

# WOMEN ON TOP: A STUDY OF MIDDLE EASTERN WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE MEDIA POLITICAL ECONOMY

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## ABSTRACT

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The issues facing women who have endured conflict or sexual assault are constantly brought up in the news and widely distributed through movies. Discourse based on media culture demonstrates how firmly the Middle East supports the rights and dignity of women. The desire of the media to demonstrate the strength and might of a nation, a person, or a viewpoint is directly tied to the political and economic interests of this. Unlike before the movement to uphold women's rights, men's right to express their masculinity is now limited. The state of the art in scientific writings that take a media, political economy, and history approach to studying Middle Eastern media culture. Researchers in Indonesia still hardly ever use qualitative research methodologies that take a media political economy perspective with four units of analysis, including history, social totality, morality, and praxis orientation, that are connected to media cultures outside of Indonesia (the Middle East). The goal of this study was to determine the Middle Eastern countries' power structures based on their publicized media cultures. The Middle East is particularly receptive to industrialization that helps women, as shown by historical characteristics of the region that produce films and news about women's fights that women always win over males. Furthermore, the Middle East is home to a large number of female political figures, demonstrating that the media's political economy interests in promoting women are upheld there.

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## 1. Introduction

Women appear to be distinct human beings from men who play a crucial function as the head of the home, group, organization, or government. not just from positions but also from the range of jobs, interests, and social activities. Men and women are treated differently because of societal structures that have been created by society and perpetuated by the media, not only differences in how their bodies are built. Compared to outstanding males, women are inferior.

The gender community has long campaigned for the rights of women and men equally through logical texts and initiatives published in numerous media in the Middle East.

The Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 1998 rules and regulations pertaining to ratification of the convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment have provisions regulating the equality of dignity between men and women (Badan Pembangunan Hukum Nasional, 1998).

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly also issued a statement on the protection of all people from torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment. In addition to stating the necessity for comprehensive measures to ensure the Declaration's implementation, the Declaration protects all people against torture and other cruel, barbaric, or degrading treatment or punishment. All nations taking part in the conference adopted the declaration on December 9, 1975.

Many state leaders have expressed support for the legislative framework that has been adopted by a number of the UN convention participants. Every nation's laws governing human value and dignity serve as analogies for unending oppression. Laws need to be implemented to lessen actions against the inhumane treatment of minorities or underprivileged groups that some individuals or groups of individuals perpetrate. The bulk of instances of violations of dignity take place as a result of gender and social status disparities present in society, particularly in the Middle East. Regarding the news from several media outlets concerning Saudi Arabian women who may face jail time if they disobey rules or commands imposed by their father. In Indonesian and Saudi Arabian media, stories with headings like "Difference in treatment of girls and boys" have received a lot of coverage. News regarding gender inequality and equality in dignity is frequently published and sent to Indonesia, for example at <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/dunia-46791977>. The BBC frequently reports on topics relating to gender and the unequal treatment of men and women in various spheres of Middle Eastern society. International scientific references, such as those produced by Hamdan (Hamdan, 2005), clearly document news in the Middle East relating to patriarchal society and feminist struggles as follows:

Many women around the world are still fighting for gender equality in this century, particularly in Saudi Arabia, which continues to have the fewest rights and statuses for women. In Arab nations, where males are the center of life, customs and tradition have a significant impact on how women are positioned. Saudi Arabia is a conservative nation in terms of its social and religious diversity. Some of Saudi Arabia's traditional views, such as those that forbid women from working as lawyers, engineers, or drivers, are not based on Islamic law but rather on the social stigma associated with maintaining culture.

The aforementioned comment unequivocally demonstrates that there is ample proof that patriarchal cultures are upheld in Middle Eastern nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, and are upheld by the laws already in place. Texts that emerge through Middle Eastern countries' cinema provide opposition to the patriarchal culture that exists there. Some examples of feature films in the Middle East with the feminism genre are: *A bit of fear/ something of fear* (شيء من الخوف) (1969), *Cairo 678*, *My Wife is My CEO* (1966), and *Open Door* (1963). The films above have been shown and developed into a feminist movement to show gender equality, dignity and respect between women and men in the Middle East.

The conflict between patriarchal culture and feminism is impacted by text production that takes place in Middle Eastern nations through news and cinema production. The two opposing schools of thought have intentionally produced a culture of contestation that is displayed in Middle Eastern nations where there is constant discussion. The competition has evolved into a platform for entertainment that promotes capitalism both domestically and internationally.

