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**Title**

**Media Representation of Mothers in their International Day: A Social  
Semiotic Analysis of Selected Saudi Arabian, Egyptian, British and  
American Newspapers**

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*To our families:*

*Our parents*

*Sisters and brothers*

*To all our beloved ones*

We would like to present our gratitude to our supervisor, Dr. AMMOUR Kamila, whose invaluable guidance, advice and pertinent comments enabled this humble work to reach fruition. She convincingly encouraged us to do our best.

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*The present study investigates the representation of mothers in their international day in both selected print and online newspapers: Saudi Arabia's 'Arab News', Egypt's 'Daily News Egypt', Britain's 'The Guardian' and America's 'The New York Times'. This research is centered on three objectives. First, it seeks to analyse the visual depiction of mothers in the images of the selected articles by adopting the multimodal social semiotic theory 'Visual Grammar' proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2006). Second, it aims to investigate the way mothers are portrayed linguistically in the news articles by relying on Van Leeuwen's approach in Critical Discourse Analysis named the 'Socio-semantic Inventory' (2008). Third, this research strives to establish a comparison between the aforementioned newspapers to reveal the main similarities and differences in the depiction of mothers. To achieve these aims, the mixed-methods research which combines the quantitative and qualitative techniques is adopted. The corpus contains eight articles along with eight images. The examination of the selected articles has revealed that Arab News, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian and The News York times provide a positive depiction of mothers at both the visual and the linguistic levels since they are represented as self-reliant and confident persons except image 2 of Arab News, which portrays them as powerless and vulnerable ones at the visual level. Thus, the visual and the linguistic modes complement each other semantically. Furthermore, the comparison has shown that there are some similarities and differences between the newspapers in their visual and linguistic representations of mothers in their international day.*

**Key Terminology:** Arab New, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian, The New York Times, International Mother's Day, Visual Grammar, Socio- semantic Inventory.

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

Hp : Hypothesis

Q : question

U.S.A : United States of America

<b>Table 1:</b> Dimensions of Social Distance (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006).....	13
<b>Table 2:</b> The Representational Metafunction in the Selected Images.....	23
<b>Table 3:</b> The Interactional Metafunction in the Selected Images .....	25
<b>Table 4:</b> The Compositional Metafunction in the Selected Images.....	26
<b>Table 5:</b> The Exclusion of Mothers in the Selected Articles.....	28
<b>Table 6:</b> Mothers Role Allocation in the Selected Articles.....	29
<b>Table 7:</b> Specification and Genericization of Mothers in the Selected Articles... and.....	29
<b>Table 8:</b> Nomination of Mothers in the Selected Articles.....	30
<b>Table 9:</b> Functionalization and Identification of Mothers in the Selected Articles.....	30
<b>Table 10 :</b> The comparison of visual representation of mothers.....	30
<b>Table 11:</b> The comparison of the linguistic representation of mothers.....	31

## Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Abstract .....	III
List of abbreviations.....	IV
List of Tables.....	V
Contents .....	VI

## General Introduction

• Statement of the Problem .....	1
• Aims and Significance of the Study .....	2
• Research Questions and Hypotheses .....	3
• Research Techniques and Methodology.....	3
• Structure of the Dissertation.....	4

## Chapter One: Review of the Literature

Introduction.....	5
1.1. Gender roles and Motherhood .....	5
1.2. Mothers' day in Western and Arab Worlds.....	8
1.3. Social Semiotics and Multimodality.....	9
1.3.1. Social Semotics.....	9
1.3.2. Multimodality.....	10
3.1.3. Visual Grammar.....	11
3.1.3.1. The Representational Metafunction.....	12
3.1.3.2. The Interactional Metafunction.....	12
2.1.3.3. The Compositional Metafunction.....	14

1.3.4. Critical Discourse Analysis.....	15
1.3.4.1. The Socio-semantic Inventory.....	16
Conclusion.....	17

## **Chapter Two: Research Design**

Introduction.....	18
2.1. Research Methods.....	18
2.2. Procedures of Data Collection.....	19
2.3. Description of the corpus.....	19
2.3.1. Arab News.....	20
2.3.2. Daily News Egypt.....	20
2.3.3. The Guardian.....	20
2.3.4. The New York Times .....	21
4. Procedures of Data Analysis.....	20
Conclusion.....	22

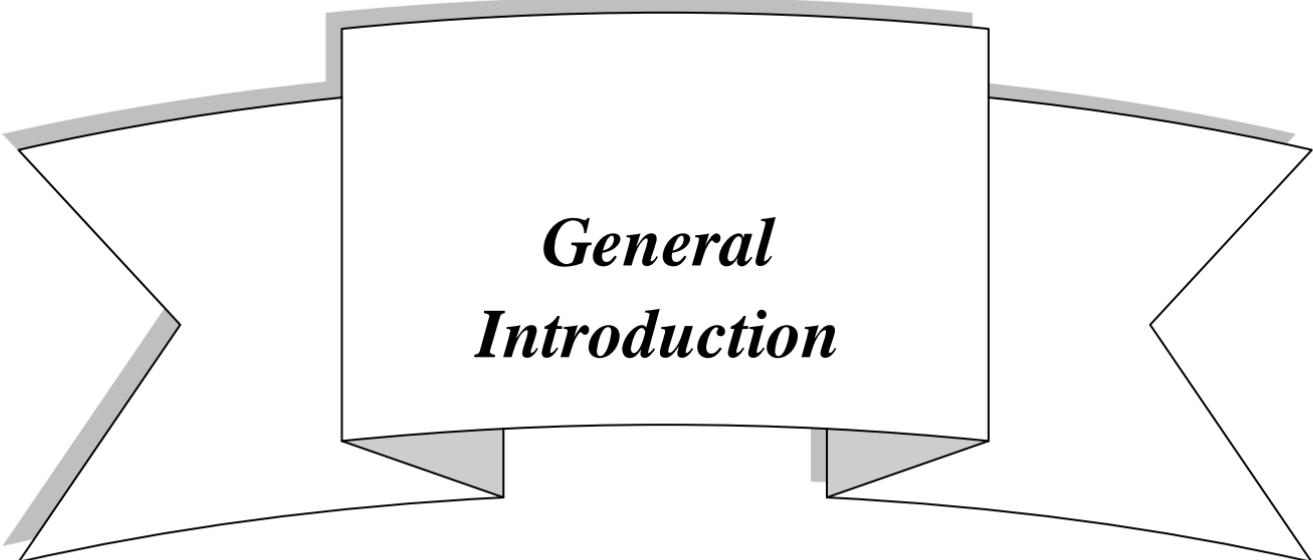
## **Chapter Three: Presentation of the Findings**

Introduction.....	22
3.1. The Representation of mothers in <i>Arab News</i> , <i>Daily News Egypt</i> , <i>The Guardian</i> and <i>The New York Times</i> : Visual Analysis.....	22
3.1.1. The Representational Metafunction.....	23
3.1.2. The Interactional Metafunction.....	24
3.1.3. The Compositional Metafunction.....	25
2. The Representation of Mothers in <i>Arab News</i> , <i>Daily News Egypt</i> , <i>The Guardian</i> and <i>The New York Times</i> : Linguistic Analysis.....	27
2.1. Exclusion.....	27
2.2. Inclusion.....	28

3.3. Comparison and the Visual and the Linguistic Representations of Mothers.....	30
3.3.1. Visual Representation.....	30
3.3.1. Linguistic Representation.....	31
Conclusion.....	31

## **Discussion of the Findings**

Introduction.....	33
4.1. The Visual Representation of Mothers in their International Day.....	33
4.1.1. The Depiction of mothers with the Representational Metafunction.....	33
4.1.2. The Interactional Metafunction.....	35
4.1.2.1. The Gaze of Mothers in the Selected Images.....	35
4.1.2.2. Social Distance between Mothers and the Viewers in the Selected Images.....	37
4.1.2.3. Point of View and Power's Distribution between Mothers and the Viewers.....	38
1.3. The Compositional Metafunction.....	40
4.1.3.1. The Placement of Mothers in the Selected Images.....	40
4.1.3.2. Mothers as Salient Elements in the Selected Images.....	42
4.1.3.3. The Framing of Mothers in the Selected Images.....	42
4.2. The Linguistic Representation of Mother in their international day.....	45
4.2.1. The Exclusion and Inclusion of Mother in the selected newspapers.....	45
3. A Comparison between the Visual and the Linguistic Depiction of mothers in the selected newspapers.....	52
Conclusion.....	52
<b>General Conclusion.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	



***General  
Introduction***

- **Statement of the Problem**

The flow of information is spreading rapidly throughout the world. This is mainly due to the technological advancement in media, which in turn has a great impact on people's life. The Newspapers are one of the greatest means of communication that makes information circulate. In addition, newspaper serves the interests of people to express their lifestyles and their values.

In fact, we may distinguish between two different types of newspapers: online and print newspapers. The former is the digital or the electronic ones, as for the latter, it is perceived as the traditional version. Both types use different semiotic resources like images, writings, and videos to be more efficient and attractive.

Media try to commemorate different major days by highlighting their importance, and the international day of mothers is an occasion for that. Mothers represent cultural identities, social status, and moral values; they also play a central role in their societies. Therefore, a day was adopted to show respect towards them. This special event is celebrated differently across the world on different dates, particularly the Arab and the Western ones; the common months of celebration are March and May.

The present study is concerned with media representation of mothers at both visual and linguistic levels. The visual representation is included to analyse how mothers are portrayed in their day in four broadsheet newspapers namely: Arab News, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian, and The New York Times, by relying on the Multimodal Social Semiotic Approach 'Visual Grammar'. In addition, the linguistic mode is adopted to examine the way mothers are depicted in their

international day, by the application of Van Leeuwen's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis named the 'Socio-semantic Inventory'.

It is worth mentioning that this research area requires attention and needs research knowledge. To the best of our knowledge, there are few studies addressing this issue. This motivates the present study to offer an original analysis of the visual and the linguistic representations of mothers in their international day.

### **●Aims and Significance of the Study**

The present work is concerned with media representation of mothers in their international day in four countries namely: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Britain and America. The objectives of this study are threefold. First, it seeks to understand the visual mode of the selected data relying on the multimodal social theory: the Grammar of Visual Design by Kress and Van Leeuwen. Second, the research aims to analyse the linguistic mode through the articles devoted to the International Mother's Day by relying on Van Leeuwen's approach in Critical Discourse Analysis. Third, it strives to compare between the selected newspapers to reveal the main similarities and differences in the depiction of mothers, since different cultural norms exist between the mentioned countries.

International Mother's Day is considered as a central event that has attracted the interest of international news media. Therefore, there were several representations of mothers in their news reports. The present research is worth conducting because of its significance that may provide in the field of media news study from social semiotic perspective. Accordingly, this dissertation is going to shade the light for deeper understanding of the way mothers are depicted in the newspapers at both visual and linguistic levels.

- **Research Questions and Hypotheses:**

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

**Q1:** How are mothers portrayed in the selected newspapers in their international day?

**Q2:** Is there any connection between the visual and the linguistic representations?

**Q3:** Are there any similarities or differences lying among the selected newspapers in terms of motherhood representation?

In order to get answers to these research questions, the following working hypotheses are advanced:

**Hp1:** The selected newspapers portray mothers positively in their international day.

**Hp2:** There is an established connection between the visual and the linguistic modes in the corpus under study.

**Hp3:** There are some similarities and differences between the selected newspapers in their visual and linguistic representations of mothers in their international day.

