades of hard-line rule" (p. 1).

Cinemas in Saudi Arabia have been banned for approximately 35 years; however, significant contributions have been made by elite Saudi women and women belonging to influential families towards film production in their respective roles (Mittal, 2023). The initiation of the 2030 vision of Prince Mohamed bin Salman, established in 2016, enabled the authorities to take a first step towards re-opening cinemas, in particular by establishing the General Authority for Entertainment, an organization tasked with the general enhancement of the entertainment industry. This led to a judgment made in 2018 reversing a ban on the entire film sector that had been in place for over three decades (Chulov, 2017). Mould (2016) considered that Al Madani's (2017) declaration resulted in Saudi citizens anticipating the re-opening of cinema across the country, as well as enabling the return of cinematography and filmmaking in less than a year. Due to the 2030 Vision, Saudi society began witnessing a new age in many social-cultural aspects, including the film industry (Khan & Iqbal, 2020), particularly the empowerment of Saudi women (Topal, 2019; Sabir & Zenaidi, 2019; Al-Qahtani et al., 2020).

Haifaa AlMansour stands out as the pioneering female filmmaker from Saudi Arabia. She is renowned for creating movies that explore women's issues within the context of Saudi society and tradition. Two of her notable works, "Wajdja" and "A Perfect Candidate," have garnered widespread acclaim on the international stage. In "Wajdja," the film narrates the story of a young girl who aspires to ride a bicycle, a prohibited activity for women in Saudi Arabia. Simultaneously, her mother grapples with the challenges of maintaining her marriage in this conservative society. On the other hand, "A Perfect Candidate" follows a young doctor employed in a municipal hospital as she embarks on a journey to nominate herself for municipal elections. The film explores the reactions and responses of society to her ambitious endeavors. In recognition of the outstanding work, Haifaa AlMansour was appointed as a member of Saudi Arabia's General Culture Authority in 2018.

The subsequent growth in Saudi films has promoted Saudi cultural values and norms through different digital platforms. Due to the cessation of Saudi filmmaking, there are currently only a limited number of previous studies examining the Saudi audience, particularly when it comes to the stereotypical presentation of women. This current study aims to fill this gap by examining the stereotypes of women found in *Amra and the Second Marriage*, as well as establishing how closely these stereotypes represent the reality of Saudi society. This study is the first mixed-method investigation of the representation of females in Saudi films broadcast through digital platforms such as *Netflix*. It makes a significant contribution to the literature of gender studies by investigating the portrayal of women in a Saudi Netflix film. This study attempts to understand how women are represented in this particular film and to compare this portrayal to the reality of women's lives within Saudi society. The current study combined both types of content analysis to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the main features of the females portrayed in digital Saudi films?

RQ2: How do Saudi films represent women on digital platforms? To what extent are these representations aligned to reality?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Position of Saudi Women: Past and Present

Saudi society is unique among global Arabic Islamic cultures, resulting in Saudi women holding a different position in their society than those in other Middle East North Africa (MENA) countries. For example, Saudi women have faced many social and/or cultural limitations in significant aspects of their lives. In the past, Saudi women lived in a patriarchal society that idealized them as perfect mothers, wives, and homemakers. According to Soekarba (2019), 'Women in Saudi Arabia are regulated by those two subsystems, which are merely patriarchal in law and norms in the tribe' (p. 365). Moreover, until the 1950s, education in Saudi Arabia was limited to males (Khadhar, 2018), with the first private female school subsequently established in the 1960s (Maisel, 2013). However, women remained limited to specific majors, based on social-cultural female norms, i.e. teaching or medicine. Furthermore, Saudi women were unable to travel without their guardianship (Hamdan, 2005), were not permitted to drive cars (Alhareth et al., 2015), and had no political voice.

