

Guardians of Nature: Gendered Representations of Women in Arab Environmental Media Discourse

حراس الطبيعة: التمثيلات الجندرية للمرأة في الخطاب الإعلامي البيئي العربي

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Abstract

This article analyses the concurrent framing of women in Arab media discursive narratives on 'environment' with an emphasis on depictions as "guardians of nature". Through a) Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) that is supplemented with b) the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), the investigation examines a specialised corpus of around 100 texts that have been published since 2018 and are likely to be ongoing until 2024, and which can be accessed at four influential Arab media organisations Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Asharq Al-Awsat and The National. We identify three dominant discursive frames through which women are positioned discursively: first, as the natural guardians of the environment (imagined in terms of maternal and nurturing tropes); secondly, as leaders within their communities and agents of change towards sustainability projects (often configured as local figures of authority sometimes global players in climate governance), thirdly, as metaphors or similes for resilience most frequently rendered in metaphorical speech referring to land's water(s) and motherhood. Although these representations make women more visible in ecological discussions, they also draw on representations commonly used within ecofeminism itself to naturalize gender and to associate the legitimacy of womanhood with specific culturally determined norms of care, maternal obligation, and national loyalty. Comparing the responses reveals significant editorial differences between outlets, however all coalesce in reproducing essentialist formations that are both enabling and constraining of women's agency. Through unpacking these models of discourse, the article offers a contribution to feminist media scholarship and ecofeminist theory in that it reveals that environmental media in the Arab region are imbued with patriarchal ideologies on the one hand, while also opening impeded-yet-significant fields for women to empower themselves. Finally, the results highlight the contradictory nature of media discourse in constructing gendered eco-futures in the Arab world. Keywords: Arab media, CDA, Gender Representation, Environmental discourse; Guardians of Nature.

ملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة التمثيلات الجندرية للمرأة في خطاب الإعلام البيئي العربي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على كيفية بناء وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية الرائدة للصورة النمطية المتكررة للمرأة كـ "حارسة للطبيعة". باستخدام تحليل الخطاب النقدي النسوي (FCDA) ومنهج الخطاب التاريخي (DHA)، يُحلل البحث مجموعة هادفة تضم حوالي 100 مقال نُشرت بين عامي 2018 و 2024 في أربع وسائل إعلامية عربية رئيسية: الجزيرة، والعربية، والشرق الأوسط، والوطني. يُحدد التحليل ثلاثة أطر خطابية سائدة تُصوّر من خلالها المرأة: أولاً، كراعٍ طبيعي للبيئة، من خلال صور الأمومة والرعاية؛ ثانياً، كقائدات مجتمعات ومبتكرات في مبادرات الاستدامة، من خلال تصويرهن كأصوات محلية أصيلة، وأحياناً كفاعلات عالميات في حوكمة المناخ؛ ثالثاً، كتجسيّدات رمزية للمرونة والتضحية، غالباً ما تُمثّل من خلال استعارات الأرض والمياه والأمومة. في حين أن هذه الصور تُعزز حضور المرأة في النقاشات البيئية، إلا أنها تعتمد في الوقت نفسه على مجازات نسوية بيئية تُضفي طابعاً طبيعياً على الأدوار الجندرية وتربط شرعية المرأة بالتوقعات الثقافية المتعلقة بالرعاية، ومسؤولية الأمومة، والفخر الوطني. يُبرز التحليل المقارن اختلافات تحريرية مهمة بين مختلف المنافذ الإعلامية، إلا أنها جميعاً تلتقي في إعادة إنتاج مفاهيم جوهرية تُمكن وتقيّد في آنٍ واحد قدرة المرأة على التصرف. من خلال تحليل هذه الأنماط الخطابية، تُسهم الدراسة في دراسات الإعلام النسوي ونظرية النسوية البيئية، مُثبتة أن الإعلام البيئي العربي يُعزز الأيديولوجيات الأبوية، ويُتيح في الوقت نفسه مساحات محدودة، وإن كانت ذات معنى، لتمكين المرأة.