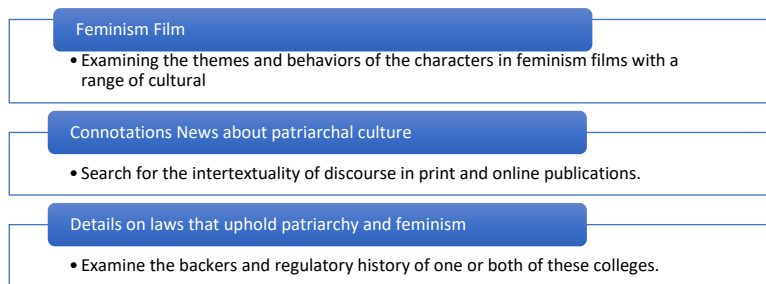


Figure 1 : Research Design

There are three categories of approaches in this research, namely the structuralist, political-economic, and culturalist approaches. This research is qualitative with a critical approach, which is reflected by the vocabulary of the Marxist approach. There are several variations of the political economy approach, some of which are represented by the categories deconstruction, reconstruction, and structuralism. Other groupings (Goulding & Murdock, Culture, communications and political economy, 1991) are text analysis, relational analysis and audience supremacy (Agung, 2008).

A case study served as the foundation for this study's design. A case study, according to Yin (Yin, 2012), is an empirical method for responding to inquiries about one or more situations. The choice of the examples to be examined is equally crucial, according to Yin (Yin, 2012). Extreme, singular, and significant happenings are a few of the fundamental qualities that an incident must have in order to be labeled as a case.

Researchers will solely concentrate on the formation of meaning as the exercise of power in movies, the news, and laws pertaining to gender equality within the parameters of this study. An intriguing text that the authorities consistently create is the conflict between feminism's battles and patriarchal society in the Middle East. This is the innovative feature of text study that examines it from the media's political economic standpoint.

This study bases its definition of the issue on the topic of how patriarchal and feminist texts are created, discussed, and resisted by power relations. In light of Marxism and the political economy of the media, the goal of this study is to describe and analyze how power relations develop in texts that are at odds with one another and promote patriarchy and feminism.

## 2. Method

Two key issues with regard to political economy are: (1) Patterns of institutional ownership and (2) consequently on patterns of control over media activities. Characteristics of the relationship between regulation by the state and communication institutions (Rachmad, 2020). This study's methodology combines a media political economy approach with qualitative research. The goal of qualitative research is to better understand societal or human problems through the development of comprehensive, holistic narratives that detail the perspectives of the informants and are conducted in settings that are as natural as possible (Creswell, 2002; Sasongko, 2017; Kho, 2022). Qualitative research, in the opinion of Fraenkel & Wallen (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990), concentrates emphasis on the ongoing process. The main goal of research is to comprehend how things occur. In terms of outcomes, qualitative research is a resounding design, according to Lincoln & Guba. Human data sources are used to negotiate comprehension and interpretation since the researcher wants to comprehend the subject's

reality (Creswell, 2002). The following are the primary traits of the Political Economy approach (Mosco, 1996):

It is historical in that it attempts to comprehend historical and social change in relation to the economic, political, cultural, and ideological moments of social existence with dynamics rooted in socioeconomic conflicts. The development of the media, the expansion of corporate influence, commodification, the alteration of the state's function, and government involvement are historical developments that are significant for the political economy of culture.

Holistic or complete social analysis. As a result, political economy examines problems in connection to other academic fields (sociology, politics and economics etc.). Thus, political-economic analysis can be applied to the entire social sphere. For Marxists, this wholeness entails an awareness of both the political and economic systems as well as the larger social and cultural context. For instance, researching how economic dynamics affect the variety of public cultural expressions and the accessibility of those expressions to particular social groups.

Morally focused. In other words, it alludes to the understanding of social values and the conception of proper social behavior. Justice, equality, and the common good are the three core moral concerns he has. The study of the political economy of the media is not value-free in that it is motivated by the desire to advance the causes of justice, equality, and the common good.

The study of the political economics of the media, which is oriented toward praxis, is focused on an action with immediate application. As a result, theory and practice are the foundation of the study of political economics. The class struggle's tactics are meant to be represented in the study of the political economics of the media.

Instrument Development. The study of political economics of the media also has an interest in the harmony between capitalist enterprise and government involvement, according to (Goulding & Murdock, 1997). In the political economics of communication, Goulding and Murdock (Goulding & Murdock, 1997) identified three areas: (1) The connection between the creation of cultural products and the significance of assuming constraints on (but not fully deciding) the influence of cultural production on cultural consumption. (2) The political economy of the text is to explain how the political economy of cultural consumption connects to representation. (3) The political economy of cultural consumption, which discusses how objects and cultural inequality are related and how political economy is specifically handled in this context.

