

# The Journalistic Representations of Saudi Women in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): A Corpus Critical Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract

This paper is a corpus critical discourse analysis of the journalistic representations of Saudi women as they appear in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies, 2008). It follows a sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2008) to explore the thematic foci discussing issues related to Saudi women and to discuss the discursive strategies implemented to propagate such issues. The study has reached four findings. First, the thematic foci related to Saudi women are textually and referentially coherent as they were meant to provide a grand narrative underlying a specific context model. Second, Saudi women are negatively represented as no social roles are ascribed to them throughout the corpus. Third, different social actors are also represented alongside Saudi women to put them in a wider socio-cultural context to aggravate their problems. Finally, the most effective discursive strategies which mediated the running context model included victimization, categorization, stereotyping, normalization, and exaggeration.

**Keywords:** socio-cognitive, discursive strategies, Saudi women, CDA, COCA, corpus

## 1. Introduction

Language is a social phenomenon mostly studied in social, historical, political and cultural contexts. Context simply refers to the background of some state of affairs expressed by a discourse type whose structure, style and content are influenced accordingly. Discourse is both constituent and constitutive of its context, and the properties of a context can be inferred from variation in discourse (van Dijk, 2008, p. 4). Discourse in general and journalistic discourse in particular shapes the public opinion, frames common ideologies and records social practices at a given time. That is, news report schemata in the press have a special context that places events in their political, social or historical contexts (van Dijk, 1988).

Literature shows that Saudi society has been described as a sexist country mostly dominated by patriarchal values. Recently, Saudi women witnessed an unprecedented wave of changes markedly represented by some initiatives for empowering women such as securing their employability and allowing them to drive publicly. However, the discourse addressing issues related to Saudi women did not receive proper attention in the field of critical discourse studies. And since any social phenomenon cannot be explored in isolation as it is influenced by different contexts, the study seeks to conduct a corpus critical discourse analysis of the journalistic discourse propagating the reasons which render Saudi women as a focus on interest in the news section in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). It seeks to answer three questions: (a) what are the various co-referential keywords of Saudi women in COCA? (b) What are the thematic foci related to Saudi women and their co-referential keywords? (c) What are the discursive strategies employed in addressing such themes?

To answer these questions, the study adopts a sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2008) as a methodological framework which draws on the idea that discourse participants develop '*context models*' based on specific sociocultural knowledge which has psychological basis. Context is decoded with reference to linguistic, social

and cognitive aspects of discourse which is governed by a set of discursive strategies. The basic approach adopted in this study combines both quantitative (COCA-based) and qualitative methods (socio-cognitive approach). Hence, the significance of this study is that it explores the way journalistic discourse could mediate a specific context model, through discursive strategies, regarding the much-debated sociopolitical shifts underlying gender policies and power relations in Saudi Arabia.

The rest of the paper is divided into five sections. Section (2) provides a review of related studies addressing women-related issues in the Saudi context. Section (3) discusses the theoretical framework of study which is drawn from critical discourse analysis (CDA) and van Dijk's sociocognitive approach (2008). Section (4) discusses the study methodology in terms of data compilation and the procedure of analysis. Section (5) analyzes the compiled data. Section (6) lists the findings of the study and relates them to the study questions.

## 2. Literature Review

Although Saudi Arabia has taken major steps to change the stereotypical image of Saudi women in the last few years, few linguistic studies have documented and analyzed the discourse addressing women-related issues. Most of these studies have taken up a wider linguistic perspective as they explored the drastic changes in Arab media discourse in relation to taboos such as religion, governance, and gender (Lahlali, 2011), the representation of women in Arab media (Lida & Avoine, 2016; Obeidat, 2002; Sakr, 2002), the representation of Islam and Muslims in electronic forums (Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016), and the image of Arabs in the American press (Shousha, 2010).

A survey of the literature of corpus critical discourse studies (CDS for short) addressing gender issues, especially those related to women, in the Saudi context shows that few studies were conducted in this regard. Most of these studies focused on specific issues such as the ban on women driving (Alenazy, 2017; Aljarallah, 2017; Altoaimy, 2018), the representation of gender, social power, identity options and cultural elements in EFL textbooks in Saudi Arabia (Al Jumiah, 2016; Aljuaythin, 2018; Alshammri, 2017; Sulaimani, 2017), women-related posts on Saudi blogs (Al Maghlouth, 2017), and more specifically the representation of Saudi women in the British newspapers (Bashatah, 2017) and the Saudi newspapers (Al Hejin, 2012; Kurdi, 2014). In what follows, we report on the key findings of the studies which addressed the different topics related to Saudi women in journalistic discourse.

Al Hejin (2012) investigated the representations of Muslim women in BBC News and Arab News (2001–2007) from a critical discourse perspective. The two newspapers represented contrastive emic and etic perspectives over the image of Muslim women. The study focused on four semantic macrostructures: war, conflict and violence, crime, religious spectrum and hijab. Data analysis drew on different approaches including dialectical-relational, sociocognitive, and socio-semantic approaches. Findings showed that the representations of Muslim women in the two news sources are markedly problematic. The BBC news was much more concerned with the semantic macrostructures of conflict and crime, while the Arab News focused on Muslim women's achievements in different areas. The hijab discourse was more prominent in the BBC News, and it was realized through negative prosody.

Bashatah (2017) explored the representation of Saudi women in four British newspapers—liberal and conservative—published between 2005–2013, using a model of news framing proposed by Entman (1993). The study was limited to two thematic foci, protests against driving ban and the 2012 London Olympics, based on five frames: conflict, human interest, morality, economy and attribution of responsibility as represented in both written texts and photographs. Findings revealed that the most dominating frames are conflict and human interest. Saudi women were negatively portrayed, thereby complying with the British ideological stance toward Muslim women and Orientalism. Photographs were generally unrelated to the raised topics. The four newspapers were reported to have different foci regarding the same issues which would affect identity construction, ideology establishment, and decision making.

Based on this literature review, it could be argued that no study conducted a comprehensive corpus-based thematic analysis of the issues related to Saudi women. Most of the studies reviewed in this section were much concerned with specific themes identified in advance. Furthermore, COCA has never been explored in terms of how the US newspapers evaluate gender and power relations in Saudi Arabia.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the theoretical framework of the present study. It first provides an overview of the position of women in Saudi Arabia. Second, it explains the approach of corpus-based CDA. Finally, it explains the tenets of sociocognitive approach (van Dijk, 2008).

