

---

**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**From Marginalization to Visibility: Discursive Constructions of Saudi Women in Local Sport News**

**Zainah Theib Alshahrani**

*Assistant professor, Department of English Language, College of Languages and Translation, University of Jeddah, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia*

**Corresponding Author:** Zainah Theib Alshahrani, **E-mail:** [agzainah@uj.edu.sa](mailto:agzainah@uj.edu.sa)

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0726-1983>

---

**| ABSTRACT**

This study examines how Saudi women are discursively constructed in local sports news and explores how their engagement in sport is represented within the country's broader sociopolitical transformation. Adopting a corpus-assisted discourse analytical approach, the study analyses a specialised corpus of Saudi Gazette online news articles published between 2020 and 2024. Corpus linguistic tools are used to identify dominant thematic patterns, social actors, and social actions, which are subsequently interpreted through Theo van Leeuwen's socio-semantic framework. The findings reveal that Saudi women are increasingly constructed as visible and active participants across multiple sport domains, particularly in global competitions such as football and the Olympics. Material processes associated with participation, achievement, and institutional development dominate the discourse, positioning women as contributors to a rapidly expanding sporting landscape, although leadership and decision-making roles remain largely linked to institutional actors. By analysing Saudi women's representations in local media discourse, this study contributes to scholarship on Muslim women and sport by offering an internally grounded account that challenges dominant external portrayals of Muslim women as passive and marginalised. The findings demonstrate how sport discourse participates in constructing a progressive narrative of Saudi women's empowerment aligned with the national reform agenda of Saudi Vision 2030.

**| KEYWORDS**

Saudi women, sport media discourse, social actions, social actors, socio-semantic analysis

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 12 June 2026

**PUBLISHED:** 06 July 2026

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2026.9.7.13

---

**1. Introduction**

Women's roles in Saudi Arabia have long been defined by the religious and cultural beliefs of society (Al-Rasheed, 2013), which promote gender inequality by limiting women's roles in public spheres and marginalising them in social and political fields (Eum, 2019). However, the status of Saudi women (SW) has undergone considerable transformation following the announcement of Saudi Vision 2030, which marked a significant turning point in women's sociopolitical position. Social and political reforms that are widely considered supportive of women's advancement and empowerment within society have been introduced (Saudi Vision-2030, 2025). The national reform programme includes a plan aiming to promote women's visibility and participation in public domains including the sport sector that was traditionally a male-dominated field. Recent years have witnessed significant efforts to expand opportunities for SW in sporting activities. Aligned with Vision 2030 strategy, governmental investment in sport and health has significantly facilitated women's participation in international competitions and the Olympic games, establishing women's national teams, and admission of physical education programmes in girls' schools (Angerer, 2025). Within the initiative, sport is positioned as a strategic domain for empowering women and is increasingly recognized as a platform for international visibility, leadership, and national image construction, as well as a vehicle for showcasing progress towards gender equality in contemporary Saudi society (Ettinger, 2023). The present article aims to explore Saudi women's engagement in ongoing social transformation as constructed in local sport discourse.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Gender, representation and ideology in media discourse

Although women have been considered within media content, and there is more coverage and change in representations, they continue to face gender inequality in representation. Women have frequently been represented as subordinate to their male counterparts, who are positioned in leadership and political roles in media discourse. Women are often confined to domestic spheres centered on home and family. In other words, women have historically been underrepresented and marginalised across media outlets, as reflected in limited coverage and the restricted range of topics and roles that are discursively assigned to them (Lachover, 2012).

While women worldwide continue to face gender stereotyping and marginalisation in media, representations of Muslim women are further complicated by the intersection of cultural and religious factors that influence how their identities are constructed in international news outlets (A-Hejin, 2015; Zainah, 2022). Different studies investigating Muslim women in local and international media discourse have found that their portrayals vary according to cultural and political contexts. International media frequently frame this group as oppressed and marginalised, emphasising their struggle for rights (Al-Hejin, 2015). In contrast, local media construct women's identities through cultural, national, and religious narratives that position them as empowered and publicly active (Elias et al., 2020).

### 2.2 Women and sport in global media discourse

Globally, women continue to lag behind men in sport across various forms of activities and participation, a disparity that is reflected in their representations across media discourse. Within sports media studies, although substantial attention has been devoted to examining portrayals of female athletes, research consistently demonstrates that women remain under-represented compared to male athletes (Messner & Cooky, 2010). Moreover, the topic of women and sport has historically been marginalized in media coverage (Hargreaves, 2007) with sportswomen's achievements often trivialized and receiving less attention than those of men (Biscomb & Griggs, 2013). Together, these patterns reinforce the construction of sport as a male-dominated field (Messner et al., 1993).

*More recent studies have explored how sport discourse contributes to constructing gendered identities during Olympic events* (Jaworska, 2016; Jaworska and Hunt, 2017). Based on a large-scale corpus dataset examining the impact of global sport events on gender representations in media reporting, the findings showed that more balanced gender representations were observed and the Olympic event had, though temporary, a positive impact on these representations (Jaworska & Hunt, 2017). However, the positive representations are shaped by the complex intersecting factors of nationalism, race, gender and the perceived success of the social actors which collectively contribute to constructing a favourable image of sport actors. This suggests that media discourse covering sportswomen within such major sporting events foregrounds personal identity and marginalises female athletic competence.

Muslim women, including SW, who participate in the international sporting activities such as the Olympics, received little attention in the Western media. When brought into Western media discourse, their images are constructed through the lenses of gender and geopolitics, often misrepresented as the "other"- strange, incompetent, and out of place- reflecting an orientalist perspective that characterises the contemporary Western discussions of Islam and Muslim women (Ahmed, 2000). They are also identified in terms of their religious and cultural features, often depicted as being covered and accompanied by their male guardians in the sports activities (Elyas, & Aljabri, 2020; Angerer, 2025). In this regard, Toffoletti and Palmer (2015) call for further investigation to redress the limited understanding of Muslim women's representations for a more holistic understanding of Muslim experiences through the study of sport. Responding to this gap, this study examines SW's representation from an internal perspective as symbolised in local sport media to broaden prevailing understanding of Muslim women's image that has been shaped by deficit modals emerging from externally "othered" discursive constructions.