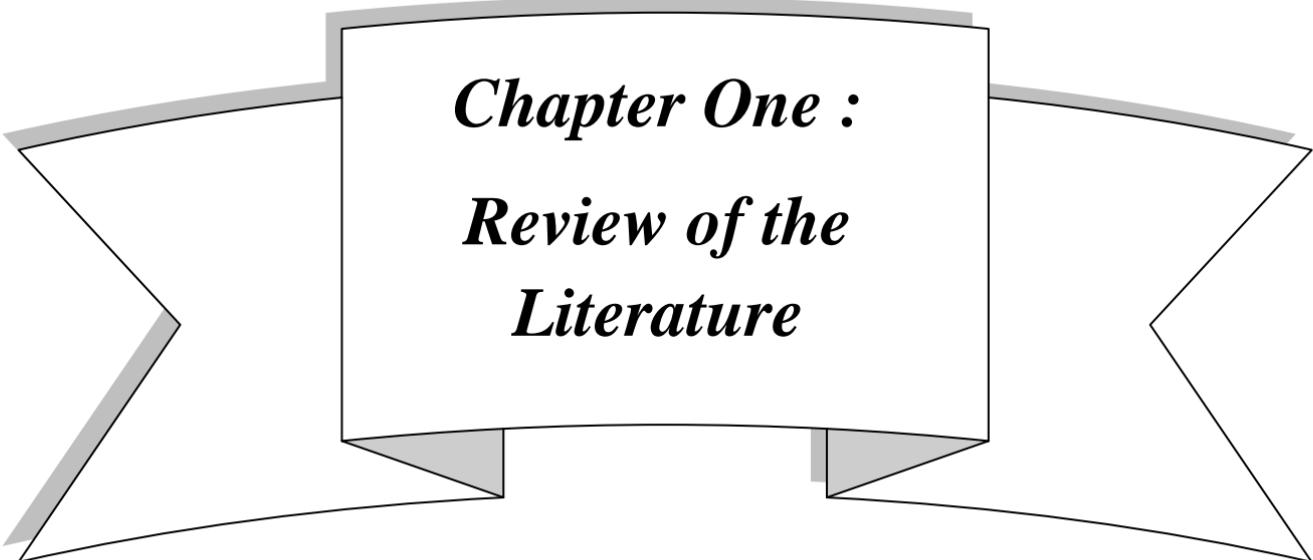
- **Research Techniques and Methodology**

In order to answer the research questions of the present study, the mixed-methods approach which combines the qualitative and quantitative techniques is used in the process of data analysis. The former is used to analyse the chosen images

of the newspapers in relation to Kress and Van Leeuwen's framework "Grammar of Visual Design". The latter is adopted when analysing the selected news articles in relation to Van Leeuwen's framework in Critical Discourse Analysis named the "Socio-semantic Inventory". These analytical tools allow us to understand how mothers are depicted differently in their international day in the selected corpus, which consists of eight images along with eight texts.

- **Structure of the Dissertation**

The structure of this dissertation follows the traditional complex model which contains four chapters, in addition to a general introduction and a general conclusion. The first chapter is concerned with the theoretical part that is related to the "Review of Literature". The second one is named "Research Design" aims to provide accurate description of the research method, the procedures of data collection and data analysis as well as the corpus of this study. The third chapter refers to the "Presentation of the Findings" which is designed to display the main results obtained from the examination of the visual and the linguistic representations of mothers in the corpus under question. The fourth which is the last chapter is called "Discussion of the Findings" is meant to discuss the results obtained from the collected data. It also provides answers to the research questions advanced for the present work. The latter ends with a general conclusion to summarize the main points of this study by including possible areas for further research.



***Chapter One :***  
***Review of the***  
***Literature***

## **Introduction**

This chapter is concerned with the literature review. It is designed to account for the major theoretical works to be considered in the present study in order to analyze how mothers are portrayed both visually and linguistically in the selected newspapers. First, it introduces motherhood and gender roles by identifying the social issues that mothers confront. Afterwards, it reviews the history of International Mother's Day in Arab and Western worlds. It, then, tries to define the theories of multimodality and social semiotics. This chapter ends up with the presentation of the two analytical tools to be used to analyze the corpus under study. The first refers to 'Visual Grammar', while the second relates to 'Critical Discourse Analysis'.

### **1.1. Gender Roles and Motherhood**

Motherhood and gender roles are largely explored by different scholars through conducting many studies since it is considered as an important issue in social science. Motherhood is central to contemporary gendered expectation for women (Ridgway and Correll cited in Noel Burgess, 2013: 1). In other words, motherhood is a role with a distinct status, independent of implications associated with gender. In fact, the construction of gender is considered as a crucial element in the visual and the linguistic depictions of mothers in a given society. Therefore, the way of depicting mothers varies from one society to another depending on their social, cultural and ideological practices. In this context, Eagly (1987: 467) asserts that the classification of roles for men and women have contributed to gender stereotypes, expectation, beliefs, attitudes and skills. That is, the roles of men and women are reflected by different social aspects in a given society.

Gender roles are the product of the interactions between the individuals and their environments; they are defined according to a society's beliefs about differences between the sexes (Blackstone, 2003: 335). According to Ridgway and Correll (2004), women are generally perceived as less competent than men, and mothers are perceived as being even less competent than men and childless women. This perception may be caused by a belief that mother could not be an 'ideal worker'. Hence, many women describe becoming mother as a life changing experience (E. Ramvi and L. Davies, 2010: 448), that is to say motherhood is a significant aspect of taking responsibilities and making decisions in which mothers try to balance between the domestic and the public spheres.

Patriarchy is one of the most problematic issues for women in the context of motherhood; it is the social system in which men hold the authority and power over women. This is what Walby calls '*a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women*' (Walby, S. 1990:20). This doctrine presents the father as the head of the family, whereas the responsibilities of mothers are restricted to nurturing and educating the children.

Another issue of gender differentiation and gender inequality that are confronted by mothers is 'motherhood penalty', it is a term given by sociologists in relation to working mothers where they are considered as less competent because they may not be able to do the same work as a man or non-mothers, since they have to take care of their children. In some countries, working mothers earn less and encounter disadvantages in wages and benefits compared to childless mothers and working fathers. In this regard, Ambrosini, A and Stanghellini, G. (2012: 277) stated that "*from a female perspective, motherhood presents itself as a conflict situation*". That is, women consider motherhood as a barrier to their professional career.

In the final decades, enormous researches have been conducted about motherhood and parental roles by different scholars who showed that working mothers play an important role in the economic growth of the countries in the world (Orgad, 2016). However, the gender gap still exists; mothers are exposed to other discriminations regardless to their difficult tasks in making balance between the pressure of work and child caring (Eagly, 1987). This leads different feminists to challenge these oppressive conditions of motherhood through their power as mothers by eliminating such archaic rules in societies and establishing equal parenting. Chodorow is one of the feminists who rejected the gender inequality in a society as well as the idea that the domestic spheres are the responsibilities of women, while the public ones are made for men.

A deep look in the literature review shows that many studies around the world have examined the representation of women in print media, by adopting the theory of Social Semiotics, but few studies have dealt with the depiction of mothers. In Indonesia, Arindita (2018) analysed the representation of Bukalapak's Mothers' Day Advertisement in order to reveal how working mothers are represented in social media. She interested to analyse this advertisement by using Roland Barthes' semiotic through qualitative approach. The main findings drawn from this research is that this advertisement still favors the idea that working mother is less lovable than stay-at home mother. The researcher concludes that Bukalapak's advertisement still represent women with the ability to do the domestic work are likely to be affectionately rewarded. In California, Kristen (2009) examined the representation of women as mothers in women's magazines by analysing the images, symbols and textual messages within the advertisements of these magazines. The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which women as mothers are portrayed in modern

American Magazine Advertisements. In addition, it seeks to focus especially on the depiction of women as mothers in popular American Advertisements in women's interest magazines during 1985-2009. This research relies on both quantitative and qualitative measures due to the nature of working with social and cultural values. The results indicate that women and their portrayals in magazines advertisements as mothers bring to light a direction in which both advertising and social expectations of women have moved since 1980. The following part of this chapter focuses on the origins of Mother's Day, where it offers an overview about the history of this major day.

## **1.2. Mothers' Day in Western and Arab worlds**

Around the world, Mother's Day is celebrated in a variety of ways and on various dates throughout the year. Indeed, Mother's Day has different origins, and it is associated either with religious, historical or symbolic events.

In Britain, Mother's Day was celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was originally a day to honor the Virgin Mary. Such celebration required people to visit their mother church which was essential for them. However, in the United States of America, modern holiday of mothers begun as women movement, that took place in the early 1900s. A woman named "Anna M. Jarvis" from Philadelphia held a memorial for her mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, who tried to establish "Mother's Friendship Day" in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1914, Anna M. Jarvis insisted to celebrate this official day which was proclaimed by the president Woodrow Wilson that held on the second Sunday of May.

Indeed, Mother's Day continues to be one of the most important occasions in the world, and many Western countries celebrate it on the same day as America.

However, Arabic countries celebrate it differently; it took place on March 21th. In fact, this event dates back to the time of pharaohs, the first day of spring. Historians claimed that an ancient pharaonic queen, ISIS, was the symbol of motherhood at that time. Accordingly, Egypt was the first Arabic country which introduced the idea of Mother's Day to the Arabic world in 1957 by a journalist named Mustafa Amin, who protested to establish a holiday for mothers in relation to the story of the widowed mother who sacrificed her life for her son until he became a doctor and showed no gratitude for her. After hard efforts, Mustafa Amin's request was approved by the president Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the current study, the multimodal Social Semiotic Approach is adopted to analyze the visual and the linguistic representations of this important day.

### **1.3. Social Semiotics and Multimodality**

#### **1.3.1. Social Semiotics**

Social Semiotics is an approach which is based on the work of MAK Halliday, *Language as a Social System* (1978). Halliday argued that language is not a set of grammatical rules to construct correct sentences; it is rather a system of choices, resources and potentials that are used in particular social or cultural settings to exchange different meanings (Halliday, 1978). Thus, language is a means that is used by individuals to communicate meaning in a given social context; which means that language goes hand in hand with society. In this theory, Halliday (2004) states that spoken and written language simultaneously fulfills three metafunctions including: Ideational metafunction, Interpersonal metafunction and Textual metafunction which are defined as follows:

- **Ideational metafunction:** refers to how individuals use language to express their ideas and to talk about their experiences.
- **Interpersonal metafunction:** refers to how language establishes interpersonal relations between the participants in a communicative act.
- **Textual metafunction:** refers to the internal and the overall connection to organize a coherent text.

This approach was expanded to other fields by different scholars such as Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen, who was influenced by MAK Halliday's work. Therefore, it is defined as *"a form of enquiry that offers ideas for formulating questions and ways of searching for answers"* (Van Leeuwen, 2005:93). Social Semiotics is considered as the study of social meaning either verbal or visual. In this context, Manning states that Social Semiotics is considered as social life, beliefs, religious, and cultural practices (Manning and Cullumswan, 2009:217).

### **1.3.2. Multimodality**

Multimodality is an inter-disciplinary approach that seeks to understand human communication and representation. It is originated from linguistic ideas of communication particularly in the work of MAK Halliday on Language as Social System. Therefore it has been developed thanks to the work of different scholars to other semiotic modes including: Hodge and Kress in Social Semiotics (1988, 1998) then, Kress and Van Leeuwen in reading images (1996, 2006), this has lead to the rise of multimodality. Hodge and Van Leeuwen claimed that modality is not restricted to language but it is a multimodal concept in which any visual representation such as photographs can express modality and can transport different levels of truth (Kress and Hodge, 1979. Besides Van Leeuwen (2005 ) states that

multimodality is the combination of different modes or social resources such as visual, language, colors, gestures, etc to communicate a specific meaning.

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2008), language and visual are two important modes of communication that are interrelated. While words provide facts, explanations, images provide interpretations to facilitate transfer of meaning or intention (Berger, 1972). In the present study, Visual Grammar and the Socio-semantic Inventory have been chosen, since they provide suitable tools for the analysis of both visual and linguistic representations of mothers in their international day in the selected newspapers.

### **1.3.3. Visual Grammar**

It is a recent approach that deals with visuals. It is founded by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen in their work ‘Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design’ (1996-2006). According to Kress, like the grammar of language that describes how words are combined to construct clauses, sentences and texts, visual grammar seeks to understand how different elements are combined together in visuals in a meaningful way (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:41). Therefore, they adopted Halliday’s metafunctions of systemic functional grammar and renamed them as: the representational, interactional, and compositional metafunctions.

- **Representational Metafunction**

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claim that the representational metafunction deals with the participants of the picture and the relation between them. At this level, two categories of processes are distinguished; narrative and conceptual.

- a) Narrative Process**

Narrative processes are described as being dynamic since they represent the participants as doing actions. Therefore, in narrative processes the represented participants in the image are connected by the vector. In fact, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 50) distinguish three types of actions within the narrative process. First, Transactional Action is when a participant (actor) performs an action to another participant (goal). Second, Non-transactional Action is when only one participant performing the action is included. Finally, Reactional Action refers to a situation where one participant reacts by gazing another participant or phenomenon.