The establishment of women's rights in Saudi society began to emerge in 2005, which can be seen as a 'golden age' for Saudi women (Alsuwaida, 2016). For instance, King Abdulla bin Abdelaziz opened up opportunities for Saudi females to study abroad. Taylor and Albasri (2014) confirmed that the King Abdullah Sponsorship Program sent both male and female students to study abroad for higher education and to expand their experiences. Furthermore, in 2013, King Abdullah allowed approximately thirty Saudi women to join the Shura Council (Majlis Al-Shura) (Thompson, 2015; Krane, 2019). This led Alsuwaida (2016) to note that, "[K]ing

Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz al-Saud, a reformist, has adopted policies that encourage women to work towards achieving employment in the industrial fields similar to those of men" (p. 113). The government regulations in Saudi Arabia are responsible for promoting discussions about gender-related issues and are dedicated to driving positive societal change in this regard (Al-Nasrallah, 2023). In essence, Saudi women have become educated and influential members of their society, with Mills (2009) suggesting that the King sent a strong message that, without female participation, the kingdom would be unable to develop economically or socially.

The 2030 Vision was established in 2016, resulting in Saudi Society, and particularly its women, entering a dramatic phase of transition and change (Grand & Wolff, 2020; Al-Qahtani et al., 2020). Thus, the 2030 Vision has acted as a catalyst for a positive era of Saudi women's rights or 'women's empowerment'. The gender dynamics in Saudi Arabia have undergone a significant shift in the wake of sweeping reforms spearheaded by Mohammed bin Salman (Karolak, 2023). These changes have ushered in a period of transformation and economic reforms, emphasizing the necessity of full female participation. To promote greater female presence in the public sphere, women have been appointed to governmental positions and granted participation in the limited political processes unfolding in the kingdom. For example, Saudi women have been given the right to travel without guardianship permission and also to drive, in a similar manner to other women throughout the world (Saleh & Malibari, 2021). In addition, Saudi women have gained access to broader fields and job opportunities equal to men, with employers hiring women based on their qualifications in all different majors, including business, law, justice, and engineering (Khadhar 2018). Moreover, women are now being employed in the media sector, as actors, directors, and filmmakers (Montagu, 2020; Janbi, 2018).

2.2 The Film Industry in Saudi Arabia

The Saudi film industry has started to emerge recently in comparison to other MENA regions after experiencing a ban for around 3 decades to create films (Jarjoura, 2014; Mittal, 2023). In 2006, "[the] first full-length Saudi-made feature film *Keif al-Hal*?" was produced (Sakr, 2008, p.400). Sarı (2020) suggested that, despite being produced by neighboring countries (including the UAE), this film used Saudi actors. In 2013, *Wadjda* was produced using Saudi actors including Waad Mohammed, and was classified as the first real Saudi film (La Caze, 2020; Harkins-Cross, 2014; Omar, 2021; Baughan, 2015).

Wadjda can be seen to have launched a brave and challenging movement in the Saudi film industry based on the perspective of Saudi women, which has the potential to overcome many cultural-social taboos in this conservative society. *Barakah Yoqabil Barakah* (Ghawanmeh, 2018) proved innovative in that the primary protagonist was a woman and the director was male, i.e. Mahmoud Sabbagh (La Caze, 2020). This represented a notable shift from the major female character being a little girl, as in *Wadjda,* to being centered on a young adult woman, including moving from focusing on social issues to a romantic story.

Interestingly, the 2030 Vision may also have been the main stimulus for the expansion of Saudi films from a local to a global reach, particularly with Jeddah scheduled to host its first-ever international film festival in the year 2020 (La Caze, 2020). Significantly, due to the social-cultural values discussed above, Saudi films have had only a limited broadcast in Saudi cinemas, resulting in the Saudi film industry producing films that are primarily broadcast on digital platforms such as Netflix.

2.3 Saudi Films and Digital Platforms

Digital platforms have recently become a global medium for broadcasting and/or producing films and series, including those created in Saudi Arabia, which have been produced and broadcast digitally through the Netflix and Shahid networks. There are several significant reasons for the broadcast of Saudi media productions through digital platforms. Firstly, to spread Saudi productions to diverse audiences through the use of subtitles with high-quality productions (Jenner, 2018; Salsabila, 2021). Secondly, watching Saudi films and series digitally provides a hybrid culture of media content, i.e. a combination of two cultures (Kraidy, 2006). Thus, audiences watching Saudi media productions using Netflix can experience exposure to hybrid media content that broadcasts Saudi culture through a Western platform. As audiences are only able to watch Saudi films or series digitally, this has stimulated these platforms to produce and/or air several Saudi films and TV series, including *Takki* (2012-2022); *Sanctity* (2013); *Amra and Second Marriage* (2018); *Whispers* (2020); *Masameer* (2020); *The Book of Sun* (2020*); and The Tambour of Retribution* (2021).