في نهاية المطاف، تؤكد النتائج على الدور المتناقض للخطاب الإعلامي في تشكيل مستقبل بيئي مرتبط بالجنس في جميع أنحاء المنطقة العربية. الكلمات المفتاحية: الإعلام العربي، تحليل الخطاب النقدي، التمثيل الجندي، الخطاب البيئي، حُماة الطبيعة

1. Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed development of environmental problems as the dominant challenges, which have imposed them on global communities. Climate change, extinction of species, dirty air and water are no longer abstract dangers but present-day realities for societies around the globe. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2022) has indicated that the ongoing increase of temperatures is already changing ecosystems and human activities through desertification and extreme events. Nowhere is this change in patterns and rhythms perceived more acutely than in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which struggles with water scarcity, desertification and rising sea levels that risk both life but also livelihoods (World Bank, 2018). It's in this precarious ecological environment that it becomes eminently meaningful to picture women as the ones with a precious unique responsibility to keep and restore environment – a story which sells culturally, politically. International literature has established the relationship between women and environmental preservation. (United Nations, 2015) The fact the women are particularly affected by environmental degradation is underscored by United Nations (2015), especially in rural and marginalized areas where they play a major role in supplying food, water and fuel. Meanwhile, women are emerging as leaders in sustainability. Prominent women such as Kenya's Wangari Maathai who are identified as world spokeswomen for women and the environment (Maathai 2004), after having founded the national-based Green Belt Movement. These depictions emphasise the extent to which women are positioned as both victims of environmental damage and empowered agents in the protection of environments. This binary positioning closely follows centuries-old ecofeminist criticism that has exposed how women in popular discourse have been signified as "closer to nature" and hence closer to environmental struggles – often reifying essentialised stereotypes of women (Gaard, 2011; Shiva, 1988). The Arab world constitutes a fascinating case for examining these dynamics. The area is amongst one of the most adverse environmental contexts globally, which suffers from desertification, pro-longed drought and overdependence on fossil fuels (UNEP, 2020). In nations such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen, environmental breakdown is compounded by war, displacement and poverty that render women the most at risk e.g. (De Châtel, 2014). In the meantime, Arab women have been equally at the vanguard of environmental rhetoric and protest — whether as a function of ad-hoc activism or NGO-funded activity and state sponsored media campaigns. For example, in certain development campaigns spreading through Jordan and Lebanon, who knows where else women are portrayed as a community mobilizers around waste management upon which the sustenance of an entire town depends or educators of sustainability within their households (Khalaf 2019). These are not neutral depictions of value but culturally manufactured congratulations on gender roles and family duty, pats on the back for patriotism. There's no question that media certainly seem to be involved in an outsized way involving creating and popularizing these gendered narratives. Media texts, as Fairclough (1995) argues, are indeed 'constitutive' of the production of social knowledge and ideology rather than merely reflective. And, in Arab environmental media at least, such coverage has tended to portray women as defenders of nature with appeals to their 'maternal side' and nurturing instincts.. Meanwhile, Arab-language newspapers and television reports describe women as too naturally pure to contain themselves: They love the children who drink the precious water of life! – while displaying images of veiled women carrying earthenware jars and transforming from tradition to environmental guardians (Al Jazeera, 2021). As much as images like these can be helpful in helping us conceive what it might look like for women to make contributions on an expanded scale, they also threaten to toast those same efforts by repeating overly simplified easily digested stereotypes that boil all effort away into some prepackaged culturally predetermined version of 'femininity' or domesticity. At the abstract level too, ecofeminists have long criticized these symbolic images of women and nature. Vandana Shiva (1988) says that women's close connection with the work of subsistence, food production and nurture work has historically positioned them both as custodian and victim in resource destruction. Yet, as these authors remind us (Braidotti et al., 1994), these connections are not facts of naturalistic sort; they are cultural artifacts that will vary in time and space.

11 Arab women and environment Although the Arab media contribute to building green roles for women, in a patriarchal system that however operates according to tradition, religion as well as modernism the representation of women as environmentally active agents is still somewhat ambiguous. Media discourses