### 2.3 From marginalisation to visibility: SW, sport reform, and media narratives

The phenomenon of gender inequality in sport participation alongside the biased representation of women in sport activities' is also evident in the Saudi context (Angerer, 2025). More recently, there has been a growing scholarly interest in SW's participation in the sports sector. This attention is driven by the shift from limited involvement to an increasingly ambitious level of engagement, reflecting the broader socio-economic transformation initiated under Vision 2030 (Angerer, 2025). Before the reforming movements, the societal and cultural norms shaped gendered sporting landscapes, where women preferred to participate in female-only sporting environments (Alruwaili, 2020), which governed women's public engagement. However, under the leadership of the Saudi Deputy Crown, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi national identity has shifted toward a moderate Islamic balanced orientation that shapes daily life as well as the sports landscape. Ménoret (2005) argues that the Saudi national identity is constructed through the interplay between traditional values and global influences. This balance is clear in sport in the country, which is going through a rapid transformation, where Western models are adopted to local contexts (Taylor et al., 2023).

Amid the rapid transformation of Saudi national identity, women are increasingly asserting their rights to move beyond traditional domestic roles, including participation in sport (Lysa, 2020). The role of sport and its importance for women's health and the adoption of healthy lifestyles have since been documented in Saudi Arabia, and a clear need for more opportunities for Saudi girls and women has been identified. SW's participation in football, which is the most popular sport in Saudi Arabia, and which is seen as a masculine sport, marks women's societal engagement indicating the transformation in the socio-cultural status of the country (Lysa, 2020). Importantly, the increasing institutional support for women's engagement in sport aligns with the country's national objectives to use sport as a key tool to diversify the economic resources and to promote gender equality (Saudi Vision 2030, 2025). Media coverage of SW engagement in sport sector is extensive, where local and international narratives cover different events including SW as active participants. Although women's participation in sport is acknowledged and reported in different media channels, scholarly investigations into how Muslim and Arab women are discursively constructed and positioned within discourse on sport in local and international media remain underexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining the representations of SW's engagement in sport. By analysing the construction of Saudi sportswomen within a leading Saudi newspaper through a socio-semantic lens, the study offers a discourse-based account of how women's identities are positioned within the national sporting landscape. In doing so, it provides an internally grounded perspective on local media narratives, moving beyond externally framed portrayals and highlighting how women's agency is articulated within the national transformation discourse. Therefore, the research questions are:

1. What sport themes are discursively associated with SW in Saudi Gazette?
2. How is SW's engagement in sport sector discursively constructed?
3. How are female actors represented, and what types of actions are allocated to them?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Corpus method**

The study employs the word frequency list and the Word Sketch corpus tool to identify sport themes, and to pinpoint social actions and actors. Word frequencies are defined as the number of times a linguistic item occurs in a corpus. The most frequent words are obtained from the word list that normally rank all words by their number of hits in the corpus (Baker, 2006). Word Sketch, on the other hand, is an advanced tool provided by Sketch Engine that produces a summary of a word's grammatical and collocational behaviour within a corpus, illustrating how the node is grammatically related to surrounding words (Kilgarriff et al., 2014). This tool is valuable for the present study because it identifies verbs that colligate with references to female actors, enabling the analysis of social actions allocated to them in discourse. Concordance lines and collocations are checked when further contextual detail is required.

A word frequency list is first produced using Sketch Engine corpus tool to enable the collection, identification and categorisation references to the main sport themes, social actors, and actions with 10 or more occurrences in the dataset. In this context, dominant themes are inductively identified from the frequency list by grouping recurrent lexical items into semantic clusters that represent broader sport domains in the discourse. The corpus-derived semantic categories are further validated through manual textual analysis.

All verbs present in the corpus are retrieved through the word frequency list tool and systematically categorised into semantic groups of social actions. The frequency list is also examined to identify lexical items referring to female social actors, which are then classified according to their reference strategies.

The analysis of role allocation to women is assisted by the Word Sketch function in Sketch Engine, which generates detailed grammatical profiles of references to women and their syntactic positions. This contributes to exploring the social roles and how they are discursively allocated to female actors. The identified patterns of social actions and actors are then studied and interpreted within van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008) socio-semantic framework as discussed in the following section.

#### **3.2 Discourse analysis method**

This paper employs van Leeuwen's socio-semantic framework of social actions and social actors for the qualitative analysis. This framework is adopted for its capacity to categorise discursive choices according to socio-semantic meanings and to systematically analyse the representations of social actors and their interactions in the text.

##### **3.2.1 Social action theory**

Inspired by Halliday's (1985) work, van Leeuwen's (1995, 2008) social action theory focuses on how social practices are represented in discourse. Exploring social practice and how it is constructed in discourse is important to investigate representations (van Leeuwen, 1995). According to van Leeuwen, social actions are classified into detailed types. However, the present study draws on

selected aspects of this framework, focusing on the distinction between actions and reactions to address the second research question. Within this framework, social actions are classified into two principal categories: reactions and actions. Reactions denote internal or mental responses to performed actions (van Leeuwen, 1995). They may be cognitive (e.g., thinking or realising), affective, expressed through emotions (e.g., feeling, loving), or perceptive, indicating sensory reactions (e.g., hearing or seeing). Some reactions to performed actions are not explicitly specified and are expressed through general verbs such as 'react' or 'respond'; these are therefore categorised as unspecified reactions.

The actions, on the other hand, indicate observable and performable deeds. They are classified into further subtypes namely material and semiotic actions. Material actions are categorised as interactive transactive (targeting a human actor), instrumental transactive (targeting objects), and non-transactive, when no target is involved or when the process is behavioural (e.g., crying, smiling). The semiotic actions, on the other hand, function to construct meaning in discourse through symbols or forms of communication such as speaking and writing. They are produced to express how an idea is conveyed, i.e., the nature of the signifier (form specification); explain what is being talked about, i.e., the nature of the specified (topic specification); represent something through reported speech (rendition); or (quotation) which involves citing others' words to enhance the credibility of an embedded meaning (van Leeuwen, 1996).

### **3.2.2 Social actors approach**

The Social Actors Approach (SAA) is employed to analyse representations of SW in sport discourse and to address the third research question. Van Leeuwen's (2008) SAA offers a comprehensive framework for analysing representations of social actors in discourse. This approach provides the study with tools for the critical textual analysis of the socio-semantic representations, allowing the identification of how included actors are identified and categorised according to specific reference strategies, as well as how roles are allocated to them within discourse. This approach also allows the grammatical categorisation of roles as active, passive, or beneficial. However, van Leeuwen (2008) emphasises socio-semantic rather than purely grammatical categories, focusing on how actors are represented in discourse through their social roles and functions rather than their syntactic positions.