### 3.1 Women in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is commonly perceived as the most conservative Arab Islamic country adhering to the Wahhabi doctrine of Islam. Wahhabism is a religious movement whose teachings and interpretations of Islam controlled all aspects of life in Saudi Arabia for decades, and have been critically recontextualized in meta-Wahhabi discourses (Salama, 2011a). This movement triggered many debates over its tenets. For instance, it was criticized for enshrining intolerant perspectives toward non-Muslims (Beydoun, 2011), and for being a substitute for Islam (Oliver, 2003). Contrarily, it is evaluated as a movement of religious reform (Curtis, 2010). Religious teachings and traditions were also perceived as impediments to Saudi women who were even marginalized.

Saudi Arabia was categorized as a '*patriarchal belt society*' due to its state-sponsored sex segregation policy (Curtis, 2010). Coeducation is forbidden as boys and girls used to have separate schools and colleges, and the ultimate goal of women education is to equip her with a set of skills to be excellent wives and mothers (Rajkhan, 2014). Personnel in all sectors used to work in different buildings even if they belong to the same institution. The guardianship system banned women to travel, marry, work, or even access healthcare without obtaining permission from their guardians (Hamdan, 2005). Furthermore, the ban women's driving was internationally perceived as an incarnation of women's suffering. The driving ban was officially announced after the Gulf war in 1990. In June 2018, Saudi women were granted the right to drive their cars. Saudi authorities once faced pressure from international bodies to change its restrictive policy toward women in the area of sports. For instance, the International Olympic Committee threatened to ban Saudi Arabia from participating in the Olympics of 2012 unless they allow women to participate.

In economics, Saudi Arabia sought to find new revenues due to decreasing oil prices. Saudization, which required releasing a large number of foreign workers, was the key to do so. Therefore, women were gradually given the right to work since 2011. However, their representation in the labor force was not equal to men (Hamdan, 2005). The introduction of Vision 2030 by the new political regime led by King Salman Ibn Abdulaziz was meant to diversify the oil-dependent economic policy adopted by the state. This vision is expected to provide more chances for women to take up leadership positions, participate in all work sectors, appear in the public, and drive their cars.

### 3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse simply refers to spoken and written language used in a social context for communication. It is exclusionary in nature as it projects a specific perspective and excludes others (Mills, 1997). Also, it is ideological as it is shaped by the system of beliefs, principles, habits and knowledge in a group or a society (van Dijk, 2001; Wodak, 2009). Any ideological stance is built around social cognitions which refer to 'the beliefs or social representations that they [people] share with others of their groups or community' (van Dijk, 2009, p. 78). Discourse links social cognition to social actions whose interpretation requires diverse linguistic, social, and cognitive realizations. Gee (2014) identifies two paths of discourse analysis (DA) research: descriptive and critical. Descriptive DA describes language to understand the meanings communicated through it without acting upon it. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is prototypically conducted through three stages: description, explanation and interpretation, thereby relating discourse to context and even to cognition which mediates between discourse structures and social structures. It "studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 466).

The field critical discourse studies (CDS) takes at its core the analysis of the content and structure of discourse which is perceived as a social practice (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2001). It deals with "opaque and transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control" (Wodak, 2009, pp. 208–209). Understanding discourse as a social practice implies "a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s), and social structure(s) which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). Wodak (2009) and van Dijk (2009) argue that the essence of CDS is the exploration of the linguistic structures and semantic forms which either express, legitimize or hide power relations, ideologies, and social injustice.

From a methodological perspective, various critiques have been levelled at critical approaches to discourse analysis. CDS are claimed to be not free of subjectivity regarding the selection and analysis of data (Magalhaes, 2006; Oprin, 2005; Stubbs, 1997). In other words, they are entrenched in qualitative analysis (Flowerdew, 2012) which is usually based on small data (Clark, 2007). They are also reported to draw on many theories in language and society which are not clearly defined (Breeze, 2011). Furthermore, CDS are criticized for being "unclear about its exact preferences for a particular social theory" (Slembrouck, 2001, pp. 40–41). Finally, they are

charged with lacking scholarly rigor and systematicity (Widdowson, 1998). One claimed solution to many of these problems is integrating corpus methods with CDS (Baker & McEnery, 2015; Partington, 2006; Stubbs, 1997; Toolan, 1997).

### 3.2 van Dijk's Sociocognitive Approach

van Dijk's (2008) sociocognitive approach draws on the theory of social representation (Moscovici, 2000). It is mainly a critique of the systemic functional linguistic approach of context, evaluating the whole approach as being 'a monodisciplinary enterprise, without much input from the other social sciences' (van Dijk, 2008, p. 36). This approach is a multidisciplinary, integrated account of context grounded on the idea that the way discourse participants define the systematically relative properties of the communicative situation influencing the structures of text and talk. It seeks to discover the representations involved in discourse processing in terms of production and comprehension, taking into consideration the complex nature of discourse contexts. van Dijk (2008) defines context as subjective, participant constructs (or mental models) of communicative situations using unique discourse, socially based on specific experiences and cultural schemas and categories which control human's actions in a current situation. These cultural categories include participants, time, place, action, gender, knowledge, attitude, ideology and goals. van Dijk (2008) offers two notions of context: inclusive (context-I) and exclusive (context-E). Context-I refers to a subjective mental model of communicative episode which involves discourse and its relevant environment (e.g., participants, discourse, knowledge, etc.), while context-E does not consider discourse, but it simply refers only to the communicative situation or environment which influences discourse.