3. Theoretical Framework

This study examined the depiction of women in Saudi films through the lens of feminism and theoretical perspectives of representation. The explanation of McDougall (2012) on feminist theory highlights the complex nature of this theoretical framework. Feminist theory encompasses a diverse range of perspectives and ideologies

to scrutinize and challenge the social, political, and cultural structures perpetuating gender inequality. Hurley et al. (2008) noted that the main concept of feminist philosophy is to empower women all over the world when it comes to social, economic, and political aspects. McDougall (2012) considered that feminism, 'is nothing more outrageous than the belief that we should oppose media texts that represent women as in-equal to men or as mere unthinking objects for male scrutiny' (p.178). Similarly, Hawkesworth (2006) asserted that feminism is a political and social movement seeking to advance women's rights and promote gender parity across a wide range of areas, including the workplace, government, economics, and everyday life. Evans (2011) highlighted an abundance of data showing that women have been previously considered as inferior citizens, with feminism maintaining that the status of women in society has been established by institutional and social circumstances.

There has been a significant relationship between feminism and the portrayal of women in the media of diverse cultures and societies globally, thus indicating that media can influence audience perspective. This is particularly relevant as stereotypes of women (both negative and positive) are disseminated through media, including film and television. McQuail (2010) noted that "Media purvey stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, Production of the content of media are gendered, … Media offer positive and supportive as well as negative role models" (p. 123).

Therefore, gender representation in the media can limit the appearance of Saudi women, based on the cultural and social considerations noted above. Saudi women can appear in different media content as representatives of modernization (Altuwayjiri, 2019), as disempowered (Kraidy, 2007), and as conservative Muslim women (Kharroub & Weaver, 2014). This demonstrates the complexity of the representation of Saudi women (Albawardi & Jones, 2023). The fact that the media presents role models that are positive and supportive, as well as negative, can lead viewers from non-MENA nations to believe that the image of women portrayed in the media, and particularly in the Saudi film industry, represents the reality of Saudi women's lives, and thus falling victim to gender stereotyping.

Hall (1977) defined representation theory as "using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people" (p.15). However, Laughey (2009) argued that types of media are crucial providers and producers of this portrayal if representation is understood as a means of recognizing actual objects. It is therefore essential to recognize that representation does not exist merely to explain an existing reality, but also contributes to its construction and comprehension. From the perspective of the film industry, representation can be viewed as a means of attempting to modify how some parts of society show or reflect social reality. Similarly, Godfrey et al. (2009) noted that: "[F]ilm is a representational system that communicates concepts and feelings in such a way as to enable interpretation of their meanings" (p.13). Ibbi (2017) suggested that film appears to urge its viewers to recognize it in a certain way, although a viewer's social position may also impact his/her comprehension.

Laughey (2009) stated that viewers can comprehend a film in a manner that differs from that intended, due to the need for a framework of interpretation. In essence, viewers have diversity precreation of perceiving reality, while at the same time lacking the flexibility to understand reality. This infers that a film's audience can use a variety of judgments based on their different experiences and/or the creation of stereotypes. Newbold et al. (2002) indicated that "the media stereotype because the people stereotype" (p.265). However, Stewart and Kowaltzke (2007) defined a stereotype as an exaggerated and stereotypical image that is so frequently repeated it forms a pattern and is therefore an extremely evaluative form of representation.

The portrayal of women in media has evolved significantly over time. In the past, women were depicted with limited visibility compared to men, often conforming to a specific image of women wearing traditional attire, including veils (Di Marianna & Greco, 2022). However, recently women have been represented in a more diverse array of roles and perspectives, reflecting the transformations within Saudi society. As a result, the utilization of this theoretical framework was beneficial for answering the main study question, which explored the stereotypes of women as represented through a digital Saudi film, alongside its reality about the perspective of feminist analysis.