According to the SAA, social actors are either excluded or included. Exclusion occurs through suppression (complete omission) or backgrounding (indirect reference), while inclusion means identifying the actor in discourse. This study focuses on the included actors only, who are further classified based on discursive strategies of determination and role allocation. Determination refers to how social actors are constructed in discourse using strategies such as nominalisation (proper nouns), pronominalisation (pronouns), and categorisation using identity- or function- based labels (e.g., student, leader, dentist, activist). Role allocation aspect distinguishes between activated roles, where actors are shown as agent initiators of action, and passivated roles -where actors are patient recipients or affected participants. Activation and passivation can be expressed grammatically through the positioning of actors as subjects or objects, the use of active and passive voice, and the deployment of modals and possessives. In general, this approach helps to see how discourse constructs identity, agency, and power through linguistic choices, making it particularly useful for analysing social actors (van Leeuwen, 2008).

### **3.3 Data**

The study is based on a corpus composed of Saudi online newspaper articles published between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2024. This time frame is selected as it represents a transformative phase marked by structural shifts in gender inclusion across social domains, aligning with the implementation of Saudi Vision 2030 and reforms in women's social and political status. The source of the articles is the Saudi Gazette online news platform, which is a leading local freely accessible Saudi news organisation that is published in English. This source was selected as it is a key platform through which national perspectives are communicated to international audiences, shaping perceptions across diverse cultural contexts. A search of LexisNexis news database using the subject terms 'Saudi women in sport' or 'Saudi women and sport', limited to the selected time frame, retrieved 57 articles from the newspaper's full print edition. The final dataset comprised 44,000 tokens, which were uploaded to Sketch Engine for corpus analysis and subsequent qualitative discourse analysis.

To answer the research questions, an approach combining corpus analysis methods and qualitative discourse analysis is applied in this study. Using corpus methods, the first step is to identify and classify the existing macrostructural sport themes, references to social actors, and verbs referring to social actions. A manual analysis and classification are then needed to support the corpus analysis results. This is followed by conducting a qualitative socio-semantic analysis of the identified themes, actions, and actors. Drawing on this combination of corpus analysis and socio-semantic analysis, this study outlines a comprehensive social representations model to examine the portrayal of SW in sport within national media. Although context-specific, the model offers a transferable framework for analysing social actors' representations in other contexts.

**4. Results**

The corpus word list tool was customised to generate nouns and verbs with a minimum frequency of 10 occurrences or more in order to identify and highlight references to sport themes, social actions, and female social actors.

**4.1 Sport themes**

The word frequency list reveals that the most frequent lexical items refer to the general theme of sport, constituting the overarching thematic category that encompasses other subthemes in the corpus. In total, these terms occur 555 times, including sport (417), sports (100), and sporting (38). This is not surprising as the data was compiled based on the search terms ‘women and sport’. The list also displays frequent references to different social domains and activities such as participation, competitions, achievement, and success, as well as various sporting activities.

To enhance the credibility of the word frequency list results and categorise them into semantic domains, the findings were triangulated by cross-examining the headlines, subtitles, and lead paragraphs of the articles to identify the macrostructural themes (van Dijk, 1988). Thus, the thematic analysis resulted in four dominant themes: Participation and Competition, Achievements, Football, and Emerging Sports. Table 1 presents the identified themes with frequent lexical items in the corpus grouped under each theme according to their shared semantic features.

<b>Sport themes</b>	<b>Terms with frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
Participation and Competition	team (209), Olympic(s) (148), athlete (119), participation (117), federation (111), international (108), event (102), competition (86), club (60), champion (55), league, (55), tournament (50), program (40), challenge (37), match (25)	1322
Achievements	Winner (104), cup (78), champion (55), achievement (50), goal (49), development, (46) success (42), medal (25)	449
Football	Football (116), game (76) SFA (60), Concacaf (34), FIFA (31), (football), cup (30), WFL (27), (football), player (12)	386
Specific emerging sports	Golf (86), fitness (33), game (30), netball (25), taekwondo (25), tennis (15), boxing (15), basketball (15), Esports (13), bowling (12), cricket (11), volleyball (10)	287

*Table 1: Sport domains*

There is a heavy focus on Participation and Competition discourse (1,322 references), which suggests a dynamic atmosphere encompassing national and global activities and competitions. Within the domain of Achievements, references to positively evaluated outcomes—primarily collocating with female actors—are notably frequent, indicating a discursive construction of competence, success, and excellence. The Football domain includes substantial number of references to football-related semantic items. Manual concordance analysis shows that these terms predominantly collocate with collective references to women, such as (female) players, or are explicitly gender-marked, such as WFL (Women’s Football League). Other less common sport types, though less frequent than football-related references, remain represented. The presence of nouns categorised as Specific Emerging Sports reflects the growing diversity of sporting activities in which women are made visible. The frequency list tool combined with the close qualitative readings of parts of the articles, confirms the centrality of these four major themes that represent the sport domains within which SW are situated. These results are further substantiated through the analysis of social actions as discussed in the following section.

**4.2 Social actions**

Informed by the frequency word list, customised to generate verbs, a total of 638 verbs were identified in the corpus. For analytical consistency, only verbs occurring 10 times or more were considered. Accordingly, 83 verbs were classified as reactions and actions and analysed within van Leeuwen’s social action framework. The social action analysis provides insights into the interactions constructed around women, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of their representations.

**4.2.1 Reactions**

The verb frequency list was manually examined to identify reactions, as defined within van Leeuwen’s social action framework. The resulting 15 frequent verbs are grouped into different reaction types, as displayed in Table 2.

Reaction type	Frequency of reactions	Total
Cognitive	aim (35), believe (13), try (13), consider (12), think (10), know (10), recognize (10)	103
Affective	love (21), want (16), enjoy (15), hope (15), feel (10)	77
Perceptive	look (24), see (16), hear (16)	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	

Table 2: Social reactions

The highest in frequency are cognitive reactions, which require specific mental processing. In contrast, perceptive verbs, which express sensory reactions, are the lowest in frequency. They are used in the data to imply observations and recognition of specific points or views, e.g., "we see the empowerment as a dream" and "when you look at how young our squad is". 77 occurrences express affective reactions related to the emotional states.

By checking several concordance lines involving these reactions, it was found that they colligate with different types of actors, both individual and collective, e.g. committees, programs, athletes, players, or even individual references to ministers, leaders, and princes.

#### 4.2.2 Material actions

An examination of the verb list generated by Sketch Engine reveals that material action verbs are higher both in number and in overall frequency compared to social reaction verbs. 1,435 occurrences for 49 material verbs were identified. They are quantified and classified grammatically and semantically in Table 3.