Methodologically, the approach is three-fold as it explores context from linguistic, social and cognitive perspectives which are motivated by a set of discursive strategies. On the linguistic level, it goes beyond semantics to discourse pragmatics with special reference to appropriacy conditions, and to stylistics with reference to variations in style, genre and register. The ideological structures projected through the link between social practices and discourse are realized through linguistic forms which "signal pragmatic properties of a communicative event, such as the intention, current mood or emotions of speakers, their perspective on events talked about, opinions about co-participants" (van Dijk, 2009, p. 106). van Dijk (2001, p. 14) maintains that ideological structures of a group or a society include membership devices (e.g., gender, appearance, etc.), actions, aims, norms and values, position, and resources. On the social level, it focuses on the social variables which cause participants to influence discourse structures during interaction. It considers the social context of discourse and the social actors producing or receiving this discourse. In this regard, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) argue that:

[d]iscourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned—it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects—that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social class, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities... (p. 258)

Contexts are regarded as 'context models', i.e., they are subjective representations of communicative situations. A context model is a reconstruction of a situation model which, being spatiotemporally limited, usually involves properties irrelevant to the context model. Such context models represent the relevant properties of the communicative environment which are largely planned, and control discourse production and comprehension. Moreover, they are dynamic and ongoingly updated in parallel with interaction. This is so on account of the fact that a pragmatic context model "controls discourse processing and adapts discourse to the social environment towards the (rhetorical) fulfilment of an overall communicative purpose" (Salama, 2011b, p. 107). The cognitive analysis of texts targets the topics addressed in discourse as they represent the macro-propositions of text representation and the mental model of the discourse producer or recipient. Context reflects on the implications and implicature of different communicative acts based on shared knowledge relevant to the current context. Equally important, presuppositions which suggest that a proposition is false or controversial are regarded. Texts are tested for having referential coherence providing that they contain mental models rendering sentences as sequentially coherent. Moreover, connotations of words are projected to underlie religious, social, economic, or political perspectives. Finally, the approach highlights that ideological stances maintained throughout texts are linguistically realized, but discursively motivated. Discursive practices refer to all that the discourse producer uses to maximize the impact of his/her message. Such practices are part of the sociocultural knowledge and are explained regarding the wider social context.

#### 4. Methodology

This section offers an overview of the data and rationale behind its selection, and the procedure of data analysis.

##### 4.1 Data

COCA (Davies, 2008) is the Corpus of Contemporary American English which includes 560 million words in 220,225 texts collected between 1990 and 2017. The rationale behind selecting COCA is that it is the most-widely used, freely-available corpus of American English. It includes different sections representing different types of discourse, e.g., spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. Since the present study focuses on the journalistic representations of Saudi women, data is limited to the news section which includes around 114 million words collected from 10 American newspapers. The corpus has not been updated since 2017, and it is available online at <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>.

##### 4.2 Procedure

van Dijk's sociocognitive approach (2008) offers a comprehensive processing of how gender-based ideologies and power relations are outlined, legitimized and established in discourse by means of discursive strategies. It links the linguistic, social and cognitive dimensions of discourse which is affected by the way social actors understand and interpret such ideologies and relations. Corpus methods are integrated with the approach to help with the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data.

The analysis includes four steps. First, the COCA is investigated for the sake of deciding on the co-referential keywords of Saudi women. This step is followed by quantitative analysis to calculate the frequency of each co-referential keyword which is marked in capital letters. Second, based on the extended context (Context-I) of each keyword, the concordance lines are grouped into specific thematic foci. Concordance lines discussing one common theme are then grouped to test their referential coherence and sequence of thought. Third, the numbers of concordance lines are given as they appear in COCA in addition to the year in which each article was published, e.g., [2/2013]. If two concordance lines share the same number and year of publication, the keyword is also added, e.g., [2/2013 – SAUDI WOMAN]. For each group of concordance lines, Context-E (e.g., social, political, cultural, etc.) would be explained in relation to the social actors and their roles which form an interactional episode. In so doing, the context model regarding each thematic focus is clarified. Finally, concordance lines are analyzed on the linguistic, social and cognitive levels as described in section (3.2). Both the social and cognitive analysis of the texts would help in determining the discursive strategies or practices (mental model) used by the text producer to communicate specific images of Saudi women to the text consumer to interpret the underlying ideological structures and power relations.

#### 5. Data Analysis

This section analyzes the data collected from the news section in COCA using quantitative (corpus as a reference) and qualitative (van Dijk's sociocognitive approach) methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the journalistic representations of Saudi women.

##### 5.1 Quantitative Analysis

After reading into the news section of COCA regarding Saudi women issues, it is found that SAUDI WOMEN is the most frequent keyword. Other co-referential keywords include SAUDI WOMAN, SAUDI GIRL, and WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA (see Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency of SAUDI WOMEN and its co-referential keywords in the news section in COCA

Co-referential Keywords	Frequency
SAUDI WOMEN	26
SAUDI WOMAN	6
WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA	4
SAUDI GIRL	3

The extended context of each concordance line is explored to decide on its thematic focus propagating views and stances about Saudi women between 1990 and 2017. Then these lines are thematically clustered, noting that some lines include more than one thematic focus. Basically, four themes were identified: gender discrimination, dress code, male guardianship, and ban on car driving. Table 2 shows the frequency of concordance lines incorporating co-referential keywords as distributed over the four themes.

Table 2. Key themes related to Saudi women in the news sections in COCA

No.	Key themes	SAUDI WOMEN	SAUDI WOMAN	WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA	SAUDI GIRL	Freq.
1	Gender discrimination	7	4	1	2	14
2	Dress code	9	1	2	1	13
3	Male guardianship	6	-	1	-	7
4	Ban on car driving	6	1	-	-	7
Total						41

To explore how ideological structures and power relations are organized and projected in the US journalistic discourse, the following subsection conducts a qualitative analysis of the thematic foci listed in Table 2.

## 5.2 Qualitative Analysis

### 5.2.1 Gender Discrimination

Based on the literature, Saudi Arabia seems to have a long history of gender discriminative policies which are biased to males (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Alomair, 2015; Rajkhan, 2014). These policies are generally ascribed to the conservative atmosphere inspired by strict religious and tribal values and cultural barriers. The theme of gender discrimination is referred to in (14) concordance lines which are shown below. They cover the period from 1990 to 2013.

Line [22/2005]

This administration couldn't give a thin dime for beaten **Saudi women** or oppressed Chinese dissidents or North Korean freedom fighters

Line [24/2004]

Many **Saudi women** consider these major steps in a country where women are not allowed to drive

Line [30/2001]

# **Saudi women** lead restrictive lives. Amnesty International, the human rights group, describes the

Line [42/1990]

I realized, beyond any analysis of equality, discrimination, stereotype, that these **Saudi women** were engaging.