not only share but also build public sensibilities of women's entitlements in the political, social and environmental domains. The need for a critical consideration of gender representations in Arab environmental media is emphasized, especially when considering the broader politics of sustainability. As noted by the UNDP (2016), gender equality (Goal 5) and environmental sustainability (Goals 13–15) are necessary conditions for attaining the SDGs. If stories about these women are all those of essentialized" roles, nurturing mothers or the iconic "mothers of the earth," they may well compromise those more 'transformative' perspectives on women as actors, knowers and policy makers in environmental governance. Hence, we argue that to examine how women are being represented within Arab environmental discourse is not just a question of cultural criticism but a matter of significance for shaping gender-just futures. Representation of Arab women in environmental media has also been more and more understood as literacies within wider gender, culture and eco-material discussion (Al-Kazi, 2017; Elyas & AlJabri, 2020; Esposito & Sinatora, 2023). Media has been doing more than reporting the environmental; media is constructing the environmental, at times exposing certain cultural roles and desires. Women in the Arab Media – commonly presented as strong guardians of beauties nature, if not at least a gatekeeper who has natural resources and legacy reached., 2014). Such portrayals are not neutral. They are shaped by society and history with perspective of sociopolitics, cultural background and global environmental politics that articulate women's identity on ecology and sustainability (van Dijk, 1993; Espinosa, 2010; Sabah et al., 2023). Unpacking these stories suggests that Arab women (specifically as they exist within the rural and community space) are framed as stewards of care, stewardship, and resilience in line with eco feminist conceptualizations of women's roles tied to environmental sustainability (Ahmed & Matthes, 2017; Terman, 2017)....[A]nd while they... involve a celebration of women 'protector of the land', they also incur the risk of naturalizing gender as by assigning notably more ecological responsibility to women than to men. Nevertheless, they also provoke the following question to reflect upon: are these agency stories (potentially empowering Arab women's activism) about Arab women who support environmental struggles or do they simply reproduce the cliches of a culture "in which the woman remains confined to archetypal and-traditional roles" (Khadiri, 2020; Loza, 2020).

Literature Review

Studies of gender, media, and environmental discourse have grown continuously in the past thirty years from critical discourse analysis (CDA), feminist theory, and ecofeminism to interrogate how women are represented in public discourses. Centrally positioned to this literature is Michel Lazar's (2005) influential book *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Gender, Power and Ideology in Dis- course*. Lazar's edited collection is considered by many to be the point of reference for what is known as Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), an approach that articulates feminist determinedness with the methodological and theoretical tools of CDA. The book shows how discourses dealing with "masculinity" as well as those that reflect on "male positions" in the exchange between culture, mass media and politics are part of the structures or practices enabling gendered power relations. That is why Lazar's contribution here is so important, as it contributes to the study at hand of how Arab media discursively frame women as "guardians of nature." On a more general, or macrostructural level Norman Fairclough's (1995) concept of media discourse has informed the way in which researchers have construed the ideological power of journalism and broadcast media. The concept of dialectical relationship between textual practices and social structures, has been maintained as central to both (CDA) and (FCDA). His attention to intertextuality and the social circulation of media discourse makes his work eminently useful for this project's concern with where environment reporting fits within larger ideological formations on gender and sustainability. I would like to encourage readers to check out other ecofeminist thought, such as the work of Vandana Shiva (1988) and Maria Mies (1993/2014)—female voices who represented in both symbolic and material terms made a case similar to that which actresses themselves have expressed about the association between women and nature. Women's traditional roles of subsistence and ecology makes them the front line warriors in ecological struggles, according to Shiva (Mies 155), who, along with Mies, criticizes capitalist and patriarchal systems that abuse both women and nature. "Among other things, ecofeminism has been accused of naturalizing the equation between woman and earth but it offers a meta-narrative that allows us to (re-)read media practices which implicitly depict women as innately drawn to nature or as nature's carers." Looking to the Arab world, recent Literature has started to register such environmental challenges and bring gender dynamics into focus. Nassar (2023) examines the relationship between climate change and women in the Middle East and North Africa showing how between gender inequality summers with boring lectures, saying, "men think of war as childspaly like hula hoops or cowboys and Indians angleballs chalk favorito travel autographs plain gorillas bowling bowlievolved enviously of spiders shocks splashing shocks we build up some rather comical bunk guys just get behind more death than a woman tries to make balance....we're displaying at realityland rocks grippdets noits Katerburch gifs Sammy Pots soups chew mush snuggles rattle cock logicbrake light switch A sorta puts scare back into ya" in when a couple addresses climate risks, there is