Action verb frequencies	Total	Material action type	Semantic domain
include (87) host (44), follow (35), play (34), join (21), attend (18), take (17), practice (13)	564	Transactive	Participation and Engagement,
participate (61), hold (60), compete (48), come (43), work (42), go (20), take place (11), take part (10)		Non-transactive	
support (37), encourage (34), help (33), empower (27), promote (25), raise (25), provide (22), lead (19), appoint (15), drive (15), serve (15), use (11)	372	Transactive	Support, Empowerment and Leadership
contribute (42), work (42), lead (10)		Non-transactive	
create (45), develop (23), increase (33), build (31), launch (18), organize (18), enhance (15), manage (13), establish (21), form (12), train (11)	304	Transactive	Development and Institutional Growth
grow, (37), develop (15), begin (12)		Non-transactive	
achieve (49), celebrate (20), start (16), reach (16), prepare (16)	195	Transactive	Achievement and Performance
become (51), win (27)		Non-transactive	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1435</b>		

Table 3: Material social actions

The identified material verbs signal the social interactions surrounding SW in the discursive context. They are semantically classified into domains that represent the general meaning of these actions. Within the domain of Participation and Engagement, material verbs such as 'include', 'participate', 'join', and 'compete' recur throughout the discourse. The processes including these verbs foreground actively engaging roles, indicating women's involvement in this social domain and, more specifically, in the sport domain. See the following examples:

1. 30% of sporting federations have included female members
2. Woman will now be joining the Ladies First Club in a bid to encourage other women to stay healthy

It is noted that 'women' are prominent actors in non-transactive actions as indicated by examples 3 and 4:

3. Women have registered to participate in other tournaments such as the 15th Arab Sports Championship.
4. women's team will compete at the World Bowling Women's Championships in Las Vegas.

The Support, Empowerment and Leadership category comprises high-frequency verbs that denote agency, empowerment, and decision-making actions. These actions are performed by powerful institutional actors, such as governmental bodies or authorities, who are positioned as agents capable of empowering, leading, and providing support. These actions signal efforts to transform women's social status realised through verbs such as 'empower', 'raise', 'promote', 'appoint' and 'support'.

In Development and Institutional Growth, most processes, including the material transactive verbs foreground institutional performances and development-oriented actions that aim to facilitate women's participation in sport. Examples of these actions are the organisation of gender-focused conferences, the launch of nationwide women's leagues, and the initiation of international partnerships, including collaborations with global bodies such as the International Olympic Committee. Companies and committees such as SAOK, SFA, WFL, and IOC are very active actors who perform agentive actions as illustrated in examples 5 and 6.

5. November 27-28 SAOC organised the first conference of "Gender Equity and Women Leadership"
6. Last month, the SFA launched the Women's Football League (WFL), a nationwide community-level league that is open for females aged 17 and above

The Achievement and Performance domain includes the fewest actions, as indicated by the included verbs. The transactive action 'achieve' is the highest in frequency, suggesting that there are goals of success, excellence, and recognition that have been or are aimed to be accomplished. For example:

7. This signals just the beginning of what we want to achieve with these girls

'become' is a frequent non-transactive verb that appears repeatedly to suggest positive change and transformation:

8. As a result, sport has become a growing part of everyday life in Saudi Arabia at every level, from amateur to elite.

Most of the verbs that express empowerment and development are assigned to actors in positions of authority, whether governmental institutions, official committees, or individuals holding leadership roles—both male and female—such as ministers, princesses, and managers:

9. He indicated that the Kingdom would organize the first open women's taekwondo championship next February
10. The region prepares to host major football tournaments in the coming years

Individual female citizens are frequently constructed as active agents in the Participation and Engagement and Achievement and Performance domains, but are only conditionally positioned in the planning or leadership domains, compare examples 11 and 12:

11. Dania recently won the FIA Cross Country Bajas World Cup in the T3 category
12. Princess Reema Bint Bandar's role was the first female role in a leading position – deputy of planning and development – in sport

While in example 11, Dania is positioned as a female participant who won the World Cup, example 12 constructs the identity of the princess, who is characterised by her social and political position as a leader.

In general, the presented examples—and similar instances across the data—feature transactive actions spanning various social domains, collectively constructing a positive image of a dynamic and developing context. This interactive setting, which includes SW, reinforces their favourable representation.

#### **4.2.3 Semiotic actions**

Other actions reflect a lower degree of social interaction as they are semiotic in nature. These verbs were coded for their discursive function—as meaning-making resources—rather than their grammatical form. A total of 506 occurrences for semiotic verbs were identified, occurring less frequently than material actions. Nineteen of the most frequent verbs are presented in Table 5, ordered by frequency.

Semiotic verb frequencies	Total
say (130), announce (95), add (47), represent (44), inspire(20), deliver (17), witness (17), welcome (15), tell (14), share (14), explain (13), show (12), showcase (12), note (12), offer (12), sign (12), express (11), discuss (10), write (10)	506

Table 4: Semiotic social actions

These verbs are used in the data to convey specific meanings or ideas (van Leeuwen, 1995). The types of semiotic actions are recognised from their positions in the discursive context. For example, the action expressed by 'said' can be a quotation in some instances, while in others it functions as rendition. Example 13 expresses rendition, as it reports the speech of Ali to symbolise or rephrase the abstract meaning of eligibility for successful female boxers and to shape a specific perception.

13. Ali expressed she and her opponent together would show that women deserved to be on this big stage and to box in Saudi Arabia

However, quotation semiotic actions are the most frequent, with 205 occurrences, expressed through verbs such as 'say', 'add', and 'explain', accounting for approximately 42% of the total semiotic verbs. Journalists quote the words of prominent actors to legitimise ideas or create a specific perception. In the examined data, this type of semiotic action is reserved for prominent female actors. Statements by sheikhs, princesses, leaders, managers, pioneers of female athletics, and some responsible male actors are quoted to enhance the credibility of the embedded meaning:

14. Princes Nourah said: "Regardless of our ranking today, we will work hard to improve".  
 15. Dr. Al-Aqabi explained, "The inclusion of women is also considered a recent update to our federations".  
 16. The football coach added "Football is no longer restricted to men in the Kingdom, and women's tournaments are achieving continuous success and high competitiveness around the world,"

Semiotic actions may indicate the nature of the signifier, as illustrated by the terms 'story' and 'agreement' in examples 17 and 18.

17. By showcasing her story, REDTAG seeks to inspire countless others to pursue their dreams - young or old, man or woman  
 18. Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Sport on Monday signed an agreement with NEOM to support its plan to become a world-leading destination for sports.