#### **b) Conceptual Process**

Conceptual process is described as being static (no vector). That is, it refers to the states rather than the actions. This process is divided into three categories. The analytical process seeks to show 'part-whole' relation among participants. Then, the classificational process aims to present participants together in one picture to highlight the ideas of belonging to the same class. While the symbolic one is associated with symbolic values pointed at by the present participants in the image.

- **Interactional Metafunction**

It examines the way the represented participants interact with the viewers in a picture; it corresponds to Halliday's Interpersonal metafunction. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, this metafunction contains three methods in which the participants engage with the viewers, through gaze, social distance and the angle from which they are seen by the audience.

#### **a) Gaze**

It is considered as a crucial semiotic resource in the visual communication that has different meanings. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) the gaze can be either a demand or an offer. The former, refers to a situation where the participants are looking directly at the viewer to ask for something. The latter refers to the situation where the participants do not gaze the viewers to inform them.

#### **b) Social Distance**

It refers to different relations between the presented participants and the viewers of the image as the following table shows:

<b>Social distance</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>The Significance of the relation</b>
<b>Close shot / Close-up</b>	Head and shoulders of the participant	Close personal distance
<b>Very close shot</b>	The face or the head only	intimate distance
<b>Medium close-shot</b>	From the waist up	Far personal distance
<b>Medium long-shot</b>	The whole figure	Close social distance
<b>Long shot</b>	The whole figure with space around it	Far social distance

**Table1: The dimensions of Social Distance (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006)**

Hence, according to Edward T. Hall (1996) the shorter the distance between the presented participants and the viewers, the more intimate the relation becomes.

#### **c) Point of view**

The angle or the point of view is the third way in which the relation between the presented participants and the viewers is depicted. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) discuss two different types of angles; the horizontal and the vertical angles.

**The horizontal angle:** It is when the viewers see the presented participants from the front or the side. This type is associated with the involvement or the detachment. The former refers to the images where the participants are presented from the frontal angle and the latter concerns the images that involve participants that are seen from the oblique angle.

**The vertical angle:** It refers to the different angles from which the participants are seen whether from below, above or at eye level. This type is associated with the power, which means that if the presented participants are seen from high vertical angle, this shows that the participants are superior to the audience. In opposite, if the participants are viewed from low angle, this indicates that, they are less powerful than the audience. While, at eye level, this signifies that the participants and the viewers have equal power.

- **Compositional Metafunction**

Compositional metafunction refers to the organization of the elements in the image by relying on three interrelated systems: information value, salience, and framing (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006:177).

- a) Information Value**

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claimed that it refers *“to the placement of elements which give specific informational values attached to various zones of the*

*images*”. The areas of information values are: left/right, top/bottom, and centre/margin.

**b) Salience**

Salience refers to how the elements are joined together in an image, and how the important elements are made more attractive to catch the viewers’ attention by using different factors such as colors, size, foreground or background, and sharpness (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 210).

**c) Framing**

It is concerned with the connection and the disconnection between the elements of an image (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006: 210). The absence of framing stresses group identity, while its presence signifies individuality and differentiation (ibid: 203).

**1.3.4. Critical Discourse Analysis**

CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that seeks to examine the relationship between discourse, social power, and ideologies. Researchers believe that discourse without its context does not produce its real meaning i.e. discourse does not only contain the linguistic units, but also social behaviors, norms, values and principles. In fact, CDA involves different approaches that are developed by various scholars such as: Fairclough (1999), Kress (1985), Van Dijk (1998), and Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008).

#### **1.3.4.1.The Socio-Semantic Inventory**

It is an approach to Critical Discourse Analysis introduced by Van Leeuwen (1996, 2008). It aims to analyse the role of social actors in a given discourse. According to Van Leeuwen (2008) there are two categories of the representation of social actors; exclusion and inclusion. That is, social actors can be omitted by their suppression/ backgrounding in the actions, or included in the actions by using different discursive categories among them: role allocation, specification, genericization, nomination, functionalization and identification.

- **Role allocation**

It is concerned with the roles that social actors play in the representation. They can be given active forces through the process of activation or passive through the process of passivation. Van Leeuwen (2008: 32) states that “‘undergoing’ the activity or as being ‘at the receiving end of it’”.

- **Specification and Genericization**

Specification is to represent social actors as individuals, whereas genericization is to represent them as classes or groups. It is divided into two sub-categories: aggregation and collectivization. The former treats the social actors as statistics while the latter does not.

- **Personalization and Impersonalization**

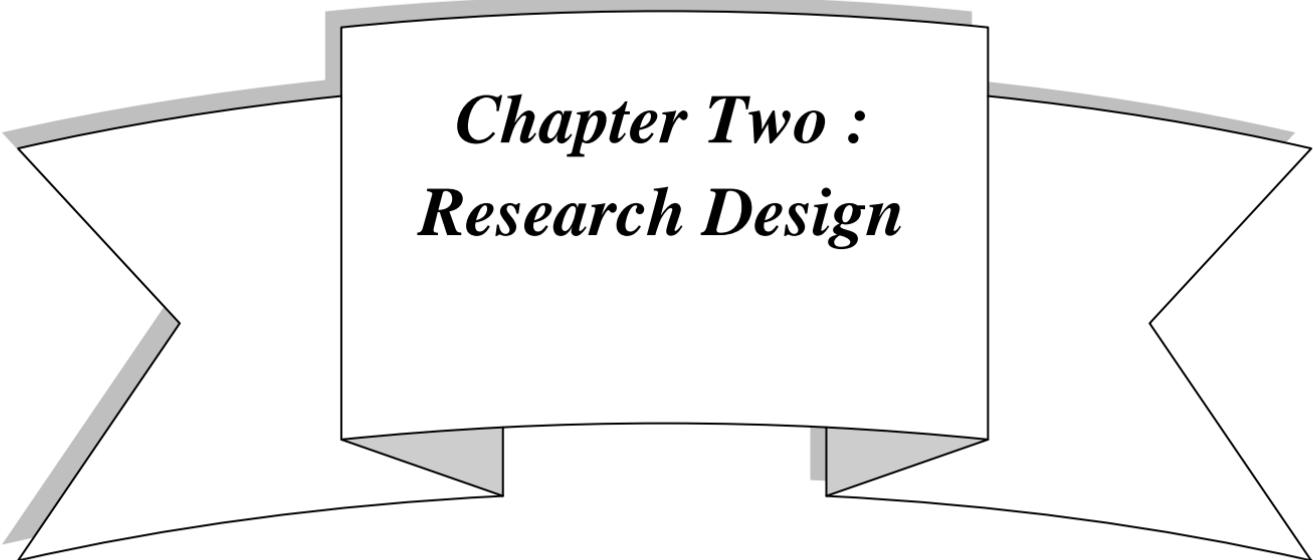
Personalization is the act of personalizing social actors. It is realized through personal or possessive pronouns, proper nouns, or nouns (van Leeuwen, 2008: 46). In other words, it refers to the representation of social actors as human beings by using different techniques including: nomination, functionalization and

identification. Nomination refers to the usage of social actors' unique identity or proper nouns which can be formal (surname only, with or without honorifics), semi-formal (name and surname), or informal (name only). Functionalization is another technique which occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity or what they do, for instance an occupation or role. The third category is identification, which happens when social actors are referred to not in terms of what they do, but rather in terms of they are. Van Leeuwen (2008) distinguished three types of identification. First, classification is when social actors are referred to in terms of major categories by means of which a given society differentiates between classes of people (ibid: 42). Second, relational identification refers to social actors by means of their personal kinship, or work relations to each other (ibid: 43). The last type is physical identification; it represents social actors in terms of physical characteristics.

In addition to personalization, social actors can be impersonalized. In fact, impersonalization is divided into two types: the abstraction and objectivation. The abstraction occurs when social actors represented by means of a quality assigned to them. However, objectivation refers to presenting social actors by means of reference to a place or thing closely associated with them.

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, this chapter has first introduced motherhood and gender roles with some social issues. Then, it has briefly reviewed the history of the International Mother's Day. After that, it has defined the theories of multimodality and social semiotics. Finally, it has informed the readers about the analytical framework to be used for the analysis of corpus under study. The next chapter is related to 'Research Design' which is concerned with the "Research Methodology" that the study adopts.



***Chapter Two :***  
***Research Design***

## **Introduction**

This chapter is methodological and deals with the research design. First, it presents the research method used for the analysis of the depiction of mothers in their international day. It, then, explains the procedures of data collection, and also provides a description of the corpus which consists of eight images along with eight texts, which are selected from the four broadsheet newspapers: Arab News, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian, and The New York Times. This chapter ends with a description of data analysis, therefore the collected data will be analyzed using two analytical tools including ‘Visual Grammar’ proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996-2006), and the ‘Socio-semantic Inventory’ (van Leeuwen, 1996-2008).

### **2.1. The Research Methods**

The present study aims at examining the ways through which mothers are represented visually and linguistically in the selected newspapers. To achieve this aim, the mixed-methods approach which combines the qualitative and the quantitative techniques is used in the process of data analysis.

The qualitative method is defined as *“a form of systemic empirical enquiry into meaning”* (Shank, 2002:5), this technique is used to interpret and analyse the chosen images in relation to Kress and van Leeuwen’s framework ‘Visual Grammar’ by relying on its three metafunctions particularly: the representational, the interactional, and the compositional metafunctions. The quantitative method, in contrast, is *“concerned with quantities and measurements”* (Biggam, 2008:86). This method is used to analyse the linguistic discourses based on van Leeuwen’s theory the ‘Socio-semantic Inventory’. In fact, these two research techniques have been chosen since

they allow us to understand how mothers are depicted differently in their international day in the selected corpus.

## **2.2. Procedures of Data Collection**

This part of our study deals with the main procedures of data collection. In order to reveal the ways through which mothers are portrayed in their international day, four broadsheet newspapers are selected to achieve the intended aim. These newspapers are: Arab News, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian and The New York Times. The reason behind the choice of these newspapers is related to their popularity in their countries which are: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Britain and U.S.A respectively. In fact, the selection of these newspapers is not random but rather it is due to their popularity. They are viewed as the most favoured ones in their countries of publication that belong to two different worlds, Arab and Western ones. These sides have different social and cultural norms that are considered as an important component in understanding the depiction of mothers in these two parts on the globe.

## **2.3. Description of the Corpus**

From each of the above mentioned newspapers, two articles and two images have been selected dealing with the international day of mothers. The dates of publication of the newspapers varied between 2017 and 2020. To collect the corpus, the websites of these newspapers are consulted. Thus, the corpus of this research contains sixteen items to be analysed, in order to reveal the way mothers are depicted in two different cultures.

### **2.3.1. Arab News**

It is a daily newspaper written in English founded in Jeddah, on 20 April 1975 by Hisham Hafiz and his brother Mohammad Hafiz. It was the first English language daily newspaper published in Saudi Arabia. It is distributed in Saudi Arabia and other countries including: United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Pakistan, North Africa, Europe and United States...In 2018, Arab News launched Pakistani edition. Later on, in 2019, Arab News launched a digital Japanese edition. It offers a variety of news ranging from politics, finance to sport and social events ([www.arabnews.com](http://www.arabnews.com)). The choice of this newspaper in the present study is motivated by the event of 'the International Mother's Day', which was reported on March 22, 2017 and March 14, 2019.

### **2.3.2. Daily News Egypt**

It is an Egyptian newspaper published in English. It is established in 2005 and relaunched in June 2012. According to its website, the newspaper covers business, political and cultural news analysis. The newspaper has claimed to be independent and not subject to government censorship. Hence, it covers Egypt news, Arab news, Middle East and world news. ([www.dailynewsegypt.com](http://www.dailynewsegypt.com)). This broadsheet is chosen to reinforce the importance of this day in Egypt, which was reported on March 22, 2019 and March 20, 2020.

### **2.3.3. The Guardian**

The guardian is a British daily newspaper founded by John Edward Taylor in 1821. It was called the Manchester Guardian which was a weekly newspaper until 1855, the year in which it turned to a daily newspaper. It changed its name to the Guardian in the 1959. Its online version was created in the late 1995([www.the](http://www.the)

Guardian.com). The event of Mother's Day was announced on March 24, 2017 and March, 21, 2020.

