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Duaa Tabaza
University of Jordan

Zahara Mustafa-Awad
University of Jordan

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Within and Beyond Stereotypes of Arab Women: A Corpus-based Approach to Jordanian Women's Portrayal in English Digital News

By Duaa Tabaza¹, Zahara Mustafa-Awad²

Abstract

This study is part of a project on the representations of Jordanian women in Arabic and English digital news, and how these relate to their perceived status in their society and to Arab women's general image in Western media. We focus on their depictions in related news stories appearing in English during the period 2014-2016 and how they compare to the overall representations of Arab women in news discourse. To this end, we combine discourse analysis approaches and corpus linguistic techniques to analyse a corpus composed of 616 articles (445,904 words) published in English mainly by 10 news websites based in several countries. We processed our data through Sketch Engine to identify the significant lexical items and expressions used by journalists to describe Jordanian women, then we classified these according to the topical frames they reflect. Finally, we related these themes to both the established stereotypes and the recent images associated with Arab women in Western media. Our results show that the most frequent topics linked to Jordanian women are: empowerment and activism, rights, oppression, work, education, family, marriage, religion and traditions. Most of these echo, in various degrees, both the conventional portrayals of Arab women in the mainstream media as oppressed victims of their societies and their emerging as protesters and fighters for their rights. Yet, these themes are addressed in different tones when it comes to Jordanian women such that religion and dress restrictions are deemphasized while rights, education, and participation in public life are highlighted. Still, some topical frames are underscored as being specifically associated with Jordanian women reflecting their particular achievements, especially, in education and working in non-traditional jobs, on the one hand, and their continuous struggle to gain more constitutional rights, on the other. While our findings shed light on sketching Jordanian women in global news, they provide further discursive evidence against the monolithic representation of Arab women in Western media.

Keywords: Arab women's stereotypes, discourse analysis, English news websites, Jordanian women, media representation, corpus linguistics

Introduction

Research on Arab women's representations in media shows that they tend to ignore the social, religious, and cultural discrepancies that characterise Arab societies (Eltantawy, 2007; Mostafa, 2018; Mustafa-Awad and Kirner-Ludwig, 2017; Radsch and Khamis, 2013). They

¹ **Duaa Tabaza** holds a Master's Degree in Language, Culture, and Communication from the University of Jordan. Ms. Tabaza's thesis compared media representation of women between two languages through corpus-assisted discourse analysis. She presented a paper at the Sixth International Conference of the Association of Professors of English and Translation at Arab Universities and co-authored another presented at CICLing 2017 conference. Ms. Tabaza is a Certified International Compliance and Ethics Professional, currently working in an international professional services firm as an Associate.

² **Dr. Zahra Mustafa-Awad** is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Jordan and has been a visiting scholar in several universities in Europe, the United States and the Middle East. Her research focuses on Discourse Analysis, Language and Media, Cross-Cultural Communication and Foreign Language Teaching. Her publications include articles in international journals, chapters in edited volumes, and two textbooks. She is a member of the Editorial Boards of the International Journal of Arabic-English Studies and Voices in Asia Journal. Orcid.org/0000-0002-5583-9167

also often include them under the umbrella of Muslim women (Al-Hejin, 2012; 2014; Falah, 2005; Jabbara, 2006; Manley, 2009; Raouda, 2008; Tucker, 1993; Wilkins, 2004), such that both are usually framed as passive victims of their societal systems oppressed by their own families. Such negative patterns of depiction fall within the big picture of the media's distorted portrayal of Muslims, in general, (Said, 1981; Karim, 2003; Nacos & Torres Reyna, 2006; Baker et al, 2013; Ahmed & Matthes, 2016) and Arabs, in particular (Shaheen 1984, 2001; Hafez, 2000; Richardson, 2004; Jabbara, 2006; Park, Felix and Lee, 2007; Pyszczynski et al., 2003).

In the last few years, new images of Arab women have emerged in news discourse due to their active engagement in the historic events that have taken place in the Middle East referred to as the Arab Spring (Mustafa-Awad & Kirner-Ludwig, 2017; Mustafa-Awad et al. 2020). Studies on the issue have highlighted their participation in the protests (Khamis 2011), their involvement in political transitions (Al-Ali 2012), and their online activism (Newsom and Lengel 2012; Radsch, 2012). As expected, such a change in their representation was highlighted in reports about women in countries that witnessed the uprisings including Tunisia (Pompper 2014), Egypt and Libya (Johansson-Nogués 2013) and Syria (Al- Natour, 2020; Alhayek 2014; Narlı et al 2020). This stereotype shift was also observed in news stories on women in other Arab countries like Palestine (Martin, 2011) and very recently Saudi Arabia (Karlak and Guta, 2020).