4. Methodology

4.1 Study Design

The current study employed a mixed methods approach, including quantitative and qualitative content analysis from the perspective of critical analysis. Berger (2000) indicated that content analysis is, "a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content according to certain usually predetermined categories. It may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis or both" (p. 173). The study's extensive review of existing studies of film and gender representation identified that most researchers have

quantitatively employed content analysis (e.g., Kunsey, 2019; Micic, 2015) and/or qualitatively (e.g., Trisnawati et al., 2021; Krahn, 2015).

4.2 The Film: Amra and the Second Marriage

The Saudi film *Amra and the Second Marriage,* written and directed by Mahmoud Sabbagh, is a combination of both social drama and 'satirical comedy' (La Caze, 2020). Its length is one hour and thirty-five minutes and was broadcast in 2018 on digital platforms such as Shahid and Netflix. The story focuses on Amra, a Saudi housewife taking care of her husband and family members who faces the issue of accepting her husband's second wife because of her inability to bear a male child, thus being confronted with the social-cultural limitations of Saudi society. The film places a particular emphasis on portraying female characters. By comparison, in the Saudi film, *Wadjda,* "most of the characters in the film are male" (Mutahar & Lakhadive, 2018, p.36). Therefore, this film was considered an excellent subject for this current study, as it gained an award from the Dubai Festival for best director, as well as the best film from the Cinematic Festival of Film through three continents at Milano.

4.3 Study Procedure Phases

4.3.1 First Phase: Quantitative Content Analysis

4.3.1.1 Coding Producer

During this first phase, the study undertook quantitative content analysis to explore the main features of Saudi females as portrayed through the Netflix digital film *Amra and the Second Marriage*. This study used female characters from the online film as an analysis unit that comprised 20 females. Initially, the three coders identified the female characters from the film, resulting in a total of twenty female characters. The coders then determined the four categories of demographic information for each female character, consisting of (1) age; (2) social status; (3) social class' and (4) hijab status.

The first category referred to age. For this, the study followed the Signorielli (2004) classifications with four sub-categories: (1) child/adolescent (any character acting or speaking as if under the age of nineteen); (2) young adult (any character acting or speaking as if between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine); (3) mature adult (any character acting or speaking as if between the ages of thirty and forty-nine); (4) and older adult (any character acting or speaking as if aged over fifty).

The second category consisted of social status and included six sub-categories: (1) housewife (traditional women who are good mothers and wives); (2) modern women (those who are independent, earn their own money, and can make their own decisions); (3) widows, (women who have lost their husbands); (4) single (unmarried women, and are daughters); (5) divorced (those who have been divorced), and (6) unknown.

The third category focused on social class and was divided into four sub-categories: (1) upper class (females showing clear signs of wealth and living a luxurious life, demonstrated explicitly or implicitly through cars, clothes, or homes); (2) middle class (women showing signs of having a middle range of income); (3) lower class (women lacking a good life, needing to work simply to meet their fundamental requirements); and (4) unknown.

The fourth category referred to hijab status and was addressed by three sub-categories: (1) wearing the hijab (a woman represented wearing the hijab, or covering her face, or wearing a niqab); (2) non-wearing of the hijab (a woman who did not wear the hijab in every scene in the film); and (3) in between (a female shown wearing a hijab outside of her home but represented without it when inside).

4.3.1.2 Reliability

The coders defined all of the categories, apart from that of age for estimating the reliability of the quantitative procedure. Following a pilot study, the coders undertook several modifications before confirming the final codes, which were designed to guarantee the intercoder reliability (Wimmer & Dominic, 2003). Each coder presented their data to compare and contrast the results of all three coders, with intercoder reliabilities for age (90.2%), social status (93%), social class (100%), and hijab status (90%). The result of the reliability test ranged between 90.2% and 100%, indicating that this finding achieved a high level of agreement (McHugh, 2012) and close to 1.00, based on Krippendorff's (1980) reliability standards.