Line [46/1990]

be able to enjoy the " traditional safety valves for soldiers. " And " **Saudi women** are not allowed to go to movie theaters or to drive cars. Saudi

Line [47/1990]

. **Saudi women** are hidden behind layers of black veils. Fraternizing between men and women outside

Line [49/1990]

a word to the cruel injustice of these conditions for **Saudi women**. It's outrageous that we claim to be defending against tyranny

Line [3/2013]

This delightful debut feature by a **Saudi woman** named Haifaa Al-Mansour uses a self-propelled vehicle as a metaphor for freedom

Line [7/2007]

: her counterpart's chair a privilege no **Saudi woman** can have because women can not become legislators.

Line [15/1990]

the geometric designs on the rugs and walls. I haven't yet seen a **Saudi woman**. # We step onto the flight line -

Line [16/1990]

Finally one **Saudi woman** walks by wearing a black veil over her entire face. The Saudi men

Line [24/1990]

but the **women in Saudi Arabia** are so oppressed that our boys will not be able to enjoy the " traditional

Line [2/2013]

" Wadjda. " Grade: B. PG. 98 min. An enterprising **Saudi girl** signs on for her school's Koran recitation competition. Arbor.

Line [3/2013]

Wadjda' An irrepressible 10-year-old Saudi girl (Waad Mohammed) enters a school contest for memorizing the Quran

The cotext of the co-referential keywords marking this theme shows the use of expressions with negative connotations, e.g., *'beaten'*, *'restrictive lives'*, *'discrimination'*, *'stereotype'*, *'are not allowed to'*, *'hidden'*, *'cruel injustice'* and *'oppressed'*. These lines are referentially coherent as they reflect some aspects of inequality and injustice that Saudi women experience. The thematic focus of gender discrimination are mediated through a group of sub-themes including gender segregation in the workplace, travel without permission, appearance in public, ban on participation in elections, ban on pursuing higher education, stereotyping of education, ban on going to movie theaters, inequality in job opportunities, and lack of political representation. No woman is called by her name except in lines [2/2013 – SAUDI GIRL], [3/2013 – SAUDI GIRL] and [3/2013 – SAUDI WOMAN]. Furthermore, they are not assigned specific social roles except in line [7/2007]. All these notions assist in understanding the mental model governing the ideological stance of text producers who seek to highlight unequal gender-based power relations in the Saudi context.

The social actors differ across lines, but most of them focus on Saudi women. The social actor in line [22/2005] is the US Bush-led administration which is criticized for being passive toward *'beaten Saudi women'*. Line [24/2004] highlights the opposing social roles of Saudi women, and Saudi government and Crown Prince Abdullah who allows women to join syndicates and national commissions. But these women are simultaneously deprived of other rights such as driving, travelling and participating in elections. The social actor in line [42/1990] is a news reporter telling a story about her Saudi friendly neighbors, while acknowledging their conservatism and commitment to Saudi dress code. The social actors in line [47/1990] are Saudi women and men who are not allowed to fraternize. Line [49/1990] focuses on the Saudi government who does not allow women to have equal governmental representation. In lines [3/2013 – SAUDI WOMAN], [3/2013 – SAUDI GIRL] and [2/2013 – SAUDI GIRL], the social actor is a Saudi girl participating in a school contest for memorizing the Quran. Line [7/2007] holds a comparison between Nancy Pelosi, the first US House Speaker, and Saudi women who are deprived of their right to be legislators and to be politically represented. The social actor in line [15/1990] is US soldiers (GIs) during the Gulf War who complain of leading a cruel life without Saudi women around. In the Same context, line [16/1990] represents two images of women: a female US reporter receiving orders during the Gulf War, and *'one'* Saudi woman wearing a black veil merely walking around. The Social actor in line [24/1990] is GIs participating in the Gulf War and women in Saudi Arabia who are described as *'traditional safety valves for soldiers'*.

The generic term 'Saudi women' is intended to generalize the repercussions of oppressing gender-biased policies. The social-actor representation of Saudi women as politicians, physicians, journalists, etc. is conspicuously absent in the corpus. One of the exceptions of Saudi women who are called by their names occurs with a young girl living in the US; and she is represented as participating in a competition for memorizing the Quran only to gain a prize to buy a bicycle described (see lines [3/2013 – SAUDI GIRL] and [3/2013 – SAUDI WOMAN]). The bicycle, metaphorically standing for the girls' aspirations and dreams, is described as being *'self-propelled'* which asserts the idea of autonomy. Such description presupposes that Saudi women are physically, mentally and professionally adept to pursue activities like men. In line [2/2013], the girl is described as *'enterprising'* which denotes willingness to try something unusual. One more note on the subtle phrasing of keywords is that SAUDI is used as a pre-modifier in most of the concordance lines in reference to Saudi female nationals; however, the only case which referred to women as sexual objects, the keyword WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA is used. This subtle phrasing of keywords aims at generalizing the issue as if all women in Saudi Arabia are perceived and treated alike.

The ideological structures and power relations characteristic of the Saudi society, with special reference to the position of women, are motivated by different discursive practices. The discursive strategy of exaggeration sought to maximize the problems of Saudi women. Lines [3/2013 – SAUDI GIRL] and [3/2013 – SAUDI WOMAN] project different sports contests which many European girls join, but the only competition that a Saudi girl seems to be allowed to join is a school Quran competition. The whole narrative is described as being a *'debut'*, denoting the first performance in public. Furthermore, in line [22/2005], Saudi women are represented as being equal to *'Chinese dissidents'*, *'North Korean freedom fighters'*, and *'the slaughtered masses in Darfur or Rwanda'*. This strategy of membership functions as an indirect allusion to the necessity for taking considerable steps towards liberating Saudi women. Finally, the strategy of normalization renders the Saudi government-sponsored *'major steps'* towards women empowerment as something normal. For instance, in line [24/2004], although Saudi women are given specific rights, many other rights are still absent.



The discursive strategy of victimization is manipulated to highlight the bad conditions of Saudi women. Expressions such as *'right'* and *'not allowed to'* aggravate the situation as they presuppose that no changes are expected. Though originated in the environment of a film, line [24/1990] put models of women leading free lives in the background, while a Saudi girl is foregrounded as she participates in a contest for memorizing the Quran. In line [30/2001], the strategy of categorization is explicit as Muslim women are categorized based on their political doctrine, secular or Islamic. For instance, women in Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia *'fare better'* than Saudi women who *'lead restrictive lives'*. In line [42/1990], gender discrimination is communicated through apophasis where the text producer alludes to a certain issue by either denying it, or denying that it should be mentioned as it highlights issues of *'equality, discrimination, and stereotype'*. Equally important, the discursive strategy of stereotyping aims at communicating a fixed, and even fossilized, image of specific behavior or style due to religious, social, cultural and political reasons. For instance, in lines [46/1990], [47/1990], and [49/1990], almost all women wear black veils; they cannot drive, vote, or go to theaters.