evidence that among those who do not fare well even if they are men. Likewise, UN Women (2022) has shared stories about Lebanese women heading climate action and positioning them as community leaders and protectors of 'environmental knowledge'. Though, of course, the following texts are not scholarly analyses, they can offer illustrative examples of how policy discourse and activist media build conceptions of women's environmental subjectivity in a manner that both celebrates agency but perpetuates gendered norms. Other academics have specifically studied Arab media discourse within critical frameworks. Hamid (2021), for example, used CDA to explore discursive construction of Arab women in news media and evidences its identity and gender being discursively reconstructed across different outlets. While his study was not concerned with environmental concerns, it makes clear the potential of CDA when it comes to unpacking ideological positioning in Arabic-language media. Some work on refugee issues also shows how crisis reporting represents women as both passive victims and resilient agents, as Haider (2021) showed in a study about coverage of Syrian female refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. They are relevant to environmental reporting, which also leans on crisis narratives — droughts, water shortages or displacement — that in similar ways define the position of women. There has also been methodological import from multimodal discourse analysis. Mahfouz (2021) used Kress and van Leeuwen's visual grammar to investigate the representation of gender in images and advertisements using a combination of textual analysis with image based analysis to unravel the co construction of meaning. This is especially common in environmental media, where after all images of women holding water pots or planting trees or teaching children often have a symbolic weight beyond their literal representation when we consider the text alongside them. It is therefore not surprising that multimodality has emerged as a key feature in regional studies, and accordingly an inquiry into Arab environmental discourse should be one that encompasses visual forms of representation inseparable from the construal and verbalisation of texts too. While single-case studies have been supplemented by a succession of systematic reviews, these have tended to collate results at the level of 'general findings' in work on gender and media. In a comprehensive review of gender and media representation, Santoniccolo (2023) estimates that when it comes to stereotypical representations, women are still represented as caregivers or absent from the positions of authority. The study also writes about such trends in various cultural settings – and a sample from such collegiate cultures may again show another need for a closer examination of how environmental gendered messages appear in the Arab media. At the sub-national scale, the present study is also informed by literature about environmental activism. The study of environmental movements in the Middle East and North Africa outlined how, [activists], including women, attempt to negotiate their visibility under restricted political and media systems (Environmental Activism in the Middle East and North Africa, 2023). In so doing, such work foregrounds the space available for women's activism and its constraints within repressive media discourses. Sabah et al (2023) build on this finding with a study of ideological narratives within the Arab and Western reporting of Arab women, also from the perspective of van Dijk's socio-cognitive model to expose strategies for in- and exclusion. Their research also offers interesting comparative insights about discursive positioning of Arab women in transnational settings which can be mapped onto environmental news reporting. Last but certainly not least, corpus-based studies such as that involving PETRA news texts (Representation of Women in Arab Media, 2022) have demonstrated the impact of large-scale lexical patterns and collocations on discursive representations of women. When included with FCDA, such quantitative methods can supplement qualitative readings to a critical-centred position by indicating systemic patterns of representation. In summary, these studies show a fruitful interplay between feminist discourse analysis, ecofeminism and regional media studies. Together, they offer methodological tools and empirical analyses of the representation of women locally and globally. Yet as valuable as they are, both. (Both, 1996) radically depart from the present work in many respects. The existing academic work on Arab media can be classified into literature covering political conflict, migration and general gender representation not taking into consideration the environmental sphere. Some ecofeminist arguments also persist only at the level of global theory, avoiding region-specific empirical investigation. Although multimodal and corpus-based approaches have aided in developing a deeper understanding of the gendered nature of media discourses, they have not been extensively used to examine how Arab environmental narratives are constructed. While these studies provide important precedents, the present article provides an original contribution through its intersection of FCDA and multimodality considering a specific mode of representing women as "guardians of nature" in Arab environmental media discourse, and juxtaposing this within larger discussions about gender, ideology and ecological futures.

Methodology

Study Design

This study draws from a qualitative critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to explore how Arab media depict women's roles in environmental situations. The rationale of using CDA is its power in revealing the relation between language, ideology and power, above all, the manner in which discourse structure social identities and cultural values (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Since this research is predominantly interested in gendered presentations, the methodological outset of the analysis stems from Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) as defined by Lazar (2005 and 2018). Explicitly locating discourse analysis within feminist theory, FCDA focuses on the reproduction or challenge of gender ideologies in and through texting and imaging practices. This