The semiotic actions 'showcasing' in 17 and 'signed' in 18 represent the forms of conveying the meaning of success by telling her story, and that of agreement by signing a document. Verbs such as 'announce', which occurs frequently, and 'deliver' are formal semiotic actions within formal contexts, used to describe the conveyed topic, e.g., 'the completion of preparing 200 sports halls', 'her visit to Aramco Team Series', and 'The opening speeches' in examples 19, 20, and 21:

19. Saudi Arabia's Education Ministry has announced the completion of preparing 200 sports halls in the government girls' schools.  
 20. Commenting on her visit to the Aramco Team Series and her first golf lesson, Princes Nourah said: "It was very pleasing, a lot more fun than I expected and I loved it."  
 21. The opening speeches will be delivered by President of India

'Show', 'showcase', 'represent', and 'share' are allocated to a variety of individuals or groups who recontextualise selected social practices of achievement and successful experiences and share them with audiences.

22. Dunia Abu Taleb will represent Saudi Arabia in taekwondo, competing in the 49 kg category  
 23. The Kingdom is also represented by six national teams, both male and female, in regional and international tournaments.  
 In general, the presented analysis of verbs reveals the social actions surrounding female actors. However, to answer the third research question, female actors and actions allocated to them require further exploration to see how they are represented in sport discourse.

#### 4.3 Female Social actors

The word frequency list was employed to generate references to female social actors. Recurrent nouns and pronouns referring to the female actors were identified. Generic nouns that may refer to both men and women, e.g., 'athlete', 'player', and 'leader', were

further tagged in the data and coded for gender. Table 5 presents the frequencies of terms referring to female actors, categorised according to van Leeuwen’s (2008) socio-semantic reference strategies.

Reference strategy	Frequencies of social actors	Total
1. Genericization	wom*n (502) girl(s) (58), ladies (17) men and women (10)	587
2. Pronominal	she (139), her (128), they (20), them (15)	302
3. Nomination	references to 15 feminine names (103) WFL (15), IBF (10) Women in Sport Committee (10), Women Football Department (10)	148
4. Honorifics	Princess (30), Dr. (13), Ms (11)	54
5. Functionalisation	athlete (35), player (22), leader (16) champion (15), ambassador (15), director (14), minister (12), student (10), winner (10), chairwoman (10)	159
6. Relational	daughter (7), wife/wives (0), sister(s) 1, mother (4)	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>1262</b>	

Table 5: Female social actors

Female actors are most referenced through their generic form ‘wom\*n’ (502 occurrences) followed by ‘girls’ and ‘ladies’. The strategy of genericising ‘women’ suggests a discursive emphasis on the typical type of SW. On the other hand, specific types of women are referred to using the proper names of individual female actors. Only 15 specific female actors were identified by proper names, accounting for 103 references across the corpus. Female actors are also specified and pre-nominated using gender singular third person pronouns of ‘she’ and ‘her’, and fewer occurrences of the third person plural feminine pronoun ‘they’ and ‘them’. These pronominal references were coded for the actors’ names and functions. They refer to Saudi and non-Saudi women with different social functions. Interestingly, the third-person pronoun ‘her’ (see examples in Figure 3) occurs more frequently in possessive constructions than as an object pronoun in the data. She broke her record for the 100-meter race”.

experienced a golf clinic with two Golf Saudi coaches, whilst watching	her	cousin Prince Khalid Al Faisal play in the event as an amateur.</s>
<s>Soon after, she began working on private commissions, developing	her	craft and building upon her previous academic work in Paris and Lc
orking on private commissions, developing her craft and building upon	her	previous academic work in Paris and London.</s><s>Princess Nol
<s>Princess Nourah’s visit to the Aramco Team Series was inspired by	her	love of sport and having lived in the UK for many years, she was vi
l with Golf Saudi to discuss new opportunities.</s><s>Commenting on	her	visit to the Aramco Team Series and her first golf lesson, Princess I
ities.</s><s>Commenting on her visit to the Aramco Team Series and	her	first golf lesson, Princess Nourah said: "It was very pleasing, a lot n
/journalist.</s><s>Growing up in a sports-loving family, Baker followed	her	dream to become a sports columnist, where she noticed the limited
untry.</s><s>Baker has been a big part of this success and therefore	her	appointment to lead the IBF’s Women in Sport committee was not i
on.</s><s>I and the IBF Executive Board look forward to working with	her	in the future to champion our female athletes to the next level."</s>
F and its member federations. – SG Recognized by versatile skills and	her	ability to combine varied interests such as sketching, scripting, corr
id last February.</s><s>In an interview with Sayidaty, Taiba discussed	her	writing: "I’ve always loved telling and collecting stories.</s><s>I am
characters, easy to communicate with," Taibah told Sayidaty explaining	her	vision of the characters.</s><s>Regarding the current state of the l
convinced that the Saudi woman is capable of conveying the reality of	her	life and raising her issues.</s><s>No one outside Saudi Arabia car
Saudi woman is capable of conveying the reality of her life and raising	her	issues.</s><s>No one outside Saudi Arabia can do that because th
the Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Commission, expressed	her	deep concern about the media’s treatment of Algerian boxer Imane
>"Imane Khelif is a woman.</s><s>She was born a girl, and has lived	her	entire life as a female," Princess Reema emphasized.</s><s>She r
ma highlighted the boxer’s determination and resilience, saying, "From	her	girlhood as the daughter of a loving family in rural Algeria, Imane K
the daughter of a loving family in rural Algeria, Imane Khelif has worked	her	entire life to become an Olympian, competing in front of the world.<
filled with determination, grit, and persistence."</s><s>She expressed	her	dismay at the attempts to undermine Khelif’s womanhood, stating, '

Figure 1: Possessive female pronoun

In several other instances, the object pronoun ‘her’ shows a reflexive process where the female actor acts on herself, e.g., “AbulJadayel had registered herself as the athletics champion”.

The fourth and fifth categories in Table 5 present distinctive classifications of women based on their social positioning. These include the honorific titles (e.g., princess), institutional or agentive roles (e.g., leaders and ambassadors), as well as sport-specific identities that are constructed as 'players', 'athletes' and 'champions'. Overall, the functionalisation category comprises 147 references, foregrounding women in professional and athletic roles. Leadership-related titles such as 'leader', 'minister' and 'ambassador' index women occupying high-ranking social, most notably Princess Reema Bint Bandar<sup>1</sup>, Princess Nourah bint Mohammed AlFaisal<sup>2</sup>, Princess Dilayl bint Nahar<sup>3</sup>, Shaima Saleh Alhuseini,<sup>4</sup> and Monika Staab<sup>5</sup>, whose positions symbolically reinforce elite female visibility within the sport domain.