#### **2.3.4. The New York Times**

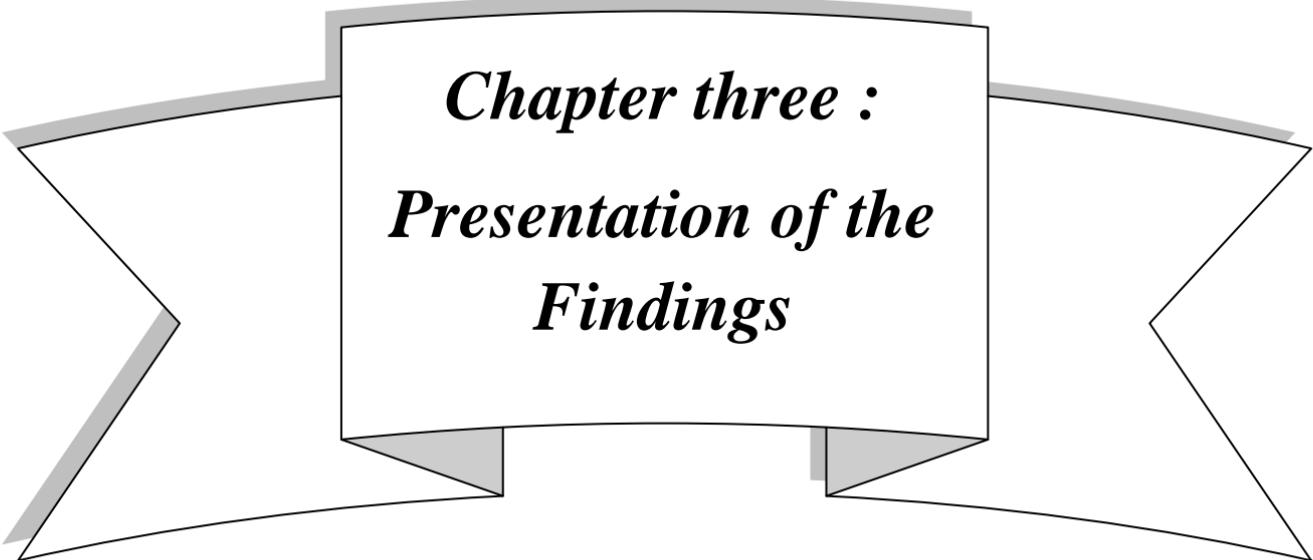
The New York Times is an American daily newspaper founded in 1851 by the journalist and politician Henry Jarvis Raymond. It was first called the New York Daily Times. This newspaper is considered to be as one of the world's prestigious and leading newspapers which have won 130 Pulitzer prizes. In 1995, the New York Times launched its electronic website [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) which is considered as one of the most visited websites in the U.S.A. ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)). This celebration was announced on May 11, 2019 and May 10, 2020.

#### **2.4. Procedures of the Data Analysis**

This section is devoted to the procedures followed to analyse the collected data. Two analytical tools are adopted for the analysis of the selected corpus. The first one refers to the theory of 'Visual Grammar' (1996, 2006) that is used to conduct a social semiotic analysis of the pictures by relying on the three metafunctions. As for the second one, it refers to the 'Socio-semantic Inventory' that is adopted to examine the articles under study in relation to some categories of van Leeuwen's framework, including; exclusion, role allocation, specification, genericization, functionalization and identification. The reason for the choice of these categories is that they provide a useful tool to analyse the linguistic representation of mothers in their international day.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is related to the research methodology of the present work. It has first presented the adopted method to investigate the topic which is the mixed-methods approach. Then, it has explained how the data are collected. Afterwards, it has provided a description of the corpus of this study. Finally, it has described the procedures of data analysis. The coming chapter is concerned with the ‘Presentation of the Findings’.



***Chapter three :***  
***Presentation of the***  
***Findings***

## **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the presentation of the findings of the analysis of the visual and the linguistic representations of mothers in their international day in the selected newspapers which contain eight articles and eight images. Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of 'Visual Grammar' (1996-2006) is used to examine the visual depiction of mothers in relation to their international day.

Furthermore, Van Leeuwen's theory named the 'socio-semantic inventory' (1996-2008) is adopted to discover the way mothers are portrayed linguistically in their international day. Thus, this chapter involves two parts. The first one describes the findings of the visual analysis of mothers, while the second presents the results obtained from the linguistic analysis of mothers in the selected articles.

### **3.1. The Representation of Mothers in Arab News, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian, The New York Times: Visual Analysis**

This part shows the results of the social semiotic analysis of eight images in relation to the theory of Visual Grammar. They are analyzed depending on three metafunctions including: the representational, the interactional and the compositional.

### 3.1.1. The Representational Metafunction

	Images	Description
<b>Arab News</b>	Image 1	This image presents two women; one of them is smiling and opening her arm to cuddle the one who wears a veil. This picture generates a narrative meaning since the two participants perform an action.
	Image 2	The image presents two veiled women standing together; one of them is blind. They are facing the viewers. This image presents a conceptual meaning since there is no action.
<b>Daily News Egypt</b>	Image 3	This image shows a group of participants; women and men in an auditorium listening, enthusiastically applauding to someone who is speaking in front of them. This image presents a narrative meaning because the participants perform an action, the vector begins from the speaker to the other participants.
	Image 4	This image shows a group of women who are standing together aside the Egyptian flag and they are looking to the viewers. It is a conceptual representation since the participants are not performing actions.
<b>The Guardian</b>	Image 5	This picture portrays a nurse analyses one child and group of other children are standing behind him as waiting their turn to be examined, this gives a narrative meaning because the participants are doing an action. The vector line begins from the nurse (actor) and ends at the children (goal).
	Image 6	In this image only one participant is presented in which a smiling mother setting on a sofa, she is looking on the screen of her PC and taping on the keyboards. It represents a narrative process because the participant performs an action.
<b>The New York Times</b>	Image 7	This image portrays a conceptual meaning since it represents two participants who are static; a mother holding her baby and looking at him while the baby is gazing the audience.
	Image 8	Similar to image 6 this one generates a narrative meaning since it depicts a mother with her son holding their hands, playing and interacting with each other ahead of the big buildings. In this case the vector which connects the two interactors is formed by the depicted elements.

**Table2: The representational Metafunction in the Selected Image**

In table 2 we notice that five images represent the narrative meaning since they involve active participants and three images are conceptual since the presented participants are static. In image 1 of Arab News, 3 of Daily News Egypt, 5 and 6 of The Guardian and 8 of The New York Times provide narrative meaning. As for the conceptual ones are 2 of Arab News, 4 of Daily News Egypt and 7 of The New York Times.

### 3.1.2. The interaction metafunction

	Images	Gaze	Social Distance	Point of View	
				Horizontal	Vertical
<b>Arab News</b>	Image 1	Offer	Far personal	Oblique	Eye level
	Image 2	Demand	Far personal	Frontal	Eye level
<b>Daily News Egypt</b>	Image 3	Demand	Far social distance	Frontal	Low angle
	Image 4	Offer	Far social distance	oblique	Eye level
<b>The Guardian</b>	Image 5	Offer	Far social distance	Oblique	Low angle
	Image 6	Offer	Far social distance	Oblique	Low angle
<b>The New York Time</b>	Image 7	Offer	Far personal	Oblique	Low angle
	Image 8	Offer	Far social distance	Oblique	Eye level

**Table3: The interactional Metafunction in the Selected Images**

Table 3 shows that most of the images are offer pictures except image 2 of Arab News and image 4 of Daily News Egypt. In terms of social distance, far personal distance is realized in images 1, 2, 7 for creating far intimate relation between the participants and the viewers. Besides, far social distance is realized in images 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 to create a far social relation between the participants and the

audience. In terms of the horizontal angle, in all the images the participants are seen form an oblique angle except images 1 of Arab news and 4 of Daily Egypt News which are viewed from the frontal angle. With regard to the vertical angle, 3 pictures are seen at eye level while 6 images depict mothers from the low angle.

### 3.1.3. The Compositional Metafunction

	Images	Information Value	Salience	Framing
<b>Arab News</b>	Image 1	In this image, the two women are placed in the centre of the image which indicates that are the most valued element.	The two participants have the same size, and they are placed on the foreground.	The two women are connected to each other.
	Image 2	Similarly, this image presents two women placed in the centre of the image to show that they are the most important elements.	Both women are given salience in this image by putting them in the foreground.	Likewise, the participants of this image are connected.
<b>Daily Egypt News</b>	Image 3	In this image, both the women and the men are in the centre of the picture; this indicates that both of them are the most important elements.	All the participants seem equal in size and they are foregrounded. This means that they are the salient elements in this image.	The participants seem to be connected in this picture.
	Image 4	This image depicts a group of women; who are placed in the centre of the image, therefore they are considered as the most valued element.	The participants in this image are placed in the foreground.	Akin to images 1 and 2, the depicted women are connected in this image.

<b>The Guardian</b>	Image 5	This image depicts children in the right side and the nurse in the left side. This indicates that the elements placed on the left are the giver while those placed on the right side are the new.	This image shows that the children and the nurse are placed on the foreground of the image with black and white colour.	This image indicates that the children are connected with the nurse.
	Image 6	In the image, the woman is on the centre which means that she is the most important element.	The participant is placed in the foreground. It means that it is the most important element in the image.	This image shows only one participant that is disconnected.
<b>The New York Times</b>	Image 7	This picture shows a mother taking her baby in the centre, which means that they are the most important element in the image.	Likewise, in this image the participants are put on the foreground.	The participants of this image are connected.
	Image 8	This image represents a mother in the right side with her son in the left side. This means that it provides new and given information to the audience.	The participants of this image are put on the right side. This gives the salience for it, by placing them on the foreground and the setting on the background.	This image shows that the mother and her son are connected to each other.

**Table4: The compositional Metafunction in the Selected Images**

From table 4, we notice that 6 images place the participants in the central position because they are the most important elements. In terms of salience, all the participants are put on the foreground in the images. As regard the framing, the majority of the depicted participants are connected and presented as unified unit of information except image 6 of The Guardian.

### **3.2. The representation of Mothers in Arab News, Daily Egypt News, the Guardian, the New York Times: Linguistic Analysis.**

This section reveals the main findings of the linguistic analysis including: the exclusion and the inclusion of mothers in the selected newspapers by relying on Van Leeuwen's framework named 'The Socio-semantic Inventory'. In order to calculate and classify the discursive categories of this framework, all the phrases, clauses and sentences of the selected news articles are analysed. Since, it provides a useful tool to examine and to intrepret the way mothers are manifested linguistically in mass media.

#### **3.2.1. Exclusion**

	<b>Arab News</b>	<b>Daily News Egypt</b>	<b>The Guardian</b>	<b>The New York Times</b>
<b>Frequency of backgrounding</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Frequency of suppression</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table5: Exclusion of Mother in the Selected Articles**

Table 5 indicates that mothers are infrequently omitted from their actions in all the selected newspapers by adopting the frequency of backgrounding (4 cases in The New York Times). However, mothers are never omitted from their actions; therefore there is no suppression of the social actors in the selected articles.

### 3.2.2. Inclusion

- **Role allocation**

	Arab News	Daily News Egypt	The Guardian	The New York Times
<b>The frequency of activation</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The frequency of passivation</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>

**Table6: Mother Role Allocation in the selected articles**

According to table 6, we notice that the frequency of activation of the representation of mother is larger than the frequency of passivation in the two Arab newspapers Arab News and Daily News Egypt (10 and 18 times respectively). However, The Guardian and the New York Times represent mothers as passive social actors (23 and 34 times respectively).

- **Specification and Genericization**

	Arab News	Daily News Egypt	The Guardian	The New York Times
<b>Frequency of specification</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Frequency of Genericization</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>

**Table7: Specification and Generalization of the Mother in the Selected Articles**

As shown in table 7, in Arab News and Daily News Egypt, mothers are represented as specific individuals (9 and 11 cases respectively). However, in The Guardian and The New York Times, mothers are depicted through genericization (9 and 13 cases respectively).