According to Goulding and Murdock (Goulding & Murdock, 1997), political-economic analysis addresses textual analysis, media consumption, and the manufacture of meaning as a power practice. People's status as political citizens has changed as a result of economic and technological advancements, turning them into consumers in a capitalist society. How diverse dynamics, particularly those in which the practices of control over the creation and distribution of culture limit or expand the public sphere, is a key issue in the political economics of communication: (1) Patterns of ownership of institutions and the ensuing patterns of mastery of their activities are two important challenges in this regard. (2) The nature of the connection between the state's arrangement and the institution of communication.

Coding and Categorizing Procedure. Three analytical frameworks have been proposed by Hoskins et al., Hiebert et al., McQuail, and Albarran (McQuail, 1992; Albarran, 1996; Hiebert, Ungurait, & Bohn, 1991; Hoskins, McFadyen, & Finn., 2004) to describe the various operational aspects of the media industry. Because they provide fundamental information about the distinctiveness of mass media business activities, these three frameworks are simultaneously extremely significant indicators for evaluating the features of the media industry. The three

analytical frameworks in discussion are firm operationalization (conduct), economic structure (structure), and company performance (performance). Mason (Mason, 1939) was the first to develop the SCP technique, and Bain (Bain, 1951) later used it through multidisciplinary research (Wirth & Bloch, 1995). The core of the SCP approach to the analysis of industrial organizations is the existence of a hypothesis that claims that the behavior of the company in the market influences the performance or existence of the market (or industry), and that the company is also influenced by various factors that make up the market structure (Wirth & Bloch, 1995). Each segment will include the following:

Structure, which is usually established by the market concentration ratio, relates to the market structure. The market concentration ratio is a comparison that assesses how market share is distributed across an industry. An industry is said to have a highly concentrated market structure if, for instance, only two corporations control 70% of the market. The number of sellers and buyers, the degree of product differentiation, the company's ability (specifically how the company creates product choices for consumers), and the company's ability to penetrate the free market—including obtaining licenses from the government, franchises, monopoly rights, patents, and barriers related to costs—are all necessary variables to assess this market structure.

Ferguson and Ferguson (Ferguson & Ferguson, 1994) claim that the term "conduct" relates to a company's actions toward the market when deciding on prices (either autonomously or by agreement), product and advertising strategies, and research and innovation (Wirth & Bloch, 1995). The focus of this article is on how businesses select advertising medium and allocate funds for performing market research on items. Investment in production facilities (e.g., how corporations budget them) and compliance with the rule of law (i.e., the use of legal systems to assess a company's place in the market) were two additional conduct variables that (Scherer & Ross, 1990) highlighted (Wirth & Bloch, 1995).

The profitability of the company, the allocation and efficiency of production (in this case, how to prevent the company from spending resources pointlessly and how to produce the right products both in quantity and quality to meet consumer satisfaction); and the proper distribution of income are some of the criteria that can be used to evaluate the economic performance of the media industry. How media market organizations support equal chances for their employees is another performance element that supports the media industry's decision-making. These variables can be transformed into three indicators for analysis purposes: Efficiency, technological use, and increased audience access (readers, viewers, spectators) are the top three criteria (Priatna, 2017).

### 3. Results and Discussion

The contextualization of theory, research object, and research methodology will result in some incredibly fascinating exchanges. In Middle Eastern nations, the fight for women's equality and dignity is divisive and against the grain of society. In the Middle East, women are treated differently in terms of economics, society, and culture within the household, in the workplace, in politics, and in general society. Numerous incidences of violence against women have taken place in Middle Eastern nations, as shown in the example below:

Protest in front the Lebanese parliament in 2016, women wore white dresses and covered themselves with bandages (522: is for the girl to marry the rapist or the one who sexually assaulted her and the rapist wouldn't go to jail for his actions). In 2017, Tunisian

women got new ways of protection against violence and house made in gulf took the precautions. And allowing Saudi women to drive.

A lot of women right's defenders were jailed and traumatized but they kept fighting. Since December 2017, a lot of women went on protests against mandatory hijab. And a lot of women were imprisoned for asking to end men's welaya which is the guardianship. In more positive progressions, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon annulled "marrying the rapist" rule. Followed then by Morocco and Egypt. Jordan adjusted the "domestic violence" law in 2008. So did Morocco in 2018.