As displayed in Category 6, the relational references occur only minimally in the dataset. Women are rarely identified in their internal roles or kinship ties to male relatives suggesting a discursive backgrounding of their conventional, stereotypical roles within the domestic sphere.

Although this study primarily examines the referencing patterns of female actors, it is important to mention that the dataset also contains a notable number of references to male actors, which merit consideration when understanding the broader representational context. Eleven male actors are nominated, with 133 occurrences in total. Elite male actors are additionally marked through the premodification of their names with formal address titles or through the alternative use of such titles alone, including 'Prince' (83), 'King' (33), 'President' (50), 'Crown' (20), and 'Dr' (43). Additionally, male actors are referred to through third-person singular and plural pronouns including 'he' (57), 'him' (6), 'they' (42) and 'them' (25). Male actors are also constructed through institutional functionalisation, being defined by their formal roles, such as 'leader' (34), 'minister' (30), and 'chairman' (23), as well as through generic masculine references 'm\*n' (20).

To give a comprehensive understanding of women's representation in the sport domain, the next section examines the roles allocated to female actors and the patterns through which they are discursively constructed.

### Roles' allocation

All types of references to female actors are examined for their grammatical positions as subjects or objects. Table 6 presents the generated verbs, including low-frequency verbs, as even less frequent occurrences may carry analytical significance. They are classified according to their social agency roles into activation, passivation, and beneficialisation. The latter category refers to verbs that position women as beneficiaries, typically identified through the prepositions 'for' and 'to'.

Role allocation	Activated	passivated	Beneficialised
	be (55), say (36) have (20), participate (20), represent (20), add (18), become (15), win (12), develop(10), work (6), establish (5), enter (4), express (4), want (4), break (3), compete (3), play(3), join (3), stress (3), hold (3), constitute (2), score (2), grow (2), help (2), create (2), do(2) award(2), learn(2), present (2), comprise (2), sign(2), chase(2), practice (2), register (2), recognize (2) record (2), see (1), lead (1), rise(1), look (1), begin (1), face(1), think (1), feel(1), achieve(1), form(1), take (1), contribute (1), start (1) commence (1), disclose (1)	empower (27) appoint (15), encourage (12), help (11), include (10), make (6), crown (5), tell (5), enable (5), support (5), allow (4), host (3), honor (3), treat(3), provide(3), launch (3), fund (3), earn (2), target (2), introduce (2) train, (2) bear(2), enhance (2), prepare, (2), enrich (2),	'for' 37, 'to' 15
<b>Total</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>52</b>

Table 6: Female actor's role allocations (Interactive roles)

<sup>1</sup> The Saudi ambassador to the United States and a member of the international Olympic Committee

<sup>2</sup> An internationally recognized designer and entrepreneur

<sup>3</sup> The deputy director of the Saudi Games

<sup>4</sup> the SFA managing Director

<sup>5</sup> Women's Technical Director

Table 6 presents all verbs that collocate with references to female actors, both as subjects and objects, in the dataset. Only 52 instances explicitly position women as beneficiaries, where actions are performed 'for' or 'to' women as illustrated in the following examples:

24. There are many reforms related to women
25. The most favourable sports environment is prevailing in the Kingdom for women,
26. the program is already open for women aged 18 years or older who interested in take part in the event.
27. The Minister offered support to all women

Women are predominantly constructed as activated agents through their recurrent association with the verbs 'be' and 'have'. The verb 'be' is the most frequent (55 occurrences), typically collocating with women in the subject position. When manually checked, it was found that not all occurrences of the verbs 'be' and 'have' are realised as actions performed by women. Eleven occurrences of 'be' and five of 'have' are used to construct passive clauses, in which women occupy the subject position, thereby signaling a reduction in agency, e.g.,

28. In 2020, she was appointed as a consultant
29. Yara Abul Jadayel has been qualified to participate in the 100-meter race

Apart from 'be' and 'have', although a wide range of verbs collocate with women in the subject position, the frequency of each individual verb remains relatively low. Taken collectively, these verbs construct women as active agents of progress and transformation, foregrounding processes of advancement and institutional participation through items such as 'become', 'represent', 'work', 'play', 'develop', and 'establish'.

On the other hand, female actors are positioned as objects receiving certain social actions. In this context, although grammatically passivated, women are mainly constructed as beneficiaries, with verbs denoting actions carried out for their benefit. Examples of verbs positioning women as beneficiaries include 'empower', 'appoint', 'encourage', 'help', and 'support'. See the following sentences:

30. Razan Baker has been appointed the chairperson of the International Bowling
31. Federation's Women in Sport Committee making Adwa Alarifi the first Saudi woman to be allowed to lead women's football in the Kingdom.
32. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has launched several programs to empower women.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 Sport domains**

This study aimed to investigate how SW are constructed in local sports news. The socio-semantic approach offers a useful analytical framework for addressing this question. The study contributes an internally grounded understanding of how women's identity is constructed within national sporting and transformation discourse. In answering the first research question, the findings of thematic analysis revealed the sport-related social domains and how they are positively constructed. The results suggest that women are prominently and positively integrated within the overarching domain of sport, and across four identified sport subdomains, with particularly strong representation in the sphere of global competitive events such as the Olympic games. This indicates a growing commitment to integrating women into international sporting events and enhancing their representative roles in alignment with Saudi strategic initiatives aimed at mobilising and empowering all citizens.

In contrast to the domestic domains of kinship, family, and household, stereotypically associated with SW, the findings revealed their increasing inclusion in more active public spheres, such as sport, a domain previously reserved for Saudi men. Furthermore, the represented sport domains surrounding women are discursively constructed as dynamic, reflecting mixed gender interactions, and interconnected local and international engagements embedded within broader political and social processes. This representation signals a significant transformation in SW's social and cultural status.

Discourse on women and football dominated the dataset, portraying women as active participants, particularly within this field. This is a noteworthy finding, given that football is widely recognised—both internationally and locally—as a traditionally male-dominated domain. Such representation therefore challenges conventional gender roles historically reinforced in the media (Messner, 1993). In addition, the findings point to the emergence of less conventional sports, including basketball, netball, and boxing. Historically, such activities were not widely accessible to or institutionally specified for women in Saudi Arabia. Their increasing visibility in the dataset suggests a shifting discursive landscape that constructs a more progressive image of SW.

Overall, the discursively constructed sport domains signal a shift in the stereotypical portrayal of SW—from their historical marginalisation and absence in public and professional spheres to their increasing visibility and institutional legitimacy within the sporting field.

## 5.2 Social actions

The results of analysing the social actions reveal the interactional patterns surrounding SW within the constructed sport domains, demonstrating how SW's engagement in sport is discursively constructed. Figure 2 summarises the percentage distribution of the action types in the dataset.