- **Nomination:**

	Arab News	Daily News Egypt	The Guardian	The New York Times
Frequency of formalization	0	6	4	3
Frequency of semi- formalization	5	3	3	2
Frequency of informalization	3	3	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>

**Table8: Nomination of Mothers in the Selected Articles**

Table 8 reveals that mothers are mainly nominated through formalization in all of Daily Egypt News, The Guardian and The New York Times in 6, 4, and 3 cases respectively. It is also noticed that in Arab News, mothers are nominated in semi-formalization in 5 cases.

- **Functionalization and Identification:**

	Arab News	Daily Egypt News	The Guardian	The New York Times
<b>Functionalization</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Identification</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>34</b>

**Table9: Functionalization and Identification of Mothers in the Selected Articles.**

Table 9 demonstrates that mothers are represented through functionalization rather than identification in Arab News, Daily Egypt News and The Guardian, except for The New York Times where mothers are represented through identification.

**3.3. Comparison of the Visual and the Linguistic Representations of Mothers**

The tables below show the results of the comparison between the selected newspapers in their visual and linguistic depictions. Hence, the findings are obtained by using different elements for each of them.

**3.3.1. Visual Representation**

	<b>Arab News</b>	<b>Daily News Egypt</b>	<b>The Guardian</b>	<b>The New York Times</b>
<b>Process</b>	Narrative/ conceptual	Narrative/ conceptual	Narrative	Conceptual/ narrative
<b>Gaze</b>	Offer/ Demand	Demand/ Offer	Offer	Offer
<b>Social Distance</b>	Far personal	Far social distance	Far social distance	Far personal distance/ Far social distance
<b>Point of view</b>	Oblique/ frontal	Frontal/ oblique	Oblique	Oblique
<b>Information value</b>	Placed in the centre	Placed in the centre	Placed in the left/ centre	Placed in the centre
<b>Salience</b>	Forgeround	Foreground	Foreground	Foreground
<b>Framing</b>	Connected its visual elements	Connected them	Connected/ disconnected them	Connected

**Table10: The comparison of visual representation of mothers**

Table 10 demonstrates that almost all the images of the newspapers represent a narrative meaning, and most of them are offer pictures. Besides, far social distance and far personal distance are realized in the pictures. As for point of view, in the majority of the images, the participants are viewed from an oblique angle. In terms of information value and salience, all the participants of the pictures all placed in the central position and put put on the foreground. Concerning framing, almost all the elements of the images are connected to each other.

### 3.3.2. Linguistic Representation

		Arab News	Daily News Egypt	The Guardian	The New York Times
Exclusion	Backgrounding				✓
	Suppression				
Role Allocation	Activation	✓	✓		
	Passivation			✓	✓
Specification/ Genericization	Specification	✓	✓		
	Genericization			✓	✓
Nomination	Formalization		✓	✓	✓
	Semi-formalization	✓			
	Informalization				
Functionalization/ Identification	Functionalization	✓	✓	✓	
	Identification				✓

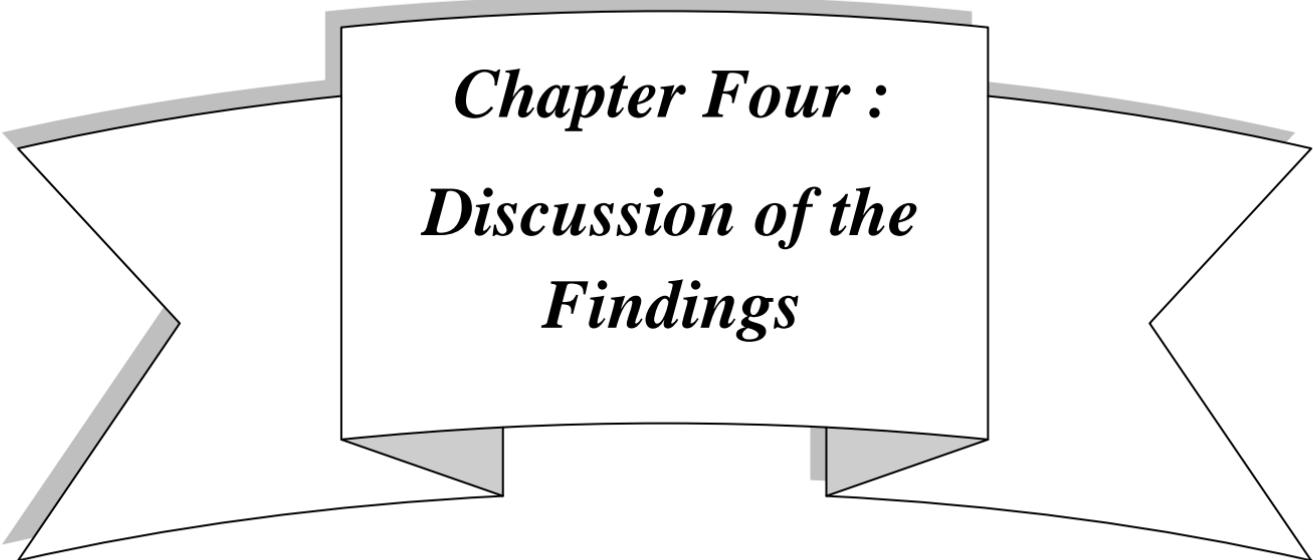
**Table 11: The comparison of the linguistic representation of mothers**

Table 11 indicates that nearly in all the newspapers, the participants are never omitted from their action except in The New York Times. In terms of role allocation, the processes of activation and passivation are realized in the articles. In addition, specification and genericization are also realized. Concerning nomination, in the majority of the newspapers, the social actors are nominated through formalization. Moreover, functionalization is adopted in almost all the news articles.

### Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has presented the findings obtained from the pictorial and the textual analysis of the representation of mothers in their international day in the corpus under study. The pictorial analysis has been conducted relying on the multimodal social semiotic theory ‘Visual Grammar’, as for the textual analysis, it has been carried out using van Leeuwen’s theory named the ‘Socio-Semantic Inventory’. Six representational categories in relation to the latter are selected to perform the linguistic analysis of the depiction of mothers. The

categories are: exclusion, inclusion, role allocation, specification and Genericization, personalization and Impersonalization. The obtained results are going to be subject to interpretation in the following chapter entitled 'Discussion of the Findings'.



***Chapter Four :***  
***Discussion of the***  
***Findings***

## **Introduction**

This chapter concerns the discussion of the findings. It is divided into three sections. The First section discusses the visual representation of mothers in their international day in the selected pictures in relation to Visual Grammar. The second chapter deals with the linguistic representation of mothers in the chosen articles by applying the socio-semantic inventory. Finally, the third section draws a comparison between the selected newspapers that belong to different contexts namely Saudi Arabian, Egyptian, British, and American in order to reveal the main similarities and differences between their depictions of mothers in their international day.

### **4.1. The Visual Representation of Mothers in their International Day**

This section provides the discussion of the results obtained from the analysis of eight selected images of mothers in their international day. They are examined in relation to the three metafunction by relying on Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of Visual Grammar (1996, 2006).

#### **4.1.1. The Depiction of Mothers with the Representational Metafunction:**

The representational metafunction shows the way the participants are presented, and how they are realized and related to each other. In fact, it is based on two distinctive categories: the narrative and the conceptual processes. The narrative process represents the participants as connected through a vector. Whereas, the conceptual process, it does not include a vector. The analysis of the selected images shows that both processes are used in portraying mothers in their international day to convey the intended meanings, as it is shown in image 1 of Arab News ( see Appendix 1), it represents a narrative process because the two participants open their arms happily to cuddle each other. That is, they are portrayed as “‘the agent’, the

doers of the action” (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 59) in order to show that mothers are active and dynamic participants in their international day. This action consists to express harmonious relationship by being too close and too familiar; it also shows that mothers support each other in this important celebration with resilience and braveness. Image 2 however, represents a conceptual meaning since the depicted mothers (one of them is blind) are static, they perform no action, and they are just posing to camera. In fact, this broadsheet presents them as being indecisive, uncertain and hesitated by dressing in conservative way and wearing a hidjab (headscarf) and Abaya (long robe) to maintain their privacy in the society. Moreover, the picture uses analytical process in which the represented mothers are the ‘carrier’ in relation to their ‘possessive attributes’, which means that the depicted mothers wear the veil which connotes ‘Islam’. Hence, mothers are categorized for the viewers in terms of the ‘cultural characteristics’ of their social group (van Leeuwen, 2008: 144).

As regards Daily News Egypt, Image 3 (see Appendix 1) represents a narrative process; it is about ceremony in which the participants are applauding with a warm smile in their faces to someone who is not present in the picture. The presented mothers seem to be celebrating their day with the presence of a group of men who show their appreciation to mothers. The picture shows solidarity and union between mothers and men that serves to establish gender equalities between them. This indicates that the men’s position is necessary in providing assistance and protection to them. As for image 4 demonstrates a group of mothers who are not acting. They stand together as one person to take picture near the Egyptian flag which identifies their identity. They appear to be confident and free by dressing in different way in order to show their religious’ freedom. This picture generates a

conceptual meaning, by adopting a ‘symbolic attributes’ that defines the meaning of identity of a participant (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006: 144). The purpose of this demonstration is to show to the viewers their identity and their important status in the Egyptian society and to prove their responsibility in freeing their own rights. Moreover, this solidarity enables them to be independent from dominance and control of men.

Concerning The Guardian, it generates narrative meaning in both images since the represented participants are involved in an action and serving “to present infolding action and event” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006: 59), that is they are resented as active participants or the “agents, the doer of the action” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2008: 42). Image 5 portrays a narrative presentation since the nurse performs an action by checking children’s mouth; the nurse presents the actor and the children relate to the goal. This action signifies that the term “motherhood” is not restricted only to woman who gives birth to child, but also the one who cares about him. So that, all females have maternal instincts which allow them to be mothers even if they are not. Similarly, image 6 is based on a narrative process; it shows a mother interacting with another person joyfully by using her personal computer with smile in her face. This indicates that regardless the difficult conditions and the long distance between the depicted mother and her family; they found a means to celebrate this event together in the time of covid-19 as it is mentioned in article 6 accompanying this picture. Traditionally, gender role beliefs dominate many spheres of societies, that is to say, the role of mothers consists in being a lady of home, taking care of the family and being focused on children and their happiness. But, nowadays, modern mothers have made great progress to be educated and well-informed in various fields.

In The New York Times, image 7 generates a conceptual process; it depicts two participants who are static, a mother who is holding her child in her arms without performing an action, in order to ensure him security and provides him the affection and warmth. Besides, this image can be considered as symbolic as being ‘symbolic attributes’ because *“they take up a posture which cannot be interpreted as narrative: they just sit or stand there for no reason other than to display themselves to the viewer”* (Van Leeuwen, 2006: 105). That is, the participants are not involved in an action, but are just posing for the audience. As for image 8, it represents narrative process since its participants perform an action; it includes a vector that relates between the actor and the goal of the action. It depicts a mother interacting with her son. This shows that mothers are always present in the life of their children by or without making actions to demonstrate that they play an important role in the development of their children.

### **4.1.2. The Interactional Metafunction**

The interactional metafunction relates to the relation between the presented participants, the producer and the viewer of the images. It involves three major dimensions: gaze, social distance, and the point of view.

#### **4.1.2.1. The Gaze of Mothers in the Selected Images**

Gaze is a crucial element in the visual representation since it presents details about the participants to the viewers. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 117) argue that *“there is a fundamental difference between pictures from which the presented participant look directly at the viewer eye and pictures in which this is not the case”*. The selected images exemplify such types, for instance, the participants of image 1 of Arab News provides an offer gaze since the depicted participants look

away from the viewers; the two participants are not looking to the camera but they are looking to each other; one of them seems happy to welcome the veiled one. This offers information to the viewers, in which it invites them to interact and participate with them in the celebration of this day. In contrast, image 2 involves participants who look straight into the camera, which makes it a demand gaze, in which the viewers “*enter a relation of social affinity with them*” (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). The mothers in this image draw viewers’ attention. They perhaps, demand from the viewers to recognize the effort that they make, or they are asking for help to give them the encouragement and praise them. The aim of this depiction is to show clearly to the audience that mothers are considered as the weak creatures, they are defenseless and powerless.