4.3.2 Second Phase: Qualitative Content Analysis

During this phase, thematic analysis as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed for the qualitative content analysis of the Saudi Netflix film, *Amra and the Second Marriage*. This analysis helped to answer the second research question, i.e. How did a Saudi film represent women in the digital platform and to what extent were these representations aligned to reality? The application of thematic analysis enabled the researchers to examine the collected information, followed by familiarising themselves with the data, before producing the first

codes. Firstly, the researchers evaluated the themes, before classifying and naming them. Secondly, they created reports after categorizing and defining common themes (Bajnaid, 2016). Thirdly, the researchers objectively analyzed and coded the data, to identify the stereotypes of women as portrayed in the online Saudi film. Finally, the themes were selected and classified to draw up the report.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Quantitative Results

Table 1 describes the demographic characteristics of 20 female characters presented in the Saudi film *Amra and the Second Marriage*. Half of the Saudi females (50%) in the film were reported as being mature adults (aged 20-49 years). In addition, less than half (40%) of the Saudi females were portrayed as being modern women. The results also showed that around 35% of Saudi females were represented as being upper class, while 35% of the Saudi women were portrayed as not wearing a hijab.

Table 1. Distribution of demographic characteristics of the female characters in the Saudi film

Category		Women as depicted in *Amra and the Second Marriage*	
		Count	%
Age	Child/adolescent	3	15%
	Young adult	5	25%
	Mature adult	10	50%
	Older adult	2	10%
Social status	Housewife	3	15%
	Modern women	8	40%
	Widow	2	10%
	Single	1	5%
	Divorced	1	5%
	Unknown	5	25%
Social class	Upper	7	35%
	Middle	5	25%
	Lower	2	10%
	Unknown	6	25%
Hijab status	Wearing the hijab	5	25%
	Not wearing the hijab	8	40%
	In between	7	35%

There are only a few existing studies investigating gender or portrayals of females in Saudi films, such as the small number of studies discussing *Wadjda;* the first Saudi film to represent women as weak and living in a dominant and conservative society (Mutahar & Lakhadive, 2018; La Caze, 2020; Omar, 2021). In addition, no previous studies examining female stereotypes have employed the mixed-method approach. However, this current study used the mixed method approach in the quantitative phase, finding that around half of the female characters in Saudi films were mature adults, with approximately 40% of the female characters portrayed as modern women and 35% characterized as being upper class, who did not wear a hijab.

5.2 Qualitative Results

5.2.1 Stereotypes and Reality of Saudi Females

5.2.1.1 Traditional Women

The most common stereotype of traditional women in the Middle East is that of housewives and good mothers. Dreher (2014) described this stereotype as "traditional women spend their entire lives in submission to male authority figures" (p. 18). In *Amra and the Second Marriage*, the main character, Amra, takes care of her daughter, her mother, and her husband, while simultaneously attempting to manage the family's financial issues.

The other characters are presented as women looking for satisfaction with a husband. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the reality of contemporary Saudi society paints a different picture. In recent times, the prevalence of such traditional roles for women has diminished significantly, as women in Saudi Arabia have taken on increasingly diverse roles and responsibilities, challenging and transcending these long-standing stereotypes.

5.2.1.2 Negative Women

This stereotype generally refers to women who are weak, sacrificial, and submissive to satisfying their husbands and making their family members happy. *Amra and the Second Marriage* represents a woman accepting the fact that her husband takes a second wife in this negative light. The woman does not become angry with her husband, or with his mother who encouraged the second marriage. Similarly, a recent study by Mutahar and Lakhadive (2018) investigated the relationship between gender and language in the film, *Wadjda*, finding that the women were represented as being weak. However, it is important to recognize that within contemporary Saudi society, this stereotype of women primarily pertains to the older generation. In recent years, women have overcome these traditional norms, assuming more diverse and empowered roles that challenge such stereotypes.

5.2.1.3 Feminist Women

The stereotype of feminism refers to women who are free and independent, and who encourage other women to be self-reliant. In *Amra and the Second Marriage*, the feminist stereotype appears through three women who attempt to help Amra and her mother leave their city and start a new life without Amra's husband. Notably, the film represents feminist women as independent, brave, and sufficiently strong to make their own decisions. Coward (1999) described feminism as follows: "Feminism had given the women the confidence to move into masculine areas, combining work and motherhood, seeing new opportunities in new work patterns" (p.51). However, it is crucial to acknowledge that Saudi society may not align entirely with this feminist stereotype, as it does not typically feature women who encourage others facing difficult circumstances to leave the country. This especially relates to considering the transformative impact of the Saudi government's 2030 Vision initiated in 2016, which has led to increased empowerment among Saudi women, enabling them to assert and exercise their rights within their communities (Al-Qahtani et al., 2020). This suggests that Saudi women are increasingly shaping their future within their home country rather than seeking to leave.