These keyword-based thematic foci and discursive strategies can be interpreted against a context model that pertains to the Saudi society itself. The US press sought to communicate a specific context model regarding the theme of gender discrimination represented through different subthemes. These subthemes form a group of restrictions regarding car driving, wearing trousers, appearing in public, participating in contests, having political positions, having equal jobs opportunities, and fraternizing with men.

### 5.2.2 Dress Code

The dress code in Saudi Arabia requires women to wear clothes that are not see-through or tight-fitting, and it is enforced by law (Abu Hwajj, 2012; Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Alomair, 2015). It is not "a simple fashion accessory, but is a representation of religion and culture. Many people outside of Islam have come to believe that Muslim women are being forced into wearing veils by a predominantly patriarchal society" (Slininger, 2014, p. 68). In COCA, the theme of dress code comes second as it is referred to in twelve concordance lines which cover articles published between 1991 and 2017. These concordance lines are listed below.

Line [1/2017]

she did not wear a head covering, as is required for Saudi women but not for western women visiting the kingdom.

Line [13/2007]

The Sultanah abaya shop in downtown Riyadh caters to young Saudi women with elaborate bead work on the shapeless black robes

Line [21/2005]

Arabia treats its women one barely noticeable notch above that of the brutal Taliban? Saudi women can not vote.

Line [24/2004]

. # Many Saudi women consider these major steps in a country where women are not allowed to drive

Line [36/1993]

our " study group " women were difficult to distinguish from Saudi women shopping in the souk. One of our men lost track of his veiled

Line [37/1993]

The woman he had touched was not his wife. # While the Saudi women were dressed in black, their husbands wore white robes

Line [38/1992]

or even rape, of infants, septuagenarians, Saudi women in chadors like tents and nuns of all ages?

Line [41/1990]

apart from men other than their husbands. Saudi women do not drive, and so, often with three and four small children

Line [45/1990]

another feature on an outdoor camel market or the plight of veiled Saudi women in an ultraconservative society.

Line [16/1990]

a 10 o'clock breakfast. Finally one Saudi woman walks by wearing a black veil over her entire face. The Saudi men

Line [19/1991]

Women in Saudi Arabia and other conservative Arab countries still wear veils in public. The veil usually is

Line [24/1991]



according to the article, but the **women in Saudi Arabia** are so oppressed that our boys will not be able to enjoy the "traditional

Line [1/2017]

likely one inspiration behind the hijab emoji, along with the efforts of a 15-year-old **Saudi girl**, Rayouf Alhamedhi.

The texts propagating the theme of dress code in Saudi Arabia are generally built around the perceptions of 'hijab/veil'. There are also references to other clothes such as 'abaya', 'cloak', 'robe', 'head covering', 'scarves', and 'chadors'. The above lines approach the Saudi dress code through different expressions which are mostly negative and even denigrating, including 'shapeless black robes', 'chadors like tents', 'sackcloth', and 'pieces of black cloth'. The context of line [1/2017 – SAUDI WOMEN] approaches head-covering as a 'requirement' which presupposes that it is legally-enforced. The line further draws a comparison between US first ladies visiting Saudi Arabia: Melania Trump, Michelle Obama, and Laura Bush. While Melania did not wear a head covering, Michelle and Laura did. This could be marked as a change of the US attitude toward the kingdom. In line [13/2017], the context propagates a rebellion against traditional dress code. It is about 'abaya shop' in Riyadh offering 'elaborate bead work' on cloaks. The shop is further described as 'a perfect example of the emerging Saudi Arabia'. Though the text producer claims such a step to be a kind of social change, he/she claims that this change is not permanent and even superficial since 'no pictures are allowed'. The context in line [21/2005] evaluates Saudi Arabia in relation to the 9/11 events as most of the attackers are reported to be Saudis. The dress code is not a matter of choice as women who challenge such code would be 'arrested and jailed indefinitely and beaten and even killed'.

The Saudi authorities in line [24/2004] are presented as being self-contradicting. This line represents the Saudi official measures to empower women, but simultaneously they impose restrictions on the dress code. The tone of lines [36/1993] and [37/1993] is even humorous and it plays on women's unified dress code as a Saudi man mistakes his wife for another. Even female tourists visiting Saudi Arabia have to abide by such dress code. In line [38/1992], the context is an inquiry regarding the claim that 'women invite unwelcome attention through provocative dress'. The text producer has a counterclaim as infants, old women and veiled women may be subject to harassment and rape. Line [41/1990] denies the cultural component of the dress code and confines it to religious teachings. It highlights the strict rules of Islam which forbid women to 'go in public without covering their faces' even if they are in foreign countries.

In line [16/1990], two women are represented: a US news reporter receiving orders to take her chemical gear and go to the restaurant and anonymous Saudi women simply described as 'wearing a black veil'. Line [19/1991] represents a comparison between non-conservative and conservative Arab countries regarding the dress code of women. Saudi Arabia is represented as a prototypically conservative country where 'veil' is perceived as symbolic of conservatism. The context of line [24/1991] is the Gulf War with special reference to the difficulties GI soldiers had due to bad weather and austere lifestyle. Saudi women are described as being 'oppressed', and 'hidden in layers of black veils', and therefore GI soldiers are deprived of their 'traditional safety valves'. Line [1/2017 – SAUDI GIRL] shows that wearing hijab is culturally and socially well-established in the minds of Saudi young girls. It reports a 15-year old Saudi girl seeking to add a 'hijab emoji' to mobile applications. The line implies that technology and modernity is not a challenge for Islamic teachings.

The group of concordance lines grouped under the theme of dress code involved different social actors. The main social actor in line [1/2017 – SAUDI WOMEN] is Melania Trump in her first visit to Saudi Arabia. She has been foregrounded in terms of a dress code typical of American ladies. However, the absence of a head covering is focalized to mark political attitudes. The social actors in line [21/2005] are Saudi women whose rights are being officially overlooked, and who are caused to be submissive to a patriarchal society which may sentence them to death if they are not 'covered from head to toe in black sackcloth'. In line [24/2004] the key social actors are Saudi decision-makers who granted Saudi women a part of their rights while overlooking other rights such as appearing in public unless they are 'being covered'. The social actors foregrounded in lines [36/1993] and [37/1993] are female tourists visiting Saudi Arabia. Their way to be welcomed there is to be dressed like Saudi women who are all 'masked and veiled' and 'dressed in black'.