As for Jordanian women, in particular, their discursive construction in the media is largely embedded in that of Muslim and Arab women. Only few studies have addressed their specific depiction in news discourse, especially with reference to local dailies (e.g. Bader, 2009; Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, 2011). This study investigates their most prominent images as reflected by online news reports published in English during the period 2014–2016. We analyse the articles for the most frequent and significant expressions used to describe them, then we categorise these into the themes they reveal and relate these to the discursive construction of Arab women in Western news discourse.

Literature Review

Arab and Muslim women tend to be considered by Western media as one homogeneous group despite the numerous cultural, ethnic and social differences among them. This singular Arab Muslim woman is typically staged as being oppressed by her religion and society, uneducated, and a victim of war or violence (Ahmed and Matthes, 2016; Al-Hejin, 2012; 2014; Falah, 2005; Jabbara, 2006; McCafferty, 2005; Manley, 2009; Raouda, 2008; Tucker, 1993; Wilkins, 2004). For instance, Falah (2005) examined the visual representations of Muslim women in American newspapers during the period post-September 11, 2001 until the invasion of Iraq in 2003. His findings show that they were mostly framed either as “passive victims,” or “active political agents”. The first category includes Iraqi and Afghani women, whose images' captions implied their need for Western liberation, as well as Palestinian women, whose own people were blamed for their victimization. The second one involves cases of defying oppression but still promoting existing stereotypes rather than challenging them. Similar results were reported by McCafferty (2005) based on analyzing the depiction of Muslim women in the New York Times during the two years surrounding September 11, 2001. She observed that their portrayal fell into three types: “powerless and oppressed, mysterious and exotic, and politicised and defiant.” (p109). She illustrated how these women were mostly staged as the “Other” who are being deprived from the opportunities that Western women have.

Recent studies addressing the discursive construction Arab and Muslim women in global media combined Corpus Linguistic and Discourse Analysis approaches. Al-Hejin (2015) compiled a corpus of BBC news about Muslim women to extract the prevalent semantic macrostructures associated with them. He found that they feature in topics predominantly linked to ‘war’ and ‘crime’, and they are mostly referred to as passive victims of their own

societies. In particular, he demonstrated how the main macro-proposition of Hijab, as being imposed on Muslim women, is part of their widespread stereotype as being submissive and powerless.

The recurrent negative images of Arab and Muslim women in news discourse are strongly linked to the distorted depiction of Muslims, in general, and Arabs, in particular, in Western mainstream media. Muslims tend to be staged either as violent, women oppressors and fanatics (Said, 1981; Hafez, 2000) linked to military threats, extremism and terrorism (Richardson 2004) or “easily offended, alienated, and in conflict with non-Muslims” (Baker et. al 2013). As for Arabs, they are usually framed either as “backward desert-dwelling-Bedouins”, or as millionaires” (Ghareeb 1993). Such biased images are propagated in American TV and Hollywood movies, according to Shaheen (1984, 2001), by spreading myths about Arabs as being extremely rich, primitive and uncivilized, “sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery,” and engaged in terrorist acts.

Despite the general trend of blending Arab women with Muslim women in research on their representations in news discourse, a number of studies have focused on their specific depictions in the media (e.g. Elayan, 2005; Eltantawy, 2007; Karimullah, 2020; Manley, 2009; Mostafa, 2018; Nawar, 2007; Newsom and Lenge, 2012; Safadi Foundation, 2010; Shaheen, 2001; Radsch and Khamis 2013). For instance, Safadi Foundation (2010) reviewed the portrayals of Mediterranean women in Western media and concluded that they are staged as “veiled, conservative, dominated by men, sex objects, or entertaining men with pornographic oriental dances”, in addition to being “homebound and uneducated”. (p.38). Similar distorted stereotypes of Arab women are proliferated in Hollywood movies according to Shaheen (2001), who observed that they tend to be framed either as “weak, silent black-covered creatures or as half-naked belly dancers.” (p.56).

Most studies on Arab women have generally dealt with them as one monolithic group despite the obvious cultural, social and religious discrepancies among the different Arab nationalities. This is not to ignore the attempts by several scholars to address sketching women from individual Arab countries in mainstream media (e.g. Alhayek, 2014; Arebi, 1994; Baron, 1994; Johansson-Nogués, 2013; Mishra, 2007; Pompper, 2014; Skalli 2011). For instance, Martin (2011) investigated Western press reports on the engagement of Palestinian women in the first Intifadah. His findings indicate that the related news articles focused on their central role in these dramatic events and elaborated on their involvement in the struggle. Also, Bashatah (2017) examined Saudi women’s depictions in four British dailies between 2005 and 2013. She reported that they continued to be portrayed in a negative fashion that is consistent with the recurrent distorted stereotypes of Muslim women. Nevertheless, positive images of Saudi women seem to have emerged recently in local and global media, according to Karolak and Guta (2020). Based on their investigation of the 2015 municipal elections’ coverage by Saudi, British, and American newspapers, they observed a drastic shift in their representation from a passive group that needs the guardians’ approval to participate in the public sphere to active agents in political events.