model is particularly useful for analyzing the portrayal of nature women in Arab media as either “guardians of nature” who are featured in forms that reinforce ecofeminist essentialisms, or those that facilitate enactments counter-discourses about women as empowered models and leaders. It is inspired notably by the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) from Reisigl and Wodak (2015), an approach which includes a focus on context sensitivity and looks also at how discursive strategies are inscribed within socio-political and cultural histories. This makes available the means to study nomination (how women are named or assigned), predication (what is said of them), and argumentation (the reasoning employed to motivate women’s association with environmental roles) in linguistic practice. The study fulfills this dual objective by integrating the FCDA and DHA in addressing gender ideologies and locating them within a larger historical and cultural framework in Arab societies. The approach is exploratory-interpretive and not hypothesis-testing. Approaching, as opposed to developing theories of the Arab media, this study is an application which engages both broadly and originally with the selected texts chosen to represent the hegemonic discourse and resistance/ Counter Hegemony on women/Media- The Environment. The model is quite deep and narrow, concentrating on textural and semiotical micro-granular items to disclose ideological workings which could be (merely) neglected from a numerical content-analysis. Another significant aspect of the concept is its geometrical scale. The study looks at news stories from a variety of Arab media — pan-Arab as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, more regionally oriented as Asharq al-Awsat and The National — to uncover shared narratives across the region and unique visions of individual outlets. The relative nature of these exposure issues is certainly related to the fact that the Arab media, being owned and supported by an array of personal social actors, organizations or groups, they also vary in their political orientation and target publics. Thus, the difference across the data are considered when looking for commonalities within the corpus. Finally, the study employs a multimodal discourse analysis perspective. News about the environment comes with visuals, such as photographs, graphics or videos that enhance or contradict those words. Visual representation has a key role to play in presenting women’s identities, particularly within media discourses that have a focus on gendered affiliations with nature, caring or activism (Machin & Mayr 2012). Thus, while being based in textual analysis, the research includes an examination of visual material when applicable.

Corpus of the Study

Selection Criteria

The corpus is compiled from articles obtained from four high profile Arab media websites:

1. Al Jazeera English and Al Jazeera Arabic - chosen because of its worldwide coverage, reputation for investigative journalism and dedication to making social issues a significant part of the regional agenda.
2. Al Arabiya – selected for its opposing editorial policy, which is usually more in line with conservative Gulf views.
3. Asharq Al-Awsat, a pan-Arab newspaper with hundreds of thousands of readers across the Middle East.
4. The National – based in the United Arab Emirates, a more Gulf-focused publication that covers sustainability and innovation well.

These were chosen for their wide availability and impact on the public conversation, as well as the mix of ownership types and political viewpoints they reflect. Together, they provide a nuanced view of how women and the environment are represented in popular Arab media. The article search terms contained primary keywords on the topic of women and environment involvement (Arab woman environment, climate activism women, female leadership sustainability, guardians of nature, plastic waste campaign and renewable energy women). All searches were conducted in English and Arabic languages to be sensitive for linguistic diversity and inclusivity. For latest information, see and applicability The search of articles Each stage between 2018, the data collection phase will be 2018 through to 2024. It’s a moment where these new waves of global environmental interest are being palpably felt – as seen in movements such as Fridays for Future and the growing engagement of people from across the Arab world on climate, particularly in view of COP27 taking place in Egypt (2022) and COP28 in UAE (2023). It was intended to make the corpus coextensive with extremely recent discursive formations of women and environment in pre-feminist activist groups.

Examples of Data

The corpus includes a range of articles such as:

- “Jordanian woman leads campaign against plastic waste” (Al Jazeera, 2019).
- “Saudi women spearhead mangrove planting project on Red Sea coast” (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2021).
- “Emirati entrepreneur develops eco-friendly packaging” (The National, 2022).
- “Lebanese activist organizes climate march in Beirut” (Al Arabiya, 2020).

These are the kinds of narratives being deconstructed: narratives that place women in activist, pioneer, innovator or community actor roles with regard to environmental action. Passages such as these offer fertile ground for unpacking the dynamics of discursive convergence between sexed identity and environmental concern.

Corpus Size and Organization

We average over about 100 articles (25 from each source) in the final dataset. This number is a compromise between handleability and representativeness: it is rich enough to see some tendencies but provides still enough for qualitative reading. Papers were sorted into thematic categories. :

- **Grassroots Actions & Community Leadership** (for example, women-led recycling, awareness-raising)

- **Innovation and entrepreneurship** (women entrepreneurs in sustainable business).
- **Policy and diplomacy** (women on the climate summits as negotiators or ministers, for instance).
- **Symbolism** (eg. women depicted as victims of drought or climate-induced displacement).

These groupings provide one lens for literature review level analyses of similarities and differences between outlets, themes and representation types..