Saudi women in line [38/1992] are juxtaposed to other people, including 'infants, septuagenarians...and nuns' who are susceptible to harassment and even rape though their clothes are not provocative. Even when in a foreign country such as the United States as shown in line [41/1990], Saudi women, restricted by 'the rules of their Muslim religion', cannot 'go out in public without covering their faces'. Lines [45/1990] and [19/1990] represent veiled Saudi women as a plight for GI soldiers during the Gulf War as those soldiers expect luxurious life similar to that of their country. The social actors in line [16/1990] are two females who are overtly different in many aspects. The first is a US reporter, Sergeant Samuelson, covering the news of the Gulf War, while the

second is a Saudi woman described simply as *'wearing a black veil over her entire face'*. Though Saudi women are the key social actor in line [19/1991], they are compared to other Arab women who are free to wear gowns, scarves and dresses.

The ideological stances underlying the theme of dress code of Saudi women are communicated through different discursive strategies, the most important of which is stereotyping. In lines [19/1991], [16/1990], [13/2007] and [45/1990], Saudi Arabia is represented as restricting variations in the Saudi dress code of which *'black veil'* and cloaks are the two stereotypical pieces of clothes that *'most wear when outside'*. In lines [36/1993] and [37/1993], once female tourists visiting Saudi Arabia are *'masked and veiled'*, they become so *'difficult to distinguish from Saudi women'*. Moreover, in line [1/2017], stereotyping is mediated through technologically-aided techniques. Though the girl represented in the line is fifteen years old, she submits a proposal for adding a hijab emoji into smart applications. This emoji becomes typical of Saudi women. In such context, hijab is juxtaposed to beard to complete the typical image of Muslims as perceived by the Western culture.

Categorization is another discursive strategy used by text producers to highlight different models of women. Line [1/2017 – SAUDI WOMEN] represents two categories of women regarding commitment to head covering. The first category involves three US first ladies including Melania Trump, Michelle Obama and Laura Bush, while the second category involves Saudi women. According to the context, head covering is *'required'* for Saudi women, but *'not for western women visiting the kingdom'*. The context of line [16/1990] is the Gulf War as two models of women are represented. The first is a female US reporter pursuing her work, while the second is a Saudi female passerby simply described as *'wearing a black veil over her entire face'*. Such sufferings rendered Saudi women as victimized. In line [21/2005], breaking the *'fashion code'* would cause women to be *'arrested and jailed indefinitely and beaten and even killed'*. In line [24/1991], Saudi women are described as being *'so oppressed'*. The strategy of victimization is further complicated in line [41/1990]. Saudi women in America, in addition to feeling homesick and imprisoned in small apartments, they cannot go out in public without covering their faces due to the *'strict'* rules of Muslim religion. Therefore, offering a cloak with *'elaborate bead work'* is exaggeratedly represented as a kind of *'rebellion'* against the country's conservatism. Moreover, the salient discursive strategy in line [38/1992] is counter-argumentation which is meant to refute the belief that *'women invite unwelcome attention through provocative dress'* as all women and even infants are prone to harassment and even rape.

All these discursive strategies underlying the theme of dress code interpret the context model governing the journalistic representations of this theme. Saudi Arabia is described as being an ultra-conservative society which legally and socially imposes a specific dress code that women must follow. Defying such a code is perceived as a form of rebellion which is criminalized. This policy even applies to Saudi women in other foreign countries. Moreover, females visiting Saudi Arabia are invited to abide by the Saudi dress code as an indicator of showing respect towards the country's customs and traditions.

### 5.2.3 Male Guardianship

Though not codified in law, Saudi women are required to get permission of a male relative known as *'legal guardian'* to pursue many activities such as marriage, travelling for a scholarship, and getting a job. This guardianship is rooted in cultural customs and is legally supported (Aldosari, 2017; Alhussein, 2014; Rajkhan, 2014). The theme of male guardianship comes third with regard to the frequency of references. It is indicated in 7 concordance lines which cover articles published between 1990 and 2011. These concordance lines are listed below.

Line [21/2005]

: barely noticeable notch above that of the brutal Taliban? Saudi women can not vote. They are not allowed to drive. They can not

Line [24/2004]

including the setting up of women-only factories. # Many Saudi women consider these major steps in a country where women are not allowed to drive

Line [31/2001]

the human rights group, describes the limitations imposed on Saudi women as " effective imprisonment within the home. " # Women are not permitted

Line [41/1990]

keeping them apart from men other than their husbands. Saudi women do not drive, and so, often with three and four small children

Line [44/1990]

the strict rules the Saudis apply to the role of women. # Saudi women aren't allowed to drive or appear in restaurants and other public places

Line [48/1990]

There are no women in the Saudi government and Saudi women are not allowed to travel or eat in a restaurant unless accompanied by a

Line [9/2011]

As with many women in Saudi Arabia, choosing a husband was not solely up to her. Her father and brothers

The theme of male guardianship is represented alongside other themes. The extended context represented women as being humiliated and even *'battered'* and *'beaten'* (see line [9/2011]) under such officially and legally-packed system of male guardianship. This system requires women to get permission from *'an immediate male family member'* as shown in line [21/2005] to pursue many activities. Expressions such as *'cannot'* in line [21/2005], *'not allowed to'* and *'without permission from'* in line [24/2004], *'limitations imposed'* and *'without a written consent from'* in line [31/2001], *'strict rules'* and *'unless escorted by males'* in line [44/1990], *'are not allowed to'* and *'unless accompanied by a man'* in line [48/1990] are more contextually relevant to a superior-inferior relationship. Even those male guardians are never identified. Simply they are referred to as *'males'*, *'a man'*, *'male guardian'*, *'father'*, and *'brother'*, but who are socially and legally powerful to determine everything related to women.