Recently, the discursive construction of Arab women in the mainstream media has attracted a lot of attention due to their crucial role in the Arab Spring (e.g. Alvi 2015; Dastgeer and Gade 2016; Johansson-Nogués, 2013; Sjoberg and Whooley, 2015). While Khamis (2011) focused on their activism and its impact on the protests that characterised these historic events, Al-Ali (2012) highlighted the importance of their involvement in the political transitions that took place in some of the concerned countries. On the other hand, Mustafa-Awad and Kirner-Ludwig’s (2017) explored the changes in Arab women’s stereotypes as reflected by German, British and American news headlines during the uprisings. They used corpus-assisted discourse analysis to extract the prominent topical frames associated with them based on the most frequent and significant collocates of *Arab women*. They identified eight themes: activism,

violence, oppression, rights, empowerment, marriage, religion and dress code. Their findings revealed a shift in Arab women's stereotypes in news discourse from passive victims of their society to protesters and fighters for their rights. These results were confirmed in a later study that examined the related full articles (Mustafa-Awad et al., 2019).

It is not surprising that many studies have focused specifically on the coverage of women in the Arab Spring countries by global and social media. Pompper (2014) addressed the concentration of the mainstream news on the women's leading role in the Tunisian revolution while Newsom and Lengel (2012) looked at the contribution of social networks to the involvement of Egyptian and Tunisian women activists in the uprisings. Radsch (2012) concentrated on several exemplars of women leading the protests in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Yemen, and how they used social media to shape the revolutions and to influence mainstream media worldwide. On the other hand, Johansson-Nogués (2013) dealt with the rights and (in)security of Tunisian, Egyptian, and Libyan women during that period.

Arab women's agency was neglected in some reports about Syrian women, according to Al-Hayek (2015). She showed how they were depicted in global and social media as a "single faceless victim/woman", like all women during times of conflict. Some Syrian female refugees were further framed as victims of their own families, who married them off for money, as appears in the posts of the Facebook campaign "Refugees not Captives" (RNC). Similar results were reported very recently by Narlı et al (2020) based on analysing articles related to Syrian women published by Turkish dailies between 2013 and 2015. They found that their representation is mostly linked to issues of violence, sexual abuse, and reproductive health challenges. This is not to ignore many instances of addressing and highlighting Syrian women's agency and leadership by different platforms of news providers and social media including Facebook and Twitter (Al- Natour, 2020).

With respect to Jordanian women, their depiction in the media falls within the big picture of Arab and Muslim women. Only a few studies examined specifically their portrayal in news discourse. Bader (2009) looked at their representation in three Jordanian dailies and concluded that they were staged as educated with high-status jobs. Yet, she pointed out that such a positive image cannot be generalised, since the local newspapers usually focus on women living in the capital, neglecting those in rural and Bedouin areas. Also, the Jordan National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science (2011) examined their coverage by the national press during the decade 2000 -2010. The findings revealed that the most frequent topics addressed were either linked to social issues such as family, marriage, violence, and honour crimes appearing in (29.2%) of the articles or celebrity news in (27.4%). These were followed by women's economics (17.6%), and their participation in both politics (16.9%) and literature (16%). Less tackled issues include health, sports, education, and religion. As for the jobs that they usually do, artists were most frequently mentioned, followed by housewives, while the vocational occupations were the least referred to. Overall, Jordanian women were depicted mostly as leaders occurring in 24.3% of the news stories, followed by initiators in 17.4%, then victims in 11%. While such local coverage sheds light on some aspects of their portrayal in news discourse, their representation in global media has not received enough attention so far except for very few recent attempts (Tabaza, 2018).