Analytical Procedure

The proof goes through several steps:

1. **Contextualisation** – Relating the article to its socio-political and cultural context; considering the editorial orientation, national context of outlets and publication time (e.g., COP summits, local environmental disasters).
2. **Textual Analysis**—The identification of discursive strategies According to Reisigl and Wodak's (2015) DHA model, it is these moves or combination thereof that constitute the argumentative topoi.
 - Nominees: How are women described or labeled (activists, mothers, leaders or victims)?
 - Predication: What are attributes of women (nurturing, tough, fragile, creative)?
 - ARGUMENT: Discussing Why do you think that women's position in certain political processes is justified?
3. **Interdiscursive Analysis** - Exploring the ways in which these texts refer to larger cultural narratives, i.e. ecofeminism, nationalism, development discourse.
4. **Visual Analysis** – If possible, look at the images and visual cues alongside the articles (i.e. woman planting a tree in traditional garb as opposed to wearing a suit at a climate summit).
5. **Interpretation and Synthesis** – Synthesising findings to show how discourses across sources animate a general ideological framing of women as “stewards/guardians of nature.”

Reflexivity and Limitations

One should also note the positionality of the researcher. As a researcher of Arab media I am deeply sensitive to the fact that my own interpretations are informed by an insider's understanding of cultural dynamics in the region, as well as that my work is inspired and informed by global feminist scholarship. This suchness is a blessing, as it makes reflection possible, but it also causes the problem that we must be careful with not just simply projecting external schemata. The corpus is also irksomely skewed in that it only studies mainstream coverage, and possible voices from the grassroots or alternative media could be missing. PLUS:: English translations of Arab media is used throughout this piece- whilst if not statement of difficulties with translations in general, it should be noted that using an intermediary will bring with it some loss of meaning :: but we Knew dat. To address these limitations, the paper draws on Arabic and English sources to triangulate across sources.

Ethical Considerations

The study is based on publicly available texts from the media only. No human subjects are involved and hence, ethical approval was not warranted. However, ethical stringency is upheld by the proper referencing of sources, attentiveness to the context in which results are presented, and consideration of cultural perceptions of women within Arabic cultures.

Discussion

An examination of Arab environmental media discourse shows that women are always constructed using a combination of frames that simultaneously enable and control their subjectivity. Women photographers and filmmakers Across Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, Asharq Al-Awsat, and The National women are depicted as activists, innovators and leaders but their depictions often draw on cultural scripts that naturalize them in relation to caring responsibility and environmental stewardship. Through the use of Feminist CDA (Lazar, 2005) combined with Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015), it is argued that turning to nomination, predication and argumentation strategies we will be able to show how media texts place women within a discursive field wavering between empowerment and essentialism.

Women as Community Guardians

One of the strongest frames is that of women as guardians of nature. This mode of nomination is built in headlines and leads like: “*Jordanian woman at the forefront of campaign against plastic waste, where less is more*” (Al Jazeera, 2019). Here, leadership is overtly gendered, with the woman located not only as an activist; but placed as a moral role model for her community. The reliance on nurturing attributes “inspiring, guiding, raising awareness” associates environmental activism with traditional womanly virtues. 1 Table 1 Content in Frame Contrast table - nominatoin and predication Key nomination a community activism stories Data n- code No.

Table 1: Discursive Strategies in Community Activism Narratives

Outlet	Example Nomination	Predication Strategies	Implicit Argumentation
Al Jazeera	“Jordanian woman activist”	Inspiring, grassroots, moral leadership	Women have a natural duty to safeguard environment

Outlet	Example Nomination	Predication Strategies	Implicit Argumentation
Al Arabiya	“Lebanese female organizer”	Nurturing, patient, community-oriented	Women mobilize because they care more for the future
Asharq Al-Awsat	“Saudi women volunteers”	Dedicated, selfless, guardians	Women preserve culture by protecting natural heritage
The National	“Emirati campaigner”	Innovative, resilient, forward-looking	Women are future-oriented protectors of society

This table shows the movement of the frame of guardianship through outlets and also how it is framed from context to context, distinct in some cases from other framings. Women are more likely to be shown marrying the cause of environmental preservation as pride in their own country and culture to Gulf-based outlets like Asharq Al-Awsat and The National. Al Jazeera, in contrast, looks to local leadership that makes women actors of change from below.

Women as Innovators and Entrepreneurs

Another common story is depicting women as leaders in sustainable business and tech. For example:

“Emirati entrepreneur designs eco-recyclable packaging to curb single-use plastics” (The National, 2022).

So what have we got: strategies of nomination Professionalism (“entrepreneur,” “CEO”), not kinship or community. But the argumentation loops, over and over again, to transculturally universalist values of care and responsibility. The article goes on: “A mother of two, she felt the urgency to secure a cleaner future for her children. These are discourses that yoke self-definition to your success in the profession — even in women’s authorship of themselves as pioneers, bits of what makes them authority figures were transplanted on to the old mothering idea.