Regarding the social actors involved in propagating the consequences of the male guardianship system, it can be argued that all lines above showed males as being markedly powerful and even authoritative. Males are entitled to allow or forbid women to *'be admitted to a hospital or examined by a doctor or travel abroad or leave the house'* (line [21/2005]), *'travel'* (line [24/2004]), *'pursue higher education, travel or get a job'* (line [31/2001]), *'go out in public'* (line [41/1990]), *'drive or appear in restaurants and other public places'* (line [44/1990]), *'travel or eat in a restaurant'* (line [48/1990]), and *'choose a husband'* (line [9/2011]). In addition to males, other social actors are represented. The social actors in line [21/2005] include Saudi Arabia as a political-religious system which is worse than *'the brutal Taliban'*, and Saudi women who are submissive to their guardians. Line [24/2004] represents two key social actors who keep a contradiction-based relationship: Saudi decision-makers and Saudi women. Though women are granted unprecedented opportunities to join commissions and syndicates, they cannot travel without permission from a male guardian. Saudi women in line [31/2001] are represented as leading *'restrictive lives'* since they cannot pursue any activity *'without written consent of a male guardian'*. Even when in foreign countries, as shown in line [41/1990], Saudi women cannot appear in public without their husbands. Lines [44/1990] and [48/1990] compare two social actors during the Gulf War: US female troops—including nurses—and Saudi women. While US female troops can drive, exercise in the gym, and appear in restaurants, Saudi women cannot *'unless escorted/accompanied by males/a man'*. The issue of marriage is solely represented in line [9/2011] as a helpless, battered Saudi female surgeon named Samia, in her 40s, is represented alongside her father and brothers who deprived her of choosing a husband.

Different aspects of the ideology underlying the theme of male guardianship are mediated through different discursive strategies aiming at problematizing the position of women under the male guardianship system. The strategy of victimization is obvious in line [21/2005] where the context represents Saudis as being terrorists in the aftermath of 9/11 events. The text producer argues that women are victims of the political system which *'treats its women one barely noticeable notch above that of the brutal Taliban'*. One aspect of this ill-treatment is the guardian system which deprives them of visiting doctors, travelling abroad and leaving the house without permission of their guardians. In line [31/2001], Saudi women are victims of their *'restrictive lives'* and the *'limitations imposed on them'* due to restrictions mainly formed by men. The discursive strategy of victimization is even complicated in line [9/2011] when the victim is a female surgeon who cannot choose a husband and at the same time is responsible for people's lives. Moreover, she is beaten when she refuses her guardian's command to marry a cousin. Despite the governmental efforts to engage women in some government-sponsored entities, such activities are normalized or even regarded as insufficient in line [24/2001] due to the absence of other complementary rights such as travelling without a male's permission. Lines [41/1990], [44/1990] and [48/1990] highlight the discursive strategy of stereotyping of Saudi women who accompany their husbands while pursuing intensive study programs in the US. According to the context, *'most of them ... felt homesick and isolated in a strange culture'*, and they cannot appear in the public, travel, or eat in a restaurant *'unless escorted by their husbands'*.

The discursive strategies highlighted in this subsection are intended to add new dimensions to the context model underlying the position of Saudi women. The theme of male guardianship is mediated through integrating other subthemes which can be perceived are realizations of the repercussions resulting from the male guardianship system. These repercussions include inability to travel, study, eat in restaurants, marry, and even visit doctors

without permission from a male relative.

#### 5.2.4 Ban on Car Driving

Saudi women are banned to drive cars due to social, legal, and religious reasons. Women's driving is even morally and socially regarded as misbehavior since they would mix with foreign men (AlMunajjed, 1997). The theme of banning car driving is mentioned in seven concordance lines published between 1990 and 2012. These lines are listed below.

Line [21/2005]

Arabia treats its women one barely noticeable notch above that of the brutal Taliban? Saudi women can not vote.

Line [24/2004]

Many Saudi women consider these major steps in a country where women are not allowed to drive

Line [31/2001]

the human rights group, describes the limitations imposed on Saudi women as " effective imprisonment within the home. "

Line [41/1990]

, keeping them apart from men other than their husbands. Saudi women do not drive, and so, often with three and four small children

Line [44/1990]

the strict rules the Saudis apply to the role of women. # Saudi women aren't allowed to drive or appear in restaurants

Line [46/1990]

traditional safety valves for soldiers. " And " Saudi women are not allowed to go to movie theaters or to drive cars.

Line [5/2012]

Shahrkhani was the first Saudi woman to compete in the Olympics, representing a country that still prohibits women

After examining the concordance lines underlying the theme of the ban on car driving, it can be argued that the journalistic discourse of COCA does not offer strong arguments regarding this issue. That is, based on the discourse organization, such theme is presented as given information in most lines, while it is foregrounded only in lines [24/2004] and [46/1990]. Furthermore, no further repercussions emerging from this ban are explained. Expressions such as 'are not allowed to' in lines [21/2005; 24/2004; 46/1990], 'are barred from' and 'limitations imposed' in line [31/2001], 'do not' in line [41/1990], 'strict rules' in line [44/1990] and 'prohibits' in line [5/2012] aggravate the problem and highlight a legally-imposed restriction.

The social actors highlighted in this theme are Saudi women who are represented as being victims of their country. In line [24/2004] Saudi women are torn out in the sense that they gain specific rights, but are simultaneously deprived of others. They participate in forums to negotiate with respect to the challenges facing Saudi Arabia. They are appointed to the executive committees of different bodies. They can set up factories. Still, they are not allowed to drive. Similarly, in line [31/2001], Saudi women are compared to other female Muslims in secular states who lead better lives. Though those women are allowed to run businesses, they are officially forbidden to drive. Saudi women in line [41/1990] are 'homesick and isolated' in America where they have to abide by the 'rules of their Muslim religion'. Even when they have the chance to drive, they 'do not drive'. In line [44/1990], Saudi women are represented alongside male and female US troops during the Gulf War. While Saudi women are not permitted to drive, female troops are enjoying different facilities. In a similar vein, in line [46/1990], US GI soldiers are foregrounded as they complain of the difficult conditions in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War. One aspect of these difficulties is the absence of Saudi women in the public since they are not allowed to drive. Line [5/2012] represents Shahrkhani as the first Saudi woman participating in the 2012 Olympics. Though she 'lost badly', her participation is represented as 'a victory for women's rights in the Middle East'. However, such victory is not satisfying since other women's rights are confiscated, including the right of driving a car.