Methodology

We used LexisNexis Academic to compile a corpus of news stories published in English about Jordanian women between January 1st, 2014, and December 31st, 2016. Our search terms were: *Jordanian woman*, *Jordanian women*, *Jordanian female*, and *Jordanian lady*. We collected a total of 616 articles (445,904 words) from the websites listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: News websites publishing articles in English about Jordanian women during 2014-2016

Website	Country	2014	2015	2016	Total
The Jordan Times	Jordan	55	67	117	239
Albawaba (English)	Jordan	5	16	12	33
BBC	Britain	11	-	9	20
Alarabiya (English)	United Arab Emirates	9	5	4	18
The National	United Arab Emirates	6	6	5	17
Daily Mail	Britain	1	5	11	17
Petra– Jordan News Agency	Jordan	4	5	3	12
Ammon News (English)	Jordan	2	4	5	11
Venture Magazine	Jordan	-	11	-	11
Al Monitor	United States	3	6	1	10
Other		63	80	85	228
Total		159	205	252	616

It is obvious that the top Arab-based websites reporting on Jordanian women are The Jordan Times followed by Albawaba. The first is the only daily English language newspaper in Jordan while the second is considered a fairly popular news website with a total traffic of 1.81 million visitors recorded between March and August 2019. On the other hand, the top Western ones are the BBC and the Daily Mail; the former is the sixth most visited website in the United Kingdom, while the latter is the 12th, according to SimilarWeb analytics, August 2019. It should be noted that websites with a total of less than 10 articles published on this topic during the period under investigation were included in one category ‘Other’.

We processed our corpus using Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2014) because it offers the features we are interested in, namely, frequency lists (wordlists), clusters (n-grams) and collocations. The wordlist feature generates all the words in the corpus ranked according to their frequency. N-grams are clusters of words which frequently occur consecutively as opposed to collocations, which are not necessarily consecutive in order. The Collocations feature offers the Co-occurrence count (CC), that is the number of times the collocation occurred in the corpus; T-score, which indicates that the co-occurrence is not random; Mutual Information (MI), which reflects the extent to which words occur together compared to the times they occur separately, and LogDice (LD), a statistical measure based on the frequency of words only regardless of the corpus size.

Results and Discussion

The outcome of processing our corpus showed that the most frequent word used to refer to Jordanian women is *women*, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The most frequent lexical items used to refer to Jordanian women

Lexical Item	Frequency
<i>Woman</i>	792
<i>Women</i>	4873

<i>Girl(s)</i>	758
<i>Ladies</i>	12
<i>Lady</i>	52
<i>Female(s)</i>	866
<i>Young women/women</i>	166

To identify the most frequent and significant terms used to describe Jordanian women, we ran collocations for the lemma *woman* within five words to the right and five to the left. Then, we manually classified these into the topics they reflect following the same procedure used by Mustafa-Awad and Kirner-Ludwig (2017) to extract the themes associated with Arab women in Western news discourse.

Our extracted collocates fall into the following topics: empowerment and activism, rights, oppression, work and education, marriage and family, and religion and traditions. The lexical items linked to each topic, their frequencies, and their significance are given below.

Empowerment and activism

The themes of empowerment and activism were prominent in our data; the most relevant terms are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Collocates of *Women* linked to empowerment and activism

Collocate	CC	T-score	MI	LD
<i>Participation</i> <i>Participate</i>	147	12.067	7.748	11.824
	28	5.124	4.984	7.706
<i>Empowerment</i> <i>Empower</i>	52	7.173	7.591	10.610
	36	5.926	6.360	8.087
<i>Leadership</i> <i>Lead</i> <i>Leading</i> <i>Leaders</i>	21	4.545	6.930	9.378
	9	2.855	4.377	7.960
	12	3.243	3.971	6.488
	25	4.802	4.661	7.588
<i>Position</i>	29	5.169	4.639	7.745
<i>Activist</i>	27	5.120	6.108	9.574
<i>Powerful</i>	22	4.574	5.343	7.372
<i>Fight</i> <i>Fighting</i>	13	3.520	5.408	8.582
	7	2.605	6.043	7.847
<i>Win</i>	15	3.786	5.481	8.955
<i>Capable</i>	12	3.401	5.801	6.511

Empowerment is reflected by a number of highly frequent and significant expressions (e.g. *empowerment, leadership, participation, capable and win*) with *participation* standing out at (CC 147, T-score 12.067, MI 7.748, and LD 11.824). An example of its use is:

Jordanian women's participation in the labor market remains low, and the lack of nurseries at the workplace is one of the reasons *The Jordan Times, August 27, 2014*)

The issue of Jordanian women's low participation in public life is addressed in the news not only with regard to the labour force, but also to economy and politics. Related expressions include clusters like *women's economic participation* (cf. Table 10, Appendix)

The word *empowerment* itself was the second most significant term appearing at (52, 7.173, 7.591, 10. 610). An instance of its occurrence is:

Shakhshir charged that the government is not interested in women's empowerment, although Jordan signed and ratified many international conventions pledging to increase women's participation in public life to a minimum of 30 per cent. (*The Jordan Times, February 18, 2016*)

Other collocates occurring at a significant level are *leaders, powerful, and capable*, which reflect progressive images of Jordanian women.