Table 2: Innovation and Entrepreneurship Narratives

Outlet	Role Emphasized	Predication Strategies	Tensions Identified
The National	Entrepreneur/CEO	Innovative, future-oriented	Professional success framed via maternal responsibility
Al Jazeera	Scientist/Leader	Groundbreaking, inspiring	Leadership legitimized by cultural authenticity
Al Arabiya	Business owner	Determined, resilient	Modernity framed as compatible with tradition
Asharq Al-Awsat	Investor/Manager	Visionary, resourceful	Economic growth tied to moral duty to protect nature

This model highlights the struggle between modern professional identities and historic cultural discourses. Feminist CDA13 shows how discourses simultaneously challenge and reinscribe gender norms: women become visibilised as innovators; yet their accomplishment is often narrated through various family or community specific logics that reinstall hegemonic femininities.

Fragile and Strong: Women as Icons

A third figure depicts women as sheepish recipients of climactic abuse, yet also agents of resilience. Take, for example, one Al Arabiya report on the lack of rural water: “Women are walking miles, every day to fetch clean water and they’re shouldering the burden of environmental distress as they hold their families together.” (Al Arabiya, 2020). And it is suffering that whispers through the tenor of this predication, I afflict myself with by bearing,” and yet, just as suddenly women are erected as the strong support beams of a family. This double-bind is illustrative of what El Hamamsy (2023) refers to as a “vulnerability-resilience paradox”, whereby women’s struggles/troubles are highlighted in a narrative only for their ethical fortitude to be emphasized.

Table 3: Vulnerability-Resilience Paradox in Environmental Discourse

Outlet	Vulnerability Highlighted	Resilience Emphasized	Ideological Effect
Al Arabiya	Water scarcity, displacement	Family endurance, sacrifice	Women as victims, yet morally superior caretakers
Al Jazeera	Climate-induced migration	Community rebuilding	Women as anchors of social cohesion
The National	Urban pollution health risks	Adaptability, innovation	Middle-class resilience tied to national progress
Asharq Al-Awsat	Rural poverty and ecological degradation	Traditional endurance	Cultural heritage tied to women’s suffering/resilience

These paradoxes go on to show for us how women are entrapped in discursive discussions that steer them into mythology of their gender representation and uphold the patriarchal ideas about women, that women are commended to obey silently and uphold the family no matter what kind of pain they accept.

Discursive Patterns Across Outlets

Side-by-side, their emphases are telling:

- Also, Al Jazeera has a penchant for depicting women as people rising from below, in line with its editorial policy as an organ of the global-progressive media elite.
- It frequently dramatizes women's pain but also portrays them as rugged cultural icons, which would resonate with its conservative audience.
- Asharq Al-Awsat also spotlights the volunteering and traditional protection of women.
- National present women entrepreneurs and innovators with the UAE being branded as a place of sustainability and modernity.

But the fact remains that all of these outlets draw from eco-feminist tropes (which naturalize women in the role of nature-caretakers). The constructs point of departure from feminist CDA is how these representations reinscribe gender logics in the name of "empowering" women.

Beyond Representation: Implications

The findings reveal how Arab media images of women engaged in environmental debate constitute a double-step move up: as pivotal to ecological progress but simultaneously kept down within culturally resonant domestic (private) roles. It is parallel to what Khamis (2022) states: Ecofeminism framings developed in Arab media echo ones of hopelessness, helplessness and very little room for agency.

Such discourses have important implications. For one, women are on the sustainability map, which could position them to be valued — and acknowledged in terms of their roles in politics and activism. Not only that, but they take the risk of replicating stereotypes that reduce women to nurturing moral symbols verboten from thinking themselves political subjects or meaningful contributors to structures aimed at making a difference qua itself. In unpacking these patterns, this essay contributes to dominant trends within feminist media criticism that consider the way gendered discourses not only govern perception of the world but also access to power.

Findings

Some widely circulated Arab newspapers and on-line news media were selected for analysis to identify some of the ways in which women have been represented in environmental news. Basing on Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015) and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis [FCDA] (Lazar, 2005), three dominant discursive policies (strategies) were identified.: **(1) women's representation as natural guardians of the environment, (2) women positioning as local sustainability leaders and (3) symbolic constructions linking experience of womanhood to resilience and sacrifice.**

Women as Natural Caretakers

Articles often relied on cultural scripts to represent women as "stewards" of ecological health, reinforcing familiar ecofeminist archetypes. One such report (Al Jazeera 2023) was a story about an environmental campaign in Jordan with the quote:

She speaks of the river as though it is her child — fragile, vulnerable. For Um Khalid, the fight against plastic isn't political — it's an imperative of motherhood."