The key theme of the ban on car driving is a key component of the context model underlying the journalistic evaluation of the issues related to Saudi women. It is mediated through a set of discursive strategies. In view of the strategy of stereotyping, all Saudi women are not allowed to drive; no exceptions are made. In lines [24/2004] and [31/2001], the Saudi government is represented as being self-contradicting as it allows women to get jobs, set-up factories, run businesses and control over money they earn or inherit, and does not allow them to drive. In line [5/2012], Saudi Arabia allows a female to participate in the Olympics for the first time to avoid being barred



from participating in international sports contests, but it still *'prohibits women from driving a car'*. The same idea of self-contradiction is textually supported by the discursive strategy of categorization in lines [44/1990] as two categories of women are represented. The first category is US female troops participating in the Gulf war and who are not *'accustomed to the strict rules the Saudis apply to the role of women'*. The second category involves Saudi women who are not allowed to drive.

The discursive strategies of stereotyping, victimization, and categorization could be interpreted as an endeavor, on the part of text producer, to reveal the inconsistency Saudi policies regarding the ban on car driving. The context presupposes that the ban on car driving is not justifiable.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

Having analyzed the concordance lines in which SAUDI WOMEN and its co-referential keywords are used, it can be argued that the sociocognitive approach to discourse analysis is methodologically effective in revealing the ideological stances shaping gender and power relations in Saudi Arabia. The approach addressed the thematic structure of news stories related to Saudi women by incorporating text-based interpretative approach with context-based social structure. In so doing, it helped to reveal the cognitive dimension of discourse organization through a set of discursive strategies. However, one caveat of the approach is that it neither regards the ideology of text producers nor the ideologies of the newspapers' publishers. Moreover, though it is argued that corpus CDA helps to avoid subjectivity and bias regarding data selection, we here argue that concordance lines cannot adequately be analyzed unless being read in their full context which is missing through corpus-based analysis. Still, both quantitative and qualitative methods helped in the illustration of attitudes and ideologies of the social actors and text producers involved in mediating different issues related to Saudi women.

Regarding the study's first question of what are the co-referential keywords of the node SAUDI WOMEN, quantitative analysis showed that these co-referential keywords are SAUDI WOMAN, SAUDI GIRL, and WOMEN IN SAUDI ARABIA. Concerning the study second question, having read the extended context of each concordance line, it was found that these lines could be thematically categorized in four thematic foci: gender discrimination (F=14), dress code (F=13), male guardianship (F=7), and ban on car driving (F=7). These thematic foci were mediated through various sub-themes in which Saudi women are represented as victims of the society that is negatively described as being ultraconservative. Furthermore, any governmental effort to empower women was represented as being superficial and motivated by a desire to avoid international criticism. It was demonstrated that the four thematic foci addressed in this paper are referentially coherent for they form a grand narrative of Saudi women. Such a narrative is textually mediated via a group of expressions with negative connotations.

The ideological stances regarding gender inequality and unbalanced power relations in Saudi Arabia are manifested through four basic socio-cultural contexts involving different social actors. The first context is Saudi Arabia where Saudi women are compared to Saudi men to reveal major differences among them including voting, having political representation, travelling abroad, appearing in the public, participating in sports, and driving cars. The second context is Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War where Saudi women are compared to US female troops and reporters who have access to all the facilities that Saudi women are deprived of. In the same context, Saudi women are denigratively represented as outlets to the oppressed desires of GI's soldiers who have difficult time in the Saudi desert. The third context is realized at a point where Saudi Arabia has been compared to other foreign countries, with Saudi women obliged to abide by the same strict rules of their country. The fourth context compares Saudi Arabia to other Muslim liberal countries where women lead better lives. The last context is Saudi Arabia where Saudi women are compared to American political figures visiting the kingdom. The aim is to highlight issues related to lack of political representation on the part of Saudi women and changing American political attitude toward Saudi Arabia.

The data generally ascribed no social roles for Saudi women. Also, Saudi women are not called by their names except in four lines, and all of them are not celebrities. The first is line [3/2013] reporting a Saudi girl, named Waad Mohammed in the US, participating in a competition for memorizing the Quran. The second is line [9/2011] reporting a Saudi surgeon, named Samia, who is beaten because she refused to marry her cousin. The third line [1/2017 – SAUDI GIRL] reports a 15-year-old Saudi girl, called Rayouf Alhumedhi, participating with a hijab emoji in a forum for inventing emojis for social media applications. The fourth line is [5/2012] which reports Sharkhani, the first Saudi woman participating in the Olympics.

In relation to the study third question of what the discursive strategies manipulated to highlight issues related to Saudi women, data analysis demonstrated the use of different discursive strategies while reporting on the key thematic foci targeting the problems of Saudi women. Understanding these discursive strategies in relation to the

social actors and roles helped to form a clear context model of the underlying issues. The most effective discursive strategies included victimization, stereotyping, categorization, exaggeration, and normalization. The strategy of victimization rendered Saudi women as victims of their patriarchal society, inequality policies, tribal values, and strict religious teachings. Stereotyping was meant to highlight a typical image of Saudi women who are submissive, oppressed and covered in black. The strategy of categorization sought to offer different models of women inside and outside Saudi Arabia. Comparisons conducted in different concordance lines were always in favor of non-Saudi women. To maximize the sufferings of these women, the strategy of exaggeration is implemented. Finally, through the strategy of normalization, all efforts exerted by Saudi decision-makers to empower Saudi women are evaluated as being normal or superficial since other rights are legally and socially confiscated.

## 7. Conclusion

The present study applied both quantitative and qualitative methods to the analysis of the COCA-based journalistic discourse highlighting different themes related to Saudi women. The procedure of socio-cognitive approach to critical discourse analysis is adopted as it integrates textual, social and cognitive analyses of discourse to decide on the underlying gender schema and power relations in Saudi Arabia. The approach could be described as thematically-oriented as it helps to frame a discourse model regarding different themes that take into consideration the socio-cultural context of gendered discourse. Integrating corpus-based approaches to critical discourse studies would help in unbiased data collection and thematic clustering. However, the data retrieved from COCA is limited to a timeframe starting from 1990 to 2017. The Introduction of Vision 2030 in 2018, simply described as a groundbreaking plan for empowering Saudi women, is claimed to trigger different journalistic evaluations. Therefore, the present study recommends updating COCA as many political, social, and economic drastic changes are expected to occur, and accordingly many of the thematic foci raised through corpus-assisted analysis of Saudi women-related issues would change.

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