In 2018, women started #NoBan4women, for women in Iran were prohibited from going to football stadiums and a lot of women stood against it and would join undercover which led to them being imprisoned, eventually, the campaign won. Israa Gharib protests: Israa was a Palestinian makeup artist and a victim of honor crime after he photo was published with a boy. And with Israa's death, A lot of protests started fuming claiming justice and protection for women who started to face the same fate. Thousands of Palestinians went out protesting under "no freed country without freeing women". Unfortunately, no change happened while there's more than 26 cases of females getting murdered in 2021.

AL-Anoud Hussien Shiryan from Yemen: she was a 19 years old when her husband deformed her using acid after 7 years of marriage. Al-Anoud went public with her story to get justice for her and other women who go through abuse and everything would be brushed away and silenced for. Al-Anoud was forced to get married at 12 and got divorced after 4 years and then she was attacked by her ex husband.

Against mandatory Hijab in Iran, Nisreen stoda: Nisreen is a famous Irani lawyer in Women's rights and human rights field. In 2019, she was sentenced to 38 years in prison and whipped 148 times for spying and disseminating propaganda and insulting the supreme leader of Iran. She defended women who took off their hijab in 2018 which authorities equaled it with treason. Nisreen is still imprisoned till this day.

The aforementioned actions and events demonstrate that numerous writings circulating in Middle Eastern nations are concerned with the equality of women's and men's dignity. In order for women to have the same rights and responsibilities in society as males, they must fight hard and demonstrate their identity. Three media outlets, among others, have written about the mistreatment of women in Middle Eastern nations : [alghad.com](http://alghad.com) ثقافة "التمييز بين الجنسين! - جريدة الغد" that made a report published by the World Economic Forum two days ago, on the diminishing gap between men's and women's salaries in the world, is very important, especially since it gives indicators of the improvement of the status of women around the world, reflecting positive steps towards achieving equality in the labor market,

[ilo.org](http://ilo.org) المساواة بين الجنسين في الدول العربية Had written a story that claim that gender equality is essential to achieving the ILO's goal of decent work for all. The organization's statistics show that women's economic participation in the Arab region is the lowest in the world (26 per cent compared with the global average of 56 per cent). By contrast, men's labour force participation rate (76 per cent) is higher than the global rate of 74 per cent. These figures continued to stubbornly fail to change despite women's improved educational standards, dan

[albankaldawli.org](http://albankaldawli.org) المساواة بين الجنسين والتنمية في الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا had written that on September 2011 - Women around the world continue to suffer from disadvantage; They are not represented on equal terms with men in positions of economic and political leadership, their unemployment rates are higher than their male counterparts and they receive lower wages.

Mass media coverage, particularly print media, plays a role in how feminism is portrayed and

explained in news articles. This has come to represent how differently women are treated in the Middle Eastern nation. In the midst of a worldwide society, women are solely seen as inferior and lack the ability to demonstrate gender equality. In films made in the Middle East, such as the one below, the implementation of laws that support men's superiority; commonly referred to as patriarchal culture has been shown :

*Table 1 : patriarchal culture films in the middle east*

Number	Film Title	Description	Year
1	A bit of fear/ something of fear (ءء من الءوءف)	This movie is one of the most contro movies when it was premiered for t time. It talks about a strong woman to surrender to injustice even wh forcefully gets married and find he people gets abused from the groom gets rid of him and get her victory.	1969
2	Cairo 678	It's difficult for women in any age this horrible experience which is harassment. This movie talks abo sexual harassment in Egypt. This r inspiring to women gets sexually ha to not give up, speak up about it a she must defend and claim her rig matter what.	2010
3	my wife is my ceo	This movie's idea is to support w work and her potential to reach the places but in rom-com way. And in f one of the favorite movies to many.	1966
4	Open Door	The man's domination over through constantly terrorizing her is difficult thing for women need so who supports her and give her fr and that's what open door is all a reveals what women can do wh share the same rights as men in the it is her right to revolute agair occupier and help the ones in need.	1963

Regulations that can support patriarchal culture and stifle the feminist movement in the Middle East are produced as a result of media coverage of the feminist movement, which is opposed to patriarchal culture. The international feminism movement's norms, which defend equality and human dignity, oppose laws that are in place in the Middle East. The three types of text (news, movies, and laws), which are linked to the country's current political system, serve the media's political and economic objectives, which are particularly advantageous for Middle Eastern nations. This is seen from the growth in investments and tourist arrivals to Middle Eastern nations following the covid 19 pandemic. According to the Middle East Monitor, Saudi Arabia will be the most popular tourist destination in 2022 according to the most recent data from the UNWTO (UN World Tourism Organization). 18 million tourists have visited. The year 2022 will mark the start of the global tourism sector's revival. The number of tourists traveling to various locations throughout the world has

increased significantly up until the first half of this year. Even the volume of travel to various nations has been able to fully recover. According to the most recent data from the UNWTO (UN World Tourism Organization), Saudi Arabia will be the destination that tourists would travel to the most in 2022. 18 million tourists have visited.