While these positive depictions partly contradict the common negative stereotypes of Arab women in Western media (e.g. Wilkins, 2004; Eltantawy, 2007; Mishra, 2007), they are in line with those emerging in news discourse during the Arab Spring (Mustafa-Awad et al. 2020; Pompper 2014; Radsch, 2012).

Rights

Another theme that featured in our corpus is rights; it was indicated by terms associated either with the ones that Jordanian women already have, or those they are still fighting for (cf. Table 5).

Table 5: Collocates of women associated with rights

Collocate	CC	T-score	MI	LD
<i>Foreigners</i>	70	8.272	6.471	9.031
<i>Non-Jordanians</i>	31	5.489	6.144	7.871
<i>Non-citizen</i>	17	4.084	6.737	7.016
<i>Palestinian</i>	28	4.940	5.351	7.666
<i>Rights</i>	144	11.865	6.480	11.307
<i>Football</i>	103	10.083	7.283	11.325
<i>Soccer</i>	11	3.291	7.041	8.518
<i>Candidate</i>	51	7.112	7.963	10.905
<i>Equality</i>	20	4.404	6.037	9.205

<i>Equal</i>	27	5.053	5.187	7.659
<i>Protection Protect</i>	7	2.573	5.193	7.778
	31	5.388	4.959	7.848
<i>Quota</i>	29	5.345	7.082	9.810
<i>Gender</i>	23	4.628	4.842	9.076
<i>Decision-making</i>	20	4.697	5.609	6.886
<i>Sports</i>	18	4.182	6.147	9.091
<i>Parliament</i>	13	3.527	5.534	8.842
<i>Elected Election</i>	6	2.427	6.811	8.018
	7	2.550	4.799	8.129
<i>Inheritance</i>	11	3.189	4.703	6.377
<i>Citizenship</i>	10	2.839	3.293	6.215

Political participation, one of the rights enjoyed by Jordanian women, is reflected by several expressions (e.g. *parliament*, *election*, *candidate*, and *quota*), as in:

Jordanians are significantly more interested in national elections after the appearance of a mysterious female candidate.” (*Albawba*, August 9, 2016)

Another set of collocates is related to their contribution to sports (e.g. *football*, *soccer*, and *sports*), an example is:

FIFA and the Jordanian government are hoping the contest will help promote women's football in Jordan and across the conservative Muslim-majority region.” (*The Daily Times*, September 29, 2016)

As for the rights they are still fighting for, passing citizenship to their children, specifically, is indicated by expressions like *non-citizens*, *citizenship*, *children* and *foreigner* and by clusters such as *Children of Jordanian women*, *Jordanian women married to foreigners/non- Jordanians* (cf. Table 6 in Appendix), as in:

The Civil Status and Passports Department (CSPD) has received 9,741 applications to issue special identification cards for children of Jordanian women married to foreigners since the beginning of the year.” (*The Jordan Times*, June 9, 2015)

Again, our results partially conform to those reported in previous literature with regard to portraying Arab women as victims of their societies deprived from some of their civil rights (e.g. Wilkins, 2004; Eltantawy, 2007; Mishra, 2007). At the same time, they support their discursive construction in media during the Arab Spring as active fighters for more

constitutional rights (e.g. Al-Ali, 2012; Alvi, 2015; Dastegeer and Gate, 2016; Johansson and Nueges, 2014; Khamis, 2011; Mustafa-Awad et al. 2020; Pompper 2014).

Oppression

Oppression, a frequent topic that usually comes up when discussing the depiction of women in the media, was also prominent in our data. The identified expressions indicate the different forms of oppression that Jordanian women have to deal with, including domestic violence, harassment, and discrimination, as can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: Collocates of women related to oppression

Collocate	CC	T-score	MI	LD
<i>Violence</i>	123	10.810	5.306	9.752
<i>Suffer</i>	28	5.148	5.209	7.711
<i>Suffering</i>	17	4.036	5.567	7.007
<i>Challenge</i>	18	3.928	3.757	7.050
<i>Obstacle</i>	9	2.864	4.469	6.088
<i>Barrier</i>	14	3.590	4.629	6.719
<i>Sexual</i>	27	4.820	3.789	7.610
<i>Discrimination</i>	27	5.068	5.351	7.662
<i>Honor</i>	10	2.726	2.858	6.200
<i>Honour</i>	16	3.617	3.386	6.872
<i>Vulnerable</i>	22	4.612	5.907	7.379
<i>Harassment</i>	18	4.054	4.497	7.072
<i>Self-defence</i>	14	3.688	6.135	6.734
<i>Abuse</i>	14	3.432	3.598	6.694
<i>Court</i>	11	3.198	4.806	8.449
<i>Crime</i>	11	2.809	2.709	6.325
<i>Rape</i>	9	2.673	3.198	6.064
<i>Killed</i>	9	2.959	6.197	8.460
<i>Arrested</i>	8	2.795	6.442	8.329
<i>Shame</i>	6	2.257	3.673	5.500
<i>Victims</i>	6	2.293	3.968	7.584
<i>Deprive</i>	4	1.936	4.971	4.930
<i>Oppressed</i>	4	1.97	6.16	4.98