5.2.1.4 Domineering Women

This stereotype depicts women with power and control over others negatively, i.e. controlling their husbands and family. Such women are portrayed as being excessively controlling, especially in their relationships with their husbands and families. They tend to not allow others the freedom to make their own choices or express their opinions freely. In the context of *Amra and the Second Marriage*, this stereotype comes to life through the character of Amra's mother-in-law, Sadiah. She is depicted as a figure who exerts a strong and dominating influence over her son and his family. Her portrayal in the film illustrates the extent to which some individuals within this stereotype can extend their control, often to the detriment of those they are supposed to care for, as well as the negative consequences of such dynamics within family relationships.

5.2.1.5 Gossiping Women

This stereotype refers to women portrayed in a negative way as gossip. They are shown in *Amra and the Second Marriage* as gossiping to enable them to feel better about themselves and remove their focus from their situation. This is evident when Amra is in the Bazaar and is surrounded by gossip about a new neighbor whose husband took a second wife because he wanted a son. In general, these gossiping women are seen as talking about who is cheating, who has been divorced, and who has become married. Such discussions are not limited to private settings; these women can often be seen indulging in gossip at various social gatherings and events within Saudi communities. This stereotype highlights the prevalence of gossip as a form of social interaction and a way for some individuals to pass the time while also offering commentary on the lives of others, sometimes without substantial basis.

5.2.1.6 Modern Women

Modern women in *Amra and the Second Marriage* exhibit behavior associated with belonging to a high class, such as playing the piano, being vegetarian, and using English vocabulary. The film represents this female stereotype in Jamila, who is seen as attracted to modernity and Western culture. At the same time, Jamila loves her mother, even attempting to kill her grandmother as she does not wish to share her mother with her grandmother. However, it is important to recognize that this particular depiction of a modern woman is somewhat removed from the reality of Saudi society, especially within middle-class families similar to Amra's.

The film's portrayal suggests a lifestyle and set of values that are more typical of a higher social class, making it less representative of the broader demographics and cultural dynamics of Saudi Arabia. While individuals in Saudi society may adopt some aspects of modernity and Western culture, the specific combination of attributes as seen in Jamila's character is relatively rare, particularly in the context of middle-class families like Amra's.

5.2.1.7 Women with Disabilities

In "Amra and the Second Marriage," the representation of women with disabilities is represented by an older woman, Amra's mother, Nafesah. Nafesah is shown to suffer from dementia, a condition that necessitates continuous care and support to manage her affairs and meet her daily needs. Throughout the film, her vulnerability is evident as she relies on others for her well-being. Towards the conclusion of the film, a deeply poignant moment unfolds when Nafesah, under the influence of Jamila's instructions, severely harms herself. This heartbreaking turn of events not only highlights the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities but also highlights the consequences of vulnerability of those who are reliant on others for their care and protection. The portrayal of Nafesah's character serves as a poignant reminder of the significance of understanding and addressing the needs and struggles of people with disabilities in society.

5.2.1.8 Second Wife

In *Amra and the Second Marriage,* this stereotype is portrayed by a woman accepting entering marriage as a second wife to provide a son to a wealthy man who only had daughters. In real life, the second woman is usually younger than the first wife. In real-life scenarios, it's worth noting that the second wife is often portrayed as being younger than the first wife, and this dynamic is a common feature in such situations. Within Saudi society, the concept of a second wife carries significant stigma, particularly from the perspective of the first wife. In the eyes of the first wife, the second wife is often labeled as a "thief" or a "home wrecker." This judgment arises from the belief that the second wife has essentially taken a man away from his first wife and disrupted the family structure. In this film, Ashtar represents the characterization of a second wife. Ashtar's role encapsulates the complexities and conflicts that can arise in such polygamous arrangements and sheds light on the social dynamics and judgments surrounding the second wife, offering a glimpse into the nuanced perspectives within Saudi society.