The United Arab Emirates came in second with a total of 14.8 million tourist visits. Morocco, which received 11 million tourist visits, is in third place. The number of tourists visiting other Middle Eastern regions is also very high. Tourists visited Syria with 8.5 million, Tunisia with 5.7 million, Egypt with 5.2 million, Bahrain with 4.3 million, and Jordan with 3.5 million (Nurfadila, 2022).

The amount of political and media attention in Middle Eastern nations increases with the number of feminist books, patriarchal cultures, and laws protecting women's rights. Feminism and patriarchy are increasingly interacting socially, which strengthens the link between the campaign to support women and laws protecting Middle Eastern culture, which has an effect on the political economy interests of the media. The illustration below illustrates the relationship between laws, the feminist movement, and the patriarchal cultures of Middle Eastern nations:

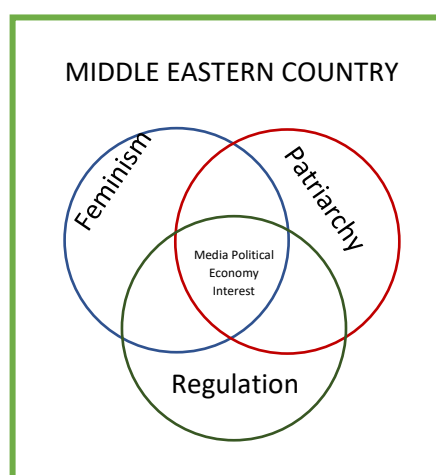


Figure 2 : Note. By Kho Gerson Ralph Manuel, Teguh Hidayatul Rachmad,

Long before industrialization arrived, patriarchal cultures in the Middle East gave rise to a world where women constantly faced obstacles from the interests and authority of men. The interests of the power structure have been impacted by laws that have been in place since the Middle East's first states were formed. Government rules for patriarchal culture and the feminist movement have provided chances for the media's political economy, which relates to economic stability in Middle Eastern countries. The expanding market structure, which includes the Middle East, demonstrates the expansion of the political economy of the media. In July 2022, the number of international visitors surpassed the pre-pandemic level. The number of visitors has increased by 287% as compared to 2021.

The media is more inclined toward a materialistic strategy to obtain market share so that economic growth is not restricted to one sector only, in contrast to structure, conduct from a political economics perspective. There are 17 nations in the Middle East region in all, but not all of them produce oil, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran,



Israel, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Cyprus, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and Jordan. There are also nations without access to natural resources like gas or oil. Israel is a prime example, as it relies on exporting the technology it has created. Another example is Jordan, which is still working to establish itself as a major trading hub in order to thrive in the world economy. Middle Eastern nations typically rely solely on oil as a source of wealth. Due to rules established by international commodity markets, dependence on a single commodity, such as oil, leads to an unstable economy. As a result, when the main income drops, there are significant economic issues. From there, a plan is in place to attract international investment or foreign currency. Even the Kingdom's Vision 2030, which attempts to diversify the economy so that it is not completely dependent on oil, now includes tourism as one of its primary pillars. The achievement of Saudi Arabia as the nation with the most tourist arrivals was warmly embraced by the administration. Considering that Saudi Arabia has made tourism a priority over the last few years.

The performance for choosing medium for information that must be distributed to all nations in the world is the final aspect of the political economics of the media. Media owners who favor patriarchal or Arab culture are more prevalent in Middle Eastern countries. This was the final straw that led to the conclusion that the feminist movement in Middle Eastern nations is still insufficiently powerful to combat the native culture of Arabs or Middle Eastern nations.

#### 4. Conclusion

In the Middle Eastern nations, the political economy of the media has evolved into a culture that is represented by evolving texts. The feminist movement, which is the source of the inferior to resist the superior in this instance of patriarchal culture, serves as the text's symbol. The state's job is to act as a third party taking action to create regulations to bind the two interests together. What actually occurred, though, was not a sort of mediating; rather, it was a manifestation of a way to maintain the battle between feminism and patriarchy, which finally resulted in foreign cash, wealth, investment, and consumerism for Middle Eastern nations

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