One dangerous type of oppression reported to face Jordanian women, often highlighted by the news as domestic violence, is honor killing. Related terms are *honor/honour*, *crime*, *killed*. This is in addition to the clusters *honor/honour killing(s)*, which occurred in our data at a frequency of (85), and *honour crimes at* (28) (cf. Table 8 in the Appendix). An instance is the following:

As part of a 16-day campaign against gender violence, activists demand stronger penalties for ‘honour’ crimes and an end to imprisonment of at-risk women. (*The Guardian, December 9, 2016*)

Other terms indicating oppression when occurring in clusters are *violence* and *sexual*; the former appears in *domestic violence* at a frequency of (38) and *sexual violence* at (72), while the latter occurs in *sexual harassment at* (25) and *sexual exploitation at* (24) (cf. Table 8, Appendix). The following is an example:

For girls and women in Jordan, sexual harassment in public spaces—lewd catcalls, groping, indecent exposure, men in cars trying to pick up women walking by the side of the road—is a fact of life. (*The Nation, March 18, 2014*)

Although the word *oppressed* itself occurs at a low frequency (4) to describe Jordanian women, their oppression is reflected by other collocates such as *vulnerable*, *challenges*, *obstacles*, and *suffer*, as in:

UN Women Jordan on Thursday announced its programme “Services to improve the socio-economic well-being of vulnerable Jordanian women in host communities in Al Mafraq, Irbid and Zarqa Governorates”, according to a press statement. (*The Jordan Times, October 5, 2015*)

These findings are in line with those reported by other studies concerning the recurrent stereotype of Arab women in Western news discourse as oppressed victims of their societal systems (cf. Falah, 2005; Eltantawy, 2007; Pompper, 2014; Wilkins 2004).

Work and Education

Other important topics featured in our corpus are work and education; relevant expressions are listed in Table 9.

Table 9: Collocates of women connected to work and education

Collocate	CC	T-score	MI	LD
<i>Work</i>	148	11.462	4.113	9.822
<i>Training Trained</i>	29	4.954	3.644	7.698
	22	4.586	5.500	7.374
<i>Drivers Taxi</i>	25	4.775	4.475	7.532
	24	4.315	4.099	6.74
<i>Education Educated</i>	38	5.521	3.262	8.025
	4	1.956	5.532	7.336
<i>Study</i>	27	4.771	3.612	7.600
<i>Entrepreneurs</i>	24	4.711	4.707	7.488
<i>Unemployment</i>	21	4.287	4.6	6.677
<i>Labour</i>	17	3.796	3.658	6.967
<i>Workplace</i>	17	3.989	4.950	7.000
<i>Employment</i>	13	3.377	3.985	6.601

<i>Plumbers</i>	12	3.242	5.474	5.826
<i>Workforce</i>	9	2.803	3.931	6.080
<i>Wage</i>	8	2.696	4.416	5.919
<i>Jobs</i>	7	2.460	3.835	7.702
<i>Doctor</i>	4	1.960	5.654	7.345

Work is reflected by the word *work* itself, *employment*, *workplace*, *drivers*, *workforce*, *plumber*, *unemployment*; while education is indicated by the term *education* itself, *educated*, *study*, and *training*. This is in addition to clusters like *Female workers*, *women entrepreneurs* and *women drivers* for the former, and *female students* for the latter (cf. Table 10, Appendix).

The issue of women's work in Jordan is frequently addressed in the news as a critical topic since their unemployment reached 30% in 2017, according to the World Economic Forum. An example is:

There's a gap between female representation in the education system and the labor force. It's apparent in the economically inactive population, with double the rates of unemployment in women versus men in Jordan (four times for youth). Of those, 70 percent of unemployed women have bachelor's degrees, compared with 25 percent of unemployed men. (*AlBawaba*, March 8, 2015)

Articles about working Jordanian women during the period under investigation highlighted those doing jobs which were previously exclusive to men such as plumbing and taxi driving. These are expressed by collocates such as *taxi* and *plumbing* and the clusters *Women/female taxi drivers* (cf. Table 10 in the Appendix). Below is an example:

Such struggles are familiar to 53-year-old Khawla Sheikh, one of Jordan's first female plumbers. In 2004, with her children grown, Sheikh signed up for a U.S.-funded plumbing course. She earned her license and gained work experience by tagging along with male plumbers employed by her husband. (*Daily Mail*, October 24, 2016)

Our findings contradict those reported by previous studies with regard to sketching Arab women in Western press as being homebound and uneducated (The Safadi Foundation report, 2010) or to portraying working Muslim women as being exceptional and unique (McCafferty, 2005).