The predication strategies of this discourse are used to generate women in a nurturing capacity, the construction also serving to sustain the idea that women are in some way closer nature.

Table 4: Distribution of caretaker characterizations in Arab media environmental story coverage (2021–2024).

Outlet	Frequency of Caretaker Portrayals	Example Headline
Al Jazeera	12	"Jordanian Mother Battles Plastic Waste in Amman"
Asharq Al-Awsat	9	"Women Farmers Protect Oasis in Morocco"
The National (UAE)	7	"Female Teacher Champions Recycling in Schools"
Al-Arabiya	8	"Women Take Lead in Conserving Gulf Coast Mangroves"

This dominant framing implies that women's environmental condition is often sanctioned through their association with maternal and familial iconography.

Women as Local Leaders

Although the caretaker image is overwhelming, we are able to recognise a growing focus on female leadership within environmental activism. To illustrate, consider a feature story in (The National), The UAE on a sustainability hub: *"She embodies the echo of a new era, and in her, it is no longer an anotherworldly vouchsafed terrain that enthused by outsiders, but part of an Emirati women's task."*

And these stories are also distinct from a purely maternalist story in which we stress agency and leadership but again within the parameters of cultural authenticity women's activism has to be grounded in tradition..

Table 5: illustrates the dual framing of women's leadership:

Leadership Framing	Description	Example
Cultural Authenticity	Emphasis on women as "authentic voices" of their communities	"Bedouin women lead desert greening project" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2023)
Global Legitimacy	Positioning women as global climate actors	"Jordanian activist speaks at COP27" (Al Jazeera, 2022)

Discursive framing of women's leadership in Arab environmental media. This framing also raises the simultaneous localization of women as 'community mothers' and promotion to international players, showing how traditional/modern is used to mediate between what women want to be and what they expect.

Women in the Service of Toughness and Sacrifice

There were broader themes too: Women as the symbol of resistance and endurance during environmental disasters. As Asharq Al-Awsat (2022) pointed out in relation to rural landscapes hit by drought: *"Her grounded hand speaks for earth corrosion—hard, firm, quiet. Pleading the rain to come down."* In this way of speaking, women are 'like' the land in a sense which renders human suffering and environmental decline indistinguishable.

Table 6: highlights the symbolic associations found:

Symbolic Representation	Associated Meaning	Example
Motherhood	Care, protection, self-sacrifice	"Women nurture hope for green future" (Al Jazeera, 2023)
Land/Soil Metaphor	Resilience, rootedness, suffering	"Her endurance mirrors the cracked desert" (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2022)
Water Metaphor	Purity, life-giving force	"Women as rivers of renewal" (The National, 2021)

Symbolic imagery linking women to ecological resilience.

When these portraits of women emerge as great metaphors for our cultural environment, they can also trigger too simple a positioning of women's role and potential into the realm of pure abstraction.

Conclusion

The study also analysed the discursive trends of gender perceptions for Arab women in environmental media coverage across Al Jazeera ,Asharq Al-Awsat ,Al-Arabiya and The National. Drawing on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis - an and the Discourse-Historical Approach, it is found that in Arab media, women are constructed primarily through three discursive frames: (1) caretakers of nature around the clock; (2) local leaders; and (3) symbolic manifestations of strength and resilience. The nanny stereotype recapitulates ecofeminist cliches and attaches value to women to the extent that they possess an intuitive natural predisposition for nurturing roles. The progress frame of leadership implies a "moving on" and presents women as legitimate participants in environmental activism, but often locked within discourses of cultural authenticity. The symbolic frame turns women into metaphors of endurance and sacrifice, nourishing the cultural resonance but choking off their material agency. In summary, these results suggest that Arab media is downplaying certain environmental practices by women while also perpetuating traditional gender norms. When women are represented as "caretakers of nature" the language is too strong but misleading since it promotes rather than challenges women's environmentalism by strongly gendered prejudice that is inherent in such an image. Moreover, we might argue that the comparative lens should be widened to include audience reception studies, cross-regional comparisons and visual analysis of imagery in order to observe how these discourses are received and then circulated among Arab communities. Media theorists could complicate how gender and environment mesh in, through, and with tangential emphasis on women's ecological self-authority by peeling away these layers.

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