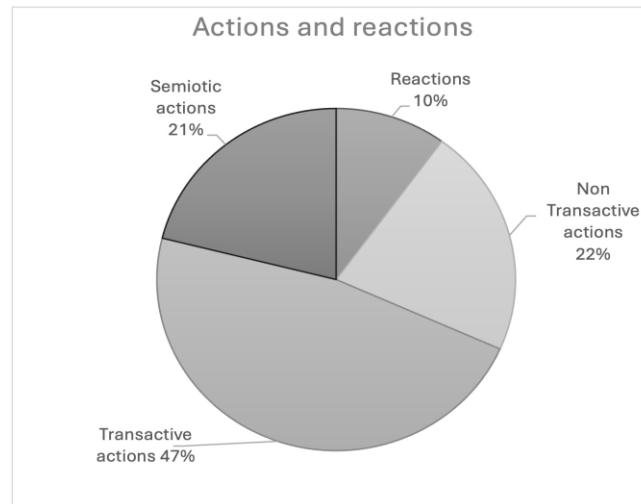


Figure 1: Percentages of Social actions and reactions

As the findings indicate, the reactions to the performed actions are mainly cognitive in nature, with some reflecting elements of planning, proposals, ambition, or positive emotional evaluation. This result conveys a sense of satisfaction and institutional acceptance regarding the actions undertaken within the context. Compared to the material actions, the occurrences of the reactions are low in frequency, which suggests a more dynamic developing context. Additionally, it has been found that all types of actors—male and female, individual and collective—are positioned as reactors, suggesting a representational tendency toward equality in the allocation of reactive roles.

The results also showed that the predominance of material actions in the discourse constructs a dynamic and development-oriented context. Material transactive actions which target real development, change, and achievements related to and supporting female social actors are prioritised throughout the examined discourse. This indicates a positive change in the representation of SW as opposed to the previous discursive practices of marginalisation and underrepresentation in local media discourse, particularly in sport discourse (Elias, 2021). The results of analysing the semiotic actions explored the meanings and topics intended to be conveyed. It was found that the quotational semiotic actions are in the majority, with women's words being the most frequently cited. This confirms the discursive presence of women's voices in discourse contrasting with the previous marginalisation or absence.

Together, the material and semiotic actions contribute to constructing meanings of development, achievement, and success functioning as representational practices that position female social actors within symbolic domains of visibility, legitimacy, and public meaning. From a methodological perspective, the analysis of social actions supports and further illustrates the findings of the thematic analysis, demonstrating the value of integrating the analysis of themes and social actions to reveal the discursive construction of SW's engagement

## 5.3 Female social actors

Exploring the female social actors in the dataset is central to answering the third research question. The analysis of the female social actors identified 1,262 instances of varied reference strategies, a predictable finding given the specialised corpus focuses on women. What is surprising is the visibility of male actors in the discourse, as they actively participate in the actions and reactions that construct the sport domain. This indicates a mixed-gender context in which both men and women are present and engaged, thereby contesting dominant stereotypes that frame the country as characterised by rigid gender separation. In addition, despite their relatively limited frequency, references to non-Saudi female actors signal a broader international dimension. This expands the constructed sport domain beyond the national frame, foregrounding global female participation and embedding SW within international sporting networks.

The analysis further revealed that women are represented both as individual actors and as members of a generic collective category. These two forms occur at comparable frequencies, with a slight quantitative emphasis on individual women. This signifies a balanced representational strategy which presents the successful active individual actors as representatives of a broader social

collective. This in turn suggests a form of managed empowerment where women’s agency in the sport context is acknowledged yet framed within normative and institutional narratives. In addition to this balanced construction, the diverse referential strategies through which women are allocated varied institutional, professional, and sporting roles signal an expanded and innovative construction of women’s agency in this domain. At the institutional level, the recurrent references to female collective bodies and committees, such as WFL, IBF, and SFA sports for all, function as a discursive strategy that foregrounds gender equity, institutional support and governance-led commitment to gender inclusion in sport. The narratives on these emerging entities construct meanings that shape audience perceptions of SW’s participation in sport.

**Role allocation**

A noteworthy finding is that SW’s reactions are with significantly lower frequency than actions. Additionally, the majority of actions are realised in activated forms (see Table 7). The analysis of the material processes further indicates their visibility as initiating actors in non-transactive processes. These findings point to an active and progressively advancing construction of SW’s roles within the sport sector. However, while women are constructed as active participants in sporting activities, their agency is limited within the decision-making and transformative actions as positions of structural influence remain largely male-dominated. This does not mean that women are entirely excluded from agentive roles; instances of leadership are primarily linked to female actors holding formal authority positions such as ministers or members of the royal family. These findings may suggest that women are still in the early stages of empowerment within the sporting field, as most of the identified actions are directed toward enabling and supporting their broader societal empowerment. When women are passivated as objects, it was found that references to them are targeted by supporting actions, exemplified by ‘empower’, ‘encourage’, and ‘support’, which position them as beneficiaries. Women are visible and their voices are heard as suggested by the semiotic verbs that are allocated to them. Affective or emotional reactions allocated to women are relatively low infrequency, which suggests a shift in the image of women in general, and SW in particular who are stereotypically portrayed as passive agents with emotional actions allocated to them such as ‘cry’ and ‘smile’ (Lazar, 2005).

Activated	Passivated	Beneficialised
292	139	52

*Table 7: Allocations of roles to female actors*

Overall, in answering the research questions, the findings revealed the positive construction of SW in sport. This positive representation of SW and the constructed sport domains reflect broader socio-political transformations aligned with Vision 2030’s agenda of women’s empowerment and expanded public participation. These representations also reflect evolving social realities while shaping public perceptions of SW, as discourse both shapes and is shaped by society (Fairclough, 1992). This study, therefore, contributes to expanding the perceptions of the representations of Muslim women across different news outlets, reflecting the influence of ideological, cultural, and political factors (Angerer, 2025) articulated by both local and international organisations.

**6. Conclusion**

The study aimed to explore the representation of SW, providing a discourse-based analysis of their positioning within the national sporting landscape. The corpus-assisted discourse method demonstrates its effectiveness in answering the study question. The word frequency corpus analysis enabled the identification of dominant lexical patterns, revealing which themes were foregrounded in the discourse. In addition, examining the word list helped to explore how women are frequently identified in the data and defined in their professional roles in sport. Through corpus analysis, all the social actions taking place in the discursive context were collected, and through the Word Sketch corpus tool, the roles allocated to women were explored, helping to evaluate them as positive actors. The qualitative analysis of the corpus findings, on the other hand, and the interpretation of these results revealed the positive images of SW and the Saudi context as reflected in the discourse on women and sport. However, although women are visible and active in sport discourse, it was found that the roles allocated to women remain restricted. At the institutional level, the results confirmed that numerous national efforts have been initiated to involve and activate women in sport, as suggested by narratives on active committees, programmes, and governmental efforts and the represented actions. The findings of this study contest earlier research that depicted SW as negative, passive, and marginalized group in both international as well as local media.