As regards, image 3 of Daily News Egypt, it is an offer picture. The participants are looking to someone who speaks in front of them with clapping their hands happily. This entails that, it provides information for the audience that the depicted participants are celebrating an important event. However, image 4 is a demand gaze; the depicted mothers observe directly the audience which creates a direct connection between the participants and the viewers. This demonstrates that despite the absence of men, they are commemorating this important event by showing their identity confidently beside the Egyptian flag. The way the depicted mothers look to the viewers with comfort may be interpreted as an invitation to the viewers to be consolidated as one person to achieve their goals in showing their status.

Concerning images 5 and 6 of The Guardian, they generate an offer gaze, in which the presented participants look away from the camera and they address them indirectly. For instance, in image 5 the nurse seems to be busy on doing something,

she checks the children one by one. As for, images 7 and 8 of The New York Times also generate an offer gaze which shows that the depicted mothers look away from the viewers. In both pictures, it seems that the depicted mothers are looking to their children blissfully, which may denote that they are the only source of their happiness.

#### **4.1.2.2. Social Distance between Mothers and the Viewers in the Selected Images**

Social distance is another factor of the interactive metafunction that refers to how the social distance is realized between the participants and the viewers. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 124) point out that *“the choice of the distance can suggest different relations between the depicted participants and the viewer”*. In the case of the selected images, mothers are represented from two different ways including: “far personal distance” and “far social distance”.

In images 1 and 2 of the Arab News (see appendix), far personal distance is reflected; the depicted participants are shown from the waist up; it is taken by medium close shot which makes the viewers close to the depicted participants. This distance establishes a far intimate relationship between the depicted mothers and the viewers. For instance, in image 1 the viewers can see how mothers show their status proudly and respectfully. The aim of this depiction is to allow the audience to captivate the mothers’ emotions. Besides, to make the viewers recognize the significant role of mothers and to demonstrate their active presence in their international day.

However, far social distance is established in both Daily News Egypt and The Guardian. In the selected images 3, 4, 5 and 6 (see appendix), the participants

and the viewers provide far social relationship in which their full figures are taken with space around, by using long shot to focus on their whole bodies in order to show distance between them and the audience. This distance is maintained in order to suit the interest of the newspapers. To enable the viewers to understand that mothers are present in different ways in their international day and to acknowledge their great efforts in keeping themselves strong and powerful.

Like in Arab News, image 7 of The New York Times demonstrates a far personal distance that is shown from the waist up to create a far intimate relation between them. The objective is to inform the audience how the depicted mother feels happy by holding her child and to show her affection and tenderness. As for image 8, it is realized with far social distance, it captures the whole figure of the participants with space around by using long shot. Besides, by adopting this distance, the depicted mothers are not represented close to the viewers. It establishes far social relationship between them in order to make the depicted participants far from the audience. Thus, this imaginary link is adopted in order to preserve the participants' intimacy from the viewers and the action in which they are involved.

### **4.1.2.3. Point of View and Power's Distribution between Mothers and the Viewers**

The point of view deals with the angles from which the participants are viewed. It contains two types: horizontal and vertical angles. Regarding the horizontal angle, Kress and Van Leeuwen state that the participants who are presented from the frontal angle have a greater sense of involvement than those who are viewed from an oblique angle. As for the vertical angle, it relates to high angle, low angle, or at eye level angle. The selected images illustrate such aspects.

In image 1 of Arab News, we notice that mothers are captured from an oblique point of view, which means that the participants are detached from the viewers. This demonstrates that the selected mothers look like they are preoccupied in doing something else than looking to the camera. In other words, the viewers do not get involved in the celebration of the international mother's day. However, image 2 of the same newspaper is captured from a frontal point of view meaning that there is an interaction between mothers and the viewers. The objective of this depiction is to involve the viewers to support them in their struggle and perhaps, to encourage them to be strong and brave to confront life's obstacles. As for the vertical angle, the two pictures are at eye level, which indicates equality between the depicted mothers and the audience.

As regard image 3 of Daily News Egypt, it is taken from an oblique angle in which the viewers are not involved with the participants. Kress and Van Leeuwen claim "*what we see here is not part of us, something we are not involved with*" (2006: 113). As for the vertical, the image is at low level angle which denotes that the viewers are more powerful than the presented participants, in which the viewers are put in symbolic power over the presented mothers. In image 4, the participants are seen from a frontal point of view which gives a sense of involvement between them and the viewers. In this sense Kress and Van Leeuwen assert (ibid) "*what we see here is part of our world, something we are involved with*". As far as the vertical angle; the image is photographed at eye level which suggests that the viewers and the participants have a relation of equality and there is no power difference between them.

In images 5, 6 of The Guardian and images 7 and 8 of The New York Times, the depicted mothers are seen from an oblique point of view which indicates that

they are detached from the viewers. The depicted mothers seem to be absorbed by something else that they did not notice their surroundings. As for the vertical point of view, the two images of the Guardian and image 7 of The New York Times are taken from a low angle which means that the viewers are superior to the depicted participants. That is, the depicted mothers have symbolic power over the viewers. However, image 8 of the New York Times is captured from medium angle which demonstrates an equal power between the presented participants and the viewers.

### **4.1.3. The Compositional Metafunction:**

The compositional metafunction seeks to analyze how the elements of the images are created; it combines the representational and the interactional metafunctions together through three main aspects: information value, salience and framing. From this prescriptive, the main result drawn from the analysis of the selected images reveals that different strategies are used.

#### **4.1.3.1. The placement of Mothers in the Selected Images**

The information value which is the principle that relates to the placement of the elements in different zones of the images to convey different meanings and to provide certain value. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen, the elements placed on the centre of an image are presented as the important elements, the element positioned on the right side are the new information that the viewers do not know, while the left side presents the information that viewers know in advance.

In image 1 and 2 of Arab News the depicted mothers are placed in the centre, which makes them the most important elements in the images. The centralization of the depicted mothers in image 1 is made to catch the viewer's attention and to inform them that mothers have active and central role in their international day. In

image 2, the two veiled mothers are placed in the centre; this is to make the viewers aware about the situation of mothers in Saudi Arabian society. Similarly, in the images of Daily News Egypt, the mothers are placed in the central position. In image 3, the presented mothers seem celebrating their international day with the presence of group of men, which indicates that both of men and women play a significant role in presenting this important day in Egypt and to show their solid determination to establish equality in society. Likewise the depicted mothers in image 4 of this newspaper are given importance by putting them in the middle. This indicates that they are the most valued elements in the image. While the Egyptian flag is placed on the left side, this demonstrates that it is ‘the given’ already known by the audience.

As regard image 5 of The Guardian, it represents a nurse on the left side and three children on the right. The presented nurse placed on the left provides given information, something that the viewers already know in advance, while the elements placed on the right are the key information; a message that the viewer has to pay particular attention to in order to recognize its real connotation. The viewers may figure out that nurse can be considered as a mother since she cares for children. As for image 6, the presented mother tapping on her PC is given prominence by placing them in the middle of the picture in order to stress the importance of her presence on such a day. This position makes them as the core information and the most valued elements in the image. Concerning image 7 of The New York Times, the elements are put in the middle, since they are considered as the crucial elements in order to invite the viewers to recognize the important position of mothers. However, in image 8, the depicted participants are placed on the left side; this demonstrates that they are ‘the given information’ already known by the viewers.

Briefly, the findings show that nearly all the images place mothers in the central position, in order to underlie and present them as the basic information in the picture.

#### **4.1.3.2. Mothers as Salient Elements in the Selected Images**

Salience is another factor of the compositional metafunction that refers to the elements that catch the viewer's attention such as colour, size and placements in the foreground or the background, etc (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006: 210). Thus, the result shows that all the images place the depicted mothers on the foreground in order to represent them as the core elements.

The participants of images 1 and 2 of Arab News are put on the foreground, and they are seen as the most important elements in the pictures. Similarly, in images 3, 4 of Daily News Egypt, the presented mothers are on the foreground. For instance, in image 4 the mothers standing together are placed in the centre of the picture. The aim behind such presentation is to show to the viewers the central and the dominant position of mothers in the societies and to let them know that they are celebrating their international day confidently. In image 5 of the Guardian, the nurse and the children are also placed on the foreground and they are depicted against a black background in order to highlight them. Likewise, in image 6 the depicted mothers are the most salient elements by placing them in the foreground position of the image. Akin to the previous images, the participants depicted in images 7 and 8 of The New York Times are salient through being foregrounded in the images.

#### **4.1.3.3. The Framing of Mothers in the Selected Images**

The final principle of the compositional metafunction is framing. It refers to the connectedness or the disconnectedness of the elements in an image. Kress and

Van Leeuwen (2006: 203) maintain that the absence of framing signifies 'group of identity' while its presence indicates 'individuality' and 'differentiation'.

In images 1 and 2 of Arab News, the depicted participants are connected to each other, which indicate that mothers are identified collectively. The same for Daily News Egypt, the represented mothers are joined to each other. Thus, the depicted mothers are unified, they are identified collectively. Likewise, in image 5 of The Guardian, the presented participants are connected to each other, while image 6 depicts mother individually. Finally, in images 7 and 8 of The New York Times, the depicted elements are connected together. This demonstrates the close relation and strong connection that exist between mothers and their children. In short, the findings of the visual analysis of the representation of mothers in the selected images and their discussion reveal that the newspapers adopt the principles of the representational, the interactional and the compositional metafunctions presented by Kress and Van Leeuwen.

In summary, the findings obtained from the visual analysis of the selected images and their discussion reveal that all these newspapers portray mothers positively, by presenting them as active social actors who are more successful. This is shown through their modern appearance, which indicates the high status and the significant position that they occupy in a society, except for image 2 of Arab News (see image 2), in which mothers are depicted as inactive social actors. They are presented at home dressing with old-fashioned way, which signifies that they are inferior and indecisive persons, since their only role is to take care of their children.

## **4.2. The Linguistic Representation of Mothers in their International Day**

This part deals with the linguistic analysis of the selected newspapers and the way mothers are represented in linguistic mode as social actors. In fact, Social actors refer to actor statuses, to the roles they play or are expected to play and this actor tries to attribute a social meaning in harmony with his own self-image (Alain, 2000: 902). That is, the representation of the social actors identifies how individuals are presented in discourse.

### **4.2.1. The Exclusion and Inclusion of Mothers in the Selected Newspapers:**

The representation of social actors can point out the way particular individuals and activities are positioned in discourse by means of different structures. Accordingly, Van Leeuwen's Socio-semantic approach(2008) provide a discursive framework to critically explore the ways the social actors are linguistically positioned in discourse. Thus, he proposed two major categories namely exclusion and inclusion. From the analysis of the selected articles, it has been noticed that mothers are never excluded in the Arab News and the Daily News Egypt, and The Guardian (except The New York Times, where mothers are rarely excluded by adopting the category of backgrounding). The following are some examples to illustrate how mothers are excluded from the action:

-Example 1 (The New York Times): The conversations were challenging and sometimes hit dead ends.

-Example 2 (The New York Times): Hundreds of deaths today alone could have been prevented.

As a result, mothers' presence is underlined in the selected articles; by including them in their actions, rather than excluding them. The purpose of this representation is to reveal that mothers and the activities which are involved in are significant to be included in the discourse of the news articles. That is, the selected articles rely systematically on 'inclusion' by employing multiple discursive structures namely: role allocation, specification, genericization, nomination, functionalization, and identification.

#### **4.2.2. The Role of Mothers in the Selected Newspapers:**

Role allocation is a significant category, which refers to the role that the social actors take in the representation. Van Leeuwen claims (2008: 32) that "*the representations can reallocate role or rearrange the social relations between the participants*". He also reveals that "*Representation can endow social actors with either active or passive roles*" (ibid, 33).

The drawing finding indicates that both Arab News and Daily News Egypt represent mothers as active and dynamic social actors. The following examples display this point clearly:

-Example 1(Arab News): She has been able to send the three siblings to Al Azhar University in Cairo to learn theology.

-Example 2 (Daily News Egypt): A total 404 mothers met the competition's criteria.

This shows that mothers play a significant role in the depicted newspapers by associating them with positive actions and showing positive attitudes towards them.