Marriage and family

Marriage and family, frequently addressed issues in news reports about Arab and Muslim women, are also identified in our data. Expressions indicating these topics are given Table 11.

Table 11: Collocates of *Women* associated with marriage and family

Collocate	CC	T-score	MI	LD
<i>Child</i>	187	13.238	4.969	10.249
<i>Man</i>	186	13.218	5.022	10.251

<i>Marriage Married</i>	4	1.89	4.17	7.17
	146	12.201	5.644	9.588
<i>Husbands</i>	23	4.412	4.755	6.748
<i>Pregnant</i>	8	3.227	5.223	5.825
<i>Single</i>	7	3.185	4.657	5.822
<i>Divorced</i>	4	1.635	4.164	4.513

These overlapping themes are reflected by several frequent and significant terms (e.g. child, married, husbands, divorced, marriage) with *married* standing out at (CC146, T-score 12.2012, MI 5.644, LD 9.588).

When we checked the related concordances, we observed that marriage is addressed either as a topic on its own or in conjunction with other issues such as Jordanian women's right to pass their citizenship to their children. In particular, the term *marriage* occurs with words like 'early', 'forced', 'arranged', and 'child', as can be seen in Table 12 below.

Table 12: collocates of *marriage*

Collocate	CC	T-Score	MI	LD
<i>Early</i>	20	4.466	9.544	11.356
<i>Child</i>	8	2.818	8.129	10.00
<i>Arranged</i>	7	2.644	10.936	10.381
<i>Forced</i>	5	2.228	8.228	9.567
<i>Second</i>	5	2.222	7.321	9.272

It is clear that the most frequent and significant term collocating with *marriage* is *early*, followed by *child* and *arranged*. Although early marriages are not usually highlighted in the news, they constituted 13% of registered marriages in 2014, according Jordanian Sharia Court. An instance is given below:

Sisterhood is Global Institute added that the ratio of early marriage among women ranges between 12 and 14 per cent, noting that eliminating this percentage will lead to more women getting better education and becoming pioneers of the future." (*The Jordan Times, March 7, 2016*)

This issue is sometimes referred to in news stories as child marriage (minimum age for marriage in Jordan is 18), as in:

Child marriage in Jordan has hit a record high, with 10,866 minor brides registered in 2015 alone. (*Breitbart News Network, May 11, 2016*)

Such a portrayal of Jordanian women in news discourse as wives, sometimes at an early age, conforms to the common representation of Arab women in global media reported by previous studies (Alhayek 2014, Safadi Foundation 2010).

Religion and Traditions

Less prominent topics identified in our data are traditions and religion although the Jordanian society is considered fairly religious and conservative. Collocates related to these topics are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Collocates of Women related to religion and traditions

Collocate	CC	T-score	MI	LD
<i>Muslim</i>	15	6.85	4.32	8.022
<i>Veiled</i>	9	3.675	5.822	6.174
<i>Hijab</i>	6	2.218	3.406	5.496
<i>Christian</i>	10	2.963	3.989	6.231
<i>Religious</i>	8	3.455	3.707	6.158
<i>Fatwa</i>	5	3.185	4.657	5.822
<i>Conservative</i>	4	3.147	3.453	5.935
<i>Tradition</i>	3	1.520	3.032	4.505

Although the terms associated with religion (e.g. *Muslim*, *Christian*, *fatwa*, *veiled*, *religious*) do not appear at a high frequency, some occur at quite significant levels, with *Muslim* standing out at (15, 6.85, 4.32, 8.022). The same can be said about those linked to tradition (e.g. *conservative*, *tradition*) including dress regulations (*veiled*, *hijab*). An example is:

The Amman Sharia Court based their ruling on a fatwa that describes women who do not wear a **hijab** as a "slut" and therefore unfit to testify in court (Shutterstock). (*Albawaba News*, March 2, 2014)

These results suggest that religion and dress regulations are de-emphasized in news stories about Jordanian women despite being prominent topics in the literature on sketching Arab and Muslim women in Western media (e.g. Al-Hejin, 2014; Amara, 2012; McEnery, 2013; Özcan, 2013; Samie and Sehlikoglu 2015).