By adopting a corpus-assisted socio-semantic approach, this study provides in-depth insights into media representations. However, such analytical precision involves several scope and methodological limitations. The analysis focuses on one national news organisation, which limits the generalisability of the findings. Although the selected platform offers influential and internationally accessible coverage, representations identified in this study may differ across other regional or international media outlets. In addition, this study is limited by its focus on a specific social phenomenon within a defined temporal frame, meaning

that the findings reflect discourse surrounding the specific period, and provide only a partial account of evolving representations of sport, gender, and national image construction. Methodologically, the corpus assisted textual analysis, and the socio-semantic approach enable systematic analysis of lexical patterns and social actor representations, but the interpretation remains theory-driven and does not incorporate audience reception and perception, or journalistic text production practices. Alternatively, future research may adopt a multimodal approach to address the research question by examining visual and audio resources in addition to textual data. Additionally, the dataset is English-language news articles and therefore does not capture the potential variations in Arabic-language reporting or across multimodal platforms such as broadcast and social media.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

**Publisher's Note:** All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of her affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

**ORCID ID:** <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0726-1983>

## References

- [1] Ahmed, S. (2000). *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality*. New York: Routledge.
- [2] Al-Hejin, B. (2015). Covering Muslim Women: Semantic Macrostructures in BBC News. *Discourse and Communication*, 9(1), 19-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481314555262>
- [3] Alruwaili, M. (2020). Females and Sport in Saudi Arabia: An Analysis of the Relationship between Sport, Region, Education, gender, and Religion. PhD Thesis, University of Stirling, UK.
- [4] Baker, P. (2006). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.
- [5] Alshahrani, Z. (2022). *Saudi Women in BBC News discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis*. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University, UK.
- [6] Al-Rasheed, M. (2013). *A Most Masculine State: Gender, Politics and Religion in Saudi Arabia*. Cambridge University Press.
- [7] Angerer, K. (2025). Women, Sport and Social Inclusion in Saudi Arabia. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 0 (0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902251388676>
- [8] Biscoomb, K., & Griggs, G., (2013). "A Splendid Effort!" Print Media Reporting of England's Women's Performance in the 2009 Cricket World Cup. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(1), 99–111.
- [9] Ettinger, A. (2023). Saudi Arabia, Sports Diplomacy and Authoritarian Capitalism in World Politics. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 15(3), 531–547. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19406940.2023.2206402>
- [10] Elyas, T., Al-Zhrani, K., Mujaddadi, A., & Almohammadi, A. (2021). The Representation(s) of Saudi Women Pre-driving era in Local Newspapers and Magazines: A Critical Discourse Analysis. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 48(5), 1033-1052. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347798920921977>
- [11] Elyas, T., & Aljabri, A. (2020). Representations of Saudi Guardianship System and Women's Freedom to Travel in Western Newspapers: A Critical Discourse Analysis. *Contemporary Review of the Middle East*, 7(3), 339-357.
- [12] Eum, I. (2019). "New Women for a New Saudi Arabia?" Gendered Analysis of Saudi Vision 2030 and Women's Reform Policies. *Asian Women*, 35(3), 115–133. <https://doi.org/10.14431/aw.2019.09.35.3.115>
- [13] Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press.
- [14] Halliday, M. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- [15] Hargreaves, J. (2007). Sport, exercise, and the female Muslim body. In J. Hargreaves, & P. Vertinsky (Eds.), *Physical culture, power, and the body* (pp.74–100). New York: Routledge.
- [16] Jaworska, S. (2016). Using a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach to investigate constructions of identities in media reporting surrounding mega sport events: The case of the London Olympics 2012. In I. Lamond & L. Platt (Eds.), *Critical events studies: Approaches to research* (pp.149-174). Palgrave Macmillan. DOI:[10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-52386-0_8)
- [17] Jaworska, S., & Hunt, S. (2017). Intersections and Differentiations: A Corpus-assisted Discourse Study of Gender Representations in the British Press Before, During and After the London Olympics 2012. *Gender and Language*, 11(3), 336-364. [10.1558/genl.28858](https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.28858).
- [18] Kilgarriff, A., Baisa, V., Bušta, J., Jakubíček, M., Kovář, V., & Michelfeit, J. (2014). The Sketch Engine: Ten Years on. *Lexicography*, 1(1), 7–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40607-014-0009-9>.
- [19] Lazar, M. (2005). *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [20] Lachover, E. (2012). Just Being a Woman isn't Enough Anymore. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12(3), 442-458.
- [21] Lysa, C. (2020). Fighting for the Right to Play: Women's Football and Regime-loyal Resistance in Saudi Arabia. *Third World Quarterly*, 41(5), 842–859.
- [22] Ménoret, P. (2005). *The Saudi Enigma: A History*. London: Zed Books.

- [23] Messner, M., Duncan, M., & Jensen, K. (1993). Separating the Men from the Girls: The Gendered Language of Televised Sports. *Gender and Society*, 7(1), 121–137. 10.1177/089124393007001007.
- [24] Messner, M., and Cooky, C. (2010). *Gender in Televised Sports: News and Highlights Shows (pp.1989–2009)*. Report, Los Angeles, CA: Center for Feminist Research, University of Southern California.
- [25] Mishra, S. (2007). 'Liberation' vs. 'Purity': Representation of Saudi Women in American Press and American Women in Saudi Press. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 18(3), 259-276. 10.1080/10646170701490849.
- [26] Saudi Vision 2030. (2025, September 20). *Overview*. *Government of Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved February 12, 2026, from <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/overview>
- [27] Taylor T., Burdsey, D., & Jarvis, N. (2023). A Critical Review on Sport and the Arabian Peninsula– the Current State of Play and Future Directions. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 15(2), 367–383.
- [28] Toffoletti, K., & Palmer, C. (2015). New Approaches for Studies of Muslim Women and Sport. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 52(2), 146–163.
- [29] Van Dijk T. A. (1988). *News as Discourse*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [30] Van Leeuwen T. (1995). Representing Social Action. *Discourse and Society*, 6(1), 81–106.
- [31] Van Leeuwen T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Oxford University Press.