5.2.1.9 Corrupt Women

The concept of corrupt women revolves around societal shame and condemnation directed at individuals perceived to engage in unacceptable social, moral, or religious behavior. *In Amra and the Second Marriage*, this stereotype is embodied by the character Hamidah, who is portrayed as a woman who displays immoral conduct, by not following rules and social norms of Saudi society. Her character is shown to be engaged in behaviors deemed as transgressive in Saudi culture. She is shown taking drugs, maintaining a boyfriend outside of a formal marriage, and using inappropriate language, all of which collectively contribute to her portrayal as "corrupt." However, it is essential to emphasize that in the broader context of Saudi culture, individuals who fit the description of "corrupt women" are indeed rare. Saudi society places a significant emphasis on traditional values, social conformity, and adherence to religious principles. While there may be exceptions and individuals who do not conform to societal norms, they typically represent a small minority and are not reflective of the prevailing standards within Saudi culture.

5.2.1.10 Religious Women

Religious women follow and respect religious norms and values. At the beginning of *Amra and the Second Marriage*, Amra prays for her husband and asks God to protect him from all other women. She wears a hijab when she goes out of her home and seeks advice from a religious man, Shikh, as well as quoting words from the Quran when she feels hopeless. The stereotype of religious women in Saudi culture is primarily based on the type of clothing worn outside the home, their way of talking, and their behavior when interacting with others inside of their home. Religious women do not show their beauty to strangers or unrelated males and pray regularly and ask God for guidance. The portrayal of religious women in the film closely mirrors the reality of Saudi culture. The depiction of Amra aligns with the values and practices commonly associated with devout women in Saudi Arabia, emphasizing the significance of faith, modesty, and spirituality in their lives.

This study has found that the digital Saudi film *Amra and the Second Marriage* represented women in the form of ten different complex stereotypes. The finding that Saudi women were represented as 'traditional women' is consistent with Kharroub and Weaver (2014), whose study concerning the depiction of Arabic women in TV series found that Saudi female characters tend to be traditional women who stay home and are homemakers. However, other stereotypes of Saudi women portrayed in this film have been absent in previous studies,

including: (1) 'negative women'; (2) 'feminist women'; (3) 'domineering women'; (4) 'gossiping women'; (5) 'modern women'; (6) 'women with disabilities'; (7) 'second wives'; (8) 'corrupt women'; and (9) 'religious women'. The current study found that most of these female stereotypes represented in digital Saudi films did not reflect the reality of Saudi culture, apart from 'gossiping women' and 'religious women'.

Despite using the mixed method approach, this study faced several limitations. Firstly, the sample of this study was focused on only one film. As there are few existing studies investigating the representation of women in Saudi films, it would be beneficial if future studies further examined these stereotypes by investigating several digital Saudi films, to acquire a broader understanding of the portrayal of Saudi women in such films. Secondly, the present study did not make a comparative study regarding gender as represented in Saudi films. Future studies could therefore compare several films to shed light on the differences between gender roles and how they reflect Saudi culture.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study has examined the multifaceted representation of female stereotypes within the cinematic context of *Amra and the Second Marriage*. It highlighted the associations between cinematic depictions and the socio-cultural realities of Saudi society. The film portrayed a diverse spectrum of female characterizations including traditional, feminist, controlling, gossiping, modern, and religious stereotypes. These portrayals have reflected the complex dynamics of societal transformations, evolving norms, and the persistence of historical traditions. Saudi society is undergoing a period of profound transformation, wherein women are embracing a broad spectrum of roles and are transcending the confines of traditional stereotypes. The present study has highlighted the influential role of the film industry as a mirror to societal attitudes, capable of both reinforcing and challenging established stereotypes.

This study recommends that future studies investigate the perceptions of audiences regarding gender representation in Saudi films in more depth by applying the interview and/or focus group methods. Furthermore, as it is crucial to improve the status of women in Saudi society, it would be advantageous to undertake a study to increase knowledge of the impact on Saudi society of gender representation, particularly that of women in Saudi films.

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