It is clear, that although most of the images associated with Jordanian women in news reports published in English resonate in various degrees with those linked to Arab women in Western media, some are underlined as being specific to them. In particular they are portrayed as empowered women, active fighters for their rights and participants in political life. While such depictions contradict the recurrent representation of Arab women as passive victims of their societal systems, they are in line with their emerging images in news discourse as active agents of change during the Arab Spring. At the same time, Jordanian women continue to be portrayed as being oppressed by their culture, like all women in the Arab World, when it comes to domestic violence and early marriages. On the other hand, some prominent topics linked to Arab women in Western media (e.g. dress restrictions and religion) are deemphasized when it comes Jordanian women, while others that do not stand out in the coverage of the former (e.g. work and education) are highlighted in the case of the latter. Yet, some topical frames are underscored as being specifically associated with Jordanian women, reflecting their particular achievements (e.g. working in non-traditional jobs) and their continuous struggle to gain more constitutional rights (e.g. passing citizenship to their children and protecting them from domestic violence).

Conclusion

We have shown that the coverage of Jordanian women by digital news published in English during 2014-2016 addresses the following topics: empowerment, rights, oppression, work, education, marriage, family, religion and traditions. Although most of these topical frames echo those linked to Arab women in Western media, some are addressed in different tones while others are projected as being specifically associated with Jordanian women. The themes of activism, rights, oppression and early marriages, which are common in the media's depictions of the former, are also salient in those of the latter. In particular, the shift in stereotypes of Arab women from passive victims of their culture to active agents of change, and brave fighters for their rights during the Arab Spring, resonates with and reflects Jordanian women. On the other hand, some issues that are highlighted in news stories about Arab women are played down when it comes to Jordanian women, while others that are marginalized in the news about the former, are given a lot of attention in the case of the latter. Yet, some challenges and achievements are underlined as being specific to Jordanian women. This suggests that representing Arab women in Western media as a homogeneous group is an overgeneralization that needs to be reconsidered.

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Appendix

Table 4: n-grams related to women's empowerment

N-gram	Frequency
<i>Empower women</i>	45
<i>Women's empowerment</i>	39
<i>Empowerment of women</i>	22
<i>Empowering women</i>	15
<i>Women empowerment</i>	14
<i>Women's participation</i>	72
<i>Participation of women</i>	61
<i>First female</i>	39
<i>Women's movement</i>	38
<i>Raise awareness</i>	32
<i>Women leaders</i>	17
<i>Women's leadership</i>	16

Table 6: n-grams related to Jordanian women's rights

N-gram	Frequency
<i>Women's rights</i>	123
<i>Human rights</i>	122
<i>Gender equality</i>	101
<i>Women's football</i>	88
<i>Children of Jordanian women</i>	61
<i>Jordanian women married to foreigners</i>	61
<i>Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians</i>	55

<i>Civil rights</i>	47
<i>Role of women</i>	38
<i>Female candidates</i>	33
<i>Rights activists</i>	30
<i>Women's quota</i>	25
<i>Gender roles</i>	23
<i>Gender gap</i>	21
<i>Citizenship rights</i>	20
<i>Rights of women</i>	17
<i>Women's rights activists</i>	15
<i>Women's football in Jordan</i>	14
<i>Non-citizen children of Jordanian women</i>	14
<i>Win outside the quota</i>	14
<i>Women's sports</i>	13
<i>Women's representation</i>	13
<i>Women's role</i>	13
<i>Female heirs</i>	12
<i>Female candidate</i>	12
<i>Representation of women</i>	11

Table 8 n-grams of terms reflecting oppression

N-gram	Frequency
<i>Honor killings</i>	34
<i>Honour killings</i>	32
<i>Honor crimes</i>	28
<i>Honour killing</i>	19
<i>Violence against women</i>	76
<i>Sexual violence</i>	72
<i>Domestic violence</i>	38
<i>Sexual harassment</i>	25
<i>Sexual exploitation</i>	24
<i>Human trafficking</i>	24
<i>Violent extremism</i>	19
<i>Protect women</i>	14
<i>Domestic abuse</i>	14
<i>Sexual and gender-based violence</i>	14
<i>Discrimination against women</i>	12
<i>Culture of shame</i>	12
<i>Violence against women and girls</i>	12
<i>Victims of violence</i>	11

Table 10: n-grams related to work and education

N-gram	Frequency
<i>Economic participation</i>	49
<i>Higher education</i>	38
<i>Women drivers</i>	13
<i>Women taxi drivers</i>	9
<i>Female taxi drivers</i>	9
<i>Women's economic participation</i>	18
<i>Women entrepreneurs</i>	17
<i>Female students</i>	14
<i>Female workers</i>	12