In the Guardian and the New York Times mothers are portrayed more as passive social actor using the category of beneficialization. Van Leeuwen (2008)

claims that *“the passivated social actor can be either subjected or beneficialized. Subjected social actors are treated as objects in the representation while beneficialized social actors form a third party which, positively or negatively, benefit from the action”* (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 33). That is, subjection is realized when a social actor transforms into passive, it is goal in a material process, phenomenon in a mental process. As for beneficialization, the presented participant is recipient or client to a material process, or receiver in relation to a verbal process (Halliday, 1985 as cited in Van Leeuwen 2008). The following examples explain this aspect:

-Example 3 (The Guardian): you literally cannot thank your biological mother enough...

-Example 4 (The New York Times): Lawrence is self-isolating so her son will deliver a home-cooked lunch to her.

As demonstrated in the examples, mothers are considered as the positive beneficiary participants and the receiver of the social action in these newspapers.

### **4.2.3. Specification and Genericization of Mothers in the Selected Newspapers:**

The results of the present study show that Arab News and The Daily News Egypt represent mothers by specific characterization. The aim of this representation is to emphasize on the success and the achievement of mothers in order to prove to the reader that mothers are distinguishable individuals who have an independent role in their society. The examples below demonstrate the specification of mothers in the newspapers:

-Examples 1(Arab News): Social media users made fun of Syrian First Lady Asma Al-Assad being named as the “Mother of the Nation.”

-Example 2 (Daily News Egypt): Celebrating motherhood: Meet Egypt’s first ‘Ideal Mother’.

However, mothers are depicted through genericization in both the Guardian and The New York Times. That is, they represent mothers as groups and classes. In this case, the social actors are generalized by providing a broad picture about mothers, to highlight their roles around the globe. These examples illustrate this genericization:

-Example 3 (The Guardian): we all have many mothers.

-Example 4 (The New York Times): 830 women will die around the globe from pregnancy or childbirth.

The objective of this depiction is to indicate that this major event is an international day for all mothers around the world. Besides, it aims at making the reader involved in this celebration.

#### **4.2.4. Nomination of Mothers in the Selected Newspapers:**

Another way through which the social actors can be represented is nomination. It is an important factor to represent the participants in terms of their unique identity. Van Leeuwen claims that nomination is realized by proper nouns, which can be formal, semi-formal, or informal (Van Leeuwen, 2008: 41). The results of this study show that mothers are enormously nominated in formalization in Daily News Egypt, The Guardian, and The New York Times by mentioning only their surnames. Some examples are:

-Example 1 (Daily News Egypt): El-Kabbaj explained that the 2020 criteria stipulate that mother should consolidate human values...

-Example 2 (The Guardian): Martin is not alone.

-Example 3 (The New York Times): I pleaded with a nurse and warned that Lemokouno might die.

This demonstrates that mothers take a significant position in their international day. They are highly respected and given serious consideration in their societies.

In Arab News, mothers are more nominated in semi-formalization by mentioning their names and their surnames. The following examples demonstrate it:

-Example 1: Social media users made fun of Syrian First Lady Asma Al-Assad.

-Example 2: Egypt's Solidarity Ministry, which has responsibility to provide social justice for all, including disabled people, made the selection of Sabah Hamza Hassanein...

This indicates that mothers are independent, identifiable and confident persons, and to show their great importance in such event.

#### **4.2.5. Functionalization and Identification of Mothers in the Selected Newspapers:**

Functionalization and identification are two other representational categories within Van Leeuwen's framework. According to Van Leeuwen, functionalization occurs when social actors are referred to in terms of an activity, while identification occurs when social actors are defined in terms of what they are (Van Leeuwen,

2008: 42). After analysing the corpus under study, it has been noticed that mothers are more categorized in terms of their function in Arab News, Daily News Egypt and The Guardian. Some instances clarify this point:

-Example 1 (Arab News): Asma Al-Assad welcomed a group of mothers.

-Example 2 (Daily News Egypt): Minister of Social Solidarity Nevine El-Kabbaj said during the ceremony that...

-Example 3 (The Guardian): Mother's Day is, often, a celebration of the heroic, generous, sturdy and brilliant women who pushed children out of their bodies in order for humanity to survive.

Hence, the represented mothers as demonstrated in the examples are functionalized as having their own role and their own responsibilities to raise their children. This shows that mothers build their status that they have to show proudly by making a balance between the domestic and the professional roles. In this respect Van Leeuwen (2008: 44) says that *"mother can be used as functionalization ("mothering" is not the act of bringing a child into the world, but the act of giving care to a child, while fathering signifies only the act of begetting a child)"*, which means that, mothers are depicted in terms of what they do, by referring to them with their functions and highlighting their roles.

In contrast, The New York Times portrays mothers frequently in terms of their identities. The examples below illustrate this identification:

-Example 1: In Cameroon I watched a mother of three named Prudence Lemokouno, 24, fighting for her life after suffering obstructed labor.

-Example 2: I picked up the phone and dialed a cellphone number I had for my mother.

-Example 3: A black American woman is more likely to die from pregnancy.

In these examples, it has been noticed that mothers are identified using classification and relational identification. Thus, the depiction is realized by describing how mothers are classified by referring to sex, race, age... or to their kinship, personal relations and the family connection. However, mothers are rarely identified in relation to their physical aspects in the news articles. In fact, this newspaper identifies mothers in relation to classificational and relational aspects that are more important rather than describing their appearances and their physical characteristics. These strategies are used to provide information about the attributes of the social actors in order to show to the target audience about the ideologies of the mothers and their social climate. From the findings of the textual analysis of the news articles and their discussion, it is revealed that the four selected newspapers provide a positive depiction of mothers in their international day.

To sum up, the results of the linguistic representation of mothers and their discussion provide further evidence that the selected broadsheets portray mothers in a positive way in the news articles. As a result, the findings show that the visual and the linguistic depictions complement each other. In this respect, Jewit and Oyama (2001: 138) argued that *“images play a role that goes far beyond the mere illustration of what is communicated in language, and images can contradict and work against spoken or written messages”*. In other words, the linguistic and the visual mode *“are characterized by intersemiotic complementarity”* (Royce, 1988: 25) since mothers are depicted positively at both linguistic and visual levels.

**4.3. A comparison between the Visual and the Linguistic Depiction of mothers in the selected newspapers:**

After having analyzed the visual and the linguistic representation of mothers in the selected corpus, it is noticed that many similarities and differences exist between the four newspapers while portraying mothers. The following explains the main points of convergence and divergence that the newspapers share in the representation of mothers.

Firstly, the visual analysis of mothers in the eight selected images has demonstrated some points of convergence between the four newspapers; it is noticeable that the chosen newspapers represent mothers in the same way at the level of the three metafunctions. First, almost all the picked images are narrative, since their participants perform actions and they are based on the vector (except image 2 of Arab News, 4 of Daily News Egypt and 7 of The New York Times). The purpose is to show that the depicted mothers are active and dynamic participants involved in the action. Second, on the interactional level, gaze is nearly the same for all the images (except images 2 of the Arab news and 4 of The Daily News Egypt), in which participants look away from the viewer. This technique is considered as vital strategy in order to invite the viewers to notice information and pay attention to it. Another shared feature is the point of view (horizontal angle). We can observe that all the images are taken from oblique angles (except image 2 of Arab News and 4 of Daily News Egypt) which suggest detachment relation between the participants and the viewers. As for vertical angle, almost all newspapers depict mothers from eye level to show an equal distribution of power between the viewers and the

participants. This denotes that mothers fight for justice and equality to free their own rights. As regards the compositional metafunction, most of the depicted mothers are placed in the central position of the images. This indicates that they are the most important element. Besides, all of them employ foregrounding as an indicator of the salience to depict the participants. In addition, in all images the participants are unified and connected to each other (except image 6 of The Guardian); in order to present them as being consolidated to one another in their representations.

As for the analysis of linguistic representation of the selected news articles depicting mothers, the findings demonstrate that the newspapers share some common points while depicting mothers linguistically. First, mothers are highly included in relation to their actions in the majority of the newspapers. In addition, they are depicted as active social actors in most of the cases. Finally, these newspapers represent mothers mostly by their functions rather than their identities.

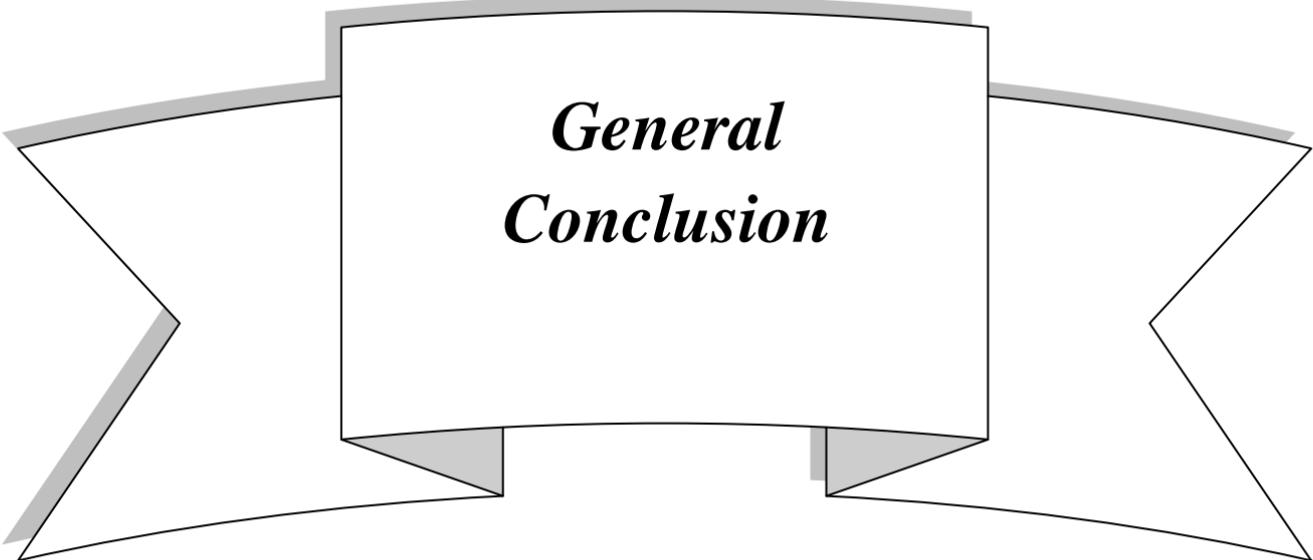
Despite the fact that the newspapers under study share some common features, the analysis reveals that they differ in some other characteristics. The first noticeable difference between the selected newspapers lies on ideology. This divergence is ideologically significant, it is considered as one of the important issues in the way of representing mothers in media. In the selected images, the depicted mothers belong to different cultures, we can notice various veiled mothers in both of Arab News and Daily News Egypt, through which they show their religious beliefs and their cultural norms, since Saudi Arabia and Egypt are among the most conservative countries in the Arab world. This may signifies that the depicted mothers show their strong faith and deep relation with God, which allows them to keep their focus on their goal in order to follow their way powerfully. However, in both The Guardian and The New York Times, the depicted mothers do not show

their religious beliefs and hide them, since they consider it as spiritual beliefs that exist only between them and God. Second, the presentations of mothers in the chosen newspapers are also different at the level of arrangement of the depicted participants. Arab news and Daily News Egypt depict mothers as group of two or more participants. This indicates that working in a team makes them strong and powerful. Besides, they joined their efforts to confront the difficulties together and to make decisions collectively. Whereas, The Guardian and The New York Times depict mothers individually to describe their individual success and to demonstrate that mothers are independent and live on their own. Thus, these newspapers portray mothers as self-reliant, confident and responsible characters. Another observable difference between the newspapers appears at the level of linguistic representation. Starting with role allocation, the results reveal that Arab News and Daily New Egypt represent mothers more as active dynamic social actors, whereas The Guardian and The New York Times represent them as passive social actors. In addition, the categories of specification and genericization, Arab News, Daily News Egypt represent mothers as specific individuals to inform the readers that mothers are considered as independent social actors. However, in The Guardian and The New York Times mothers are depicted through genericization. Such difference lies on the various communicative purposes of the selected newspapers since each one has specific target readers.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to discuss and interpret the research findings. It has answered the research questions raised in the general introduction and confirmed the suggested hypotheses. The first part has dealt with the positive interpretation of the visual and the textual depiction of mothers in their international day. Second, the

results have shown that the visual and the linguistic modes complete each other in the selected newspapers. Finally, this chapter has discussed the main similarities and differences shared by the four newspapers in their representation of mothers in their international day.



***General  
Conclusion***

## **General Conclusion**

This research aimed to explore the way mothers are depicted by media in their international day. It has concerned with the visual and the linguistic representation of mothers in four broadsheet newspapers which include: Arab News, Daily News Egypt, The Guardian and The News York Times.

The present study has selected three main objectives, to understand the visual depiction of mothers in the chosen pictures, then to examine the linguistic representation of mothers in the selected articles, finally to establish a comparison between the four broadsheet newspapers to reveal the similarities and differences in the portrayal of mothers in their international day. In order to achieve these objectives, three metafunction underlying the theory of “Visual Grammar” (1996, 2006), and seven representational categories related to Van Leeuwen framework named the “Socio-Semantic Inventory” (1996, 2008) have been adopted. The categories are: exclusion, role allocation, genericization, specification, nomination, functionalization and identification. The analytical tools are used in the selected corpus which contains eight pictures along with eight articles.

To answer the research questions and to examine the validity of the advanced hypotheses, the mixed-methods approach that combines the qualitative and quantitative techniques has been used in the process of data analysis. The qualitative technique is used to examine the chosen images of the newspapers, while the quantitative technique is adopted to count the frequency distribution of some categories related to the articles under study.

Starting by the representational metafunction, the results of the study have revealed that almost all the selected images are narrative and the represented

participants are dynamic, this means that they perform actions. In relation to the interactional metafunction, the findings show that gaze is not direct in the images, in order to offer information to the audience since the depicted participants look away from the viewers. Another feature within this metafunction is distance. In fact, far personal and far social relations are established between the depicted participants and the audience in the selected pictures. Point of view is the third means that is used in this metafunction, the horizontal and the vertical point of view. In fact, in both pictures of Arab News and Daily News Egypt, the frontal and the oblique angles are reflected, whereas in the Guardian and The New York Times, the oblique angle is used in all the selected images of these newspapers. As regards to the vertical angle, nearly all the selected pictures are seen from low angle to show that the participants are superior to the audience.

Concerning the compositional metafunction, the result shows that most of the depicted mothers are placed in the central position in the selected images to indicate that they are the most important elements. Another element within this metafunction is 'salience'. The depicted participants are put on the foreground to draw the attention of the audience to them. Framing is the third factor of the composition. It is noticed that the majority of the represented participants are connected and represented as unified unit of information.

The findings of the linguistic analysis of the selected texts have revealed that mothers are never excluded from their action in all newspapers except The New York Times, it excluded mothers by adopting the category of backgrounding. In addition, in both of Arab News and Daily News Egypt, the depicted mothers are included in the articles actively; this means that they are presented as active and dynamic social actors. In The Guardian and The New York Times, however,

mothers are represented as passive social actors. In the categories of the specification and genericization, Arab News and Daily News Egypt represent mothers as specific individuals to inform the readers that mothers are considered as independent social actors, whereas in the Guardian and The New York Times mothers are depicted through genericization.

In terms of nomination, mothers are enormously nominated in formalization in Daily News Egypt, The Guardian and The New York Times by mentioning their names. In Arab News they are more nominated in semi-formalization by addressing them using their first names and surnames. The categories of functionalization and identification are also used to represent mothers in the articles. The results reveal that three newspapers namely: Arab News, Daily News Egypt and The Guardian represent mothers in terms of their function which is associated with high status activities. The New York Times, in contrast, depicts mothers mostly through classification and relational identification.

In brief, the results of the pictorial and the textual representations of mothers provided further evidence; we come to draw the following conclusions. First, the selected newspapers portray mothers positively in their international day both visually and linguistically. Moreover, this study also revealed combination of the visual and the linguistic modes to achieve a greater effect on the audience. Finally, the discussion of the results highlighted some points of convergence and divergence while depicting mothers. Hence, these findings proved that the hypotheses mentioned in the general introduction are confirmed.

This study has examined the representation of mothers in their international day in the selected newspapers. We hope that the present research contributes in the

field of Social Semiotics in analysing the visual and the linguistic discourses and open new ideas for further researches from different perspectives. Future studies can be conducted on other forms of resources such as videos or advertising to investigate the gender dimension in relation to mothers, in order to throw light on gender differences in the representation of mothers in a given context, by adopting qualitative research method.



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## *Appendix*

**Article 01, Arab News**



**Instagram bursts with mockery of Syrian first lady's 'Mother's Day' congratulations**

DUBAI: Social media users made fun of Syrian First Lady Asma Al-Assad being named as the “Mother of the Nation.” In comments replete with derision and taunts, they said it was galling on her part to be called the “Mother of the Nation” after having overseen the murder of nearly 400,000 of her compatriots since the 2011 revolution. Almost 5 million people have fled Syria since the beginning of the war and a further 6.3 million remain as internally displaced persons, according to UNHCR data. The Syrian president wife was named “Mother of the Nation” in a flurry of pictures and video clips released on the occasion of Mother’s Day in the Middle East. To mark the occasion, which is celebrated on March 21 in the Arab world, Asma Al-Assad welcomed a group of mothers whose sons had died in the fighting in Aleppo. The Instagram and Facebook accounts of the Syrian presidency posted images of the meeting, showing Asma Al-Assad hugging and laughing with a group of women. The images and video were titled “Mother of the Nation,” in reference to the first lady. Instagram users went ballistic against her. “She has no shame,” said one Instagram user. “She and her husband have reduced the country into one big graveyard.”

In a video posted to the Facebook page, Asma Al-Assad told the mothers: “You, Aleppo mothers, made Aleppo stronger. You have been the compass we all followed and went through toward victory. You decided you would win and you did through your sons, your homes, your endurance and your support to your army. You won and Aleppo won along with you.” She further said: “Every mother that insisted on staying at her home despite the bombs of terrorism is a weapon in the hand of a soldier, and every mother who sent her children to school despite the fear and danger is a bullet in the rifle of every

soldier.

The plight of civilians in Aleppo caused global outrage as Syrian troops moved from neighborhood to neighborhood and civilians posted social media videos bidding farewell to their followers. “We appear to be witnessing nothing less than ... a total uncompromising military victory,” former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the time, according to Reuters.

**Arab News, March 22, 2017**

**Article 02, Arab News**



**Widow who brought up three visually impaired children named as Egypt's ideal mother**

CAIRO: A widow, who has brought up three visually impaired children and sent them all to university, has been chosen to be the nation's ideal mother.

Egypt's Solidarity Ministry, which has responsibility to provide social justice for all, including disabled people, made the selection of Sabah Hamza Hassanein, from the village of Meet Ghamr in Dakahlia, north east of the capital.

Sabah, who has a vegetables stall at her local market, has been raising her two sons and daughter, who are visually impaired, on her own since the death of their father.

She has been able to send the three siblings to Al Azhar University in Cairo to learn theology.

The 59-year-old mother, who married 40 years ago, said: “My husband continued to support me and told me always that it was god's will and a test to our patience. He

insisted they go to AlAzhar to learn the Qur'an.” she was quoted as saying by Arabic Egyptian online news site, Masrawy.

Sabah said she would wake at dawn each day to prepare food for her children to take to school. They often made the journey to school on the back of a donkey.

While they were at school, Sabah would spend the day at her stall in the market. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will attend the ceremony to honor her.

**Arab News, 14 March, 2018**

#### **Article 03, Daily News Egypt**



#### **Egypt's first 'ideal mother': woman's success story, struggles**

**By Nihal Samir**

Egypt honoured 32 women across Egypt on Monday, naming them 'ideal mothers for 2019'. The mothers come from different governorates across Egypt, including Cairo; Giza; Assiut; North Sinai; New Valley; Qena; Matrouh; Alexandria; Kafr El-Sheikh; Aswan; Fayoum; the Red Sea; Qaliubiya; Sharqeya; Port Said; Gharbeya; Beni Suef; Menoufiya; Beheira; Sohag; South Sinai, and Suez.

Meanwhile, a 63-year-old widowed female from Minya, Saadiya Thabet was honoured as the first 'ideal mother' across Egypt, told Daily News Egypt that she has three sons, who graduated from the Faculties of Commerce, Fine Arts, and Social Service.

She narrated that she married a governmental employee. Following her marriage, her husband started suffering from epilepsy.

Thabet continued with tears in her eyes that she suffered during her husband's treatment period, which lasted for nine years until his death in 1985, leaving her with three children, and a limited pension of EGP 55.

The mother was responsible for her children and cared for them, as she did not find any affinity nor support from her husband's family. Moreover, they even raised a case against her for custody of the children. However, they lost the case.

Although Thabet did not complete her education, as her father withdrew her from school in order to take care of her brothers, she insisted on educating her children until they all presently reached eminent positions in their jobs.

Furthermore, Thabet faced another affliction when her eldest son suffered from renal failure and needed nephritic dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Consequently, she did not hesitate to sell everything in her possession for his operation, in addition to donating her kidney to her son, when she was 57-years-old.

The ideal mother competition started in January, where applications were submitted through nominations.

Every year, Egypt, represented by the ministry of social solidarity, names and honours ideal mothers in the country, with the aim of commending their roles in bringing up their children to become upstanding citizens who serve their society.

**Daily News Egypt, March 22, 2019**

**Article 04, Daily News Egypt**



### **Celebrating motherhood: Meet Egypt's first 'Ideal Mother' in 2020**

**By Nihal Samir**

Saturday 21 March will mark the Mother's Day. On this special occasion, Egypt has a tradition to honor ideal mothers to appreciate their roles in family and community.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity announced on Tuesday the 32 ideal mothers, including a mother with disability and a mother of a son with special needs from across Egypt.

Minister of Social Solidarity Nevine El-Kabbaj said during the ceremony that the winning mothers were selected from 762 mothers who participated in the contest. A total 404 mothers met the competition's criteria.

El-Kabbaj explained that the 2020 criteria stipulate that mother should consolidate human values among her family and promote the value of family. She also should maintain the cohesion and interdependence of her family. The ideal mother has to keep balance between her responsibilities, promote positive values to her children, and take good care of them.

The ideal mother should be more than 50 years old as of December 2019. She has to be literate with no more than three children, with the exception of border provinces (Red Sea, Sinai, Matrouh, New Valley, and Aswan) where applicants should have no more than five children, and those children must be university graduates or students.

At the end of her speech, El-Kabbaj stressed that the ministry will not hold any activities that require gatherings in light of the government's precautionary measures to curb the spread of the COVID-19.

### **Amina Rashed, Egypt's first ideal mother**

Daily News Egypt met the first Egyptian ideal mother in 2020 to tell us about her motherhood journey.

Amina Rashed, a 71-year-old widowed woman from Damietta, told Daily News Egypt that she used to work as a nurse before retirement.

"I used to work as a nurse at a hospital where I met my husband who was a doctor. We got married and got three children. We had a happy life until the turning point 32 years ago when my husband died suddenly due to a heart attack, leaving behind three daughters, the eldest was 6 years old and another 4 years old, while I was pregnant with my third daughter," Rashed said.

She added that after her husband's death, she faced a lot of obstacles, but she did not give up. She fought for her family and continued to work as a nurse to raise her children.

"I wanted my daughters to have a better life than mine, and thanks God they are now," she said, trying to smile though tears were in her eyes.

"School leaving was not an option for my daughters, and I did not want to marry again," she stressed.

Rashed's eldest daughter got a Bachelor of Science, while the second and the third daughters both got a Bachelor of Engineering.

The eldest and youngest daughters got married, and the mother over years won many certificates of appreciation through her participation in the social work.

Talking about the competition, Rashed mentioned that her friends advised her to apply in the competition, expressing her happiness with this honoring and winning.

Rashed's story is one of many others of Egyptian women who raised their children and devoted their lives for this goal. The Mother's Day is a special occasion to honour all those women who could support their children despite all the obstacles they faced.

Egypt was the first country to celebrate Mother's Day in the Arab world, with all Arab countries soon following suit.

The idea of the day was originated by sibling journalists Ali and Mostafa Amin, the founders of Akhbar Al-Youm newspaper, as the former received a letter from a mother complaining of ill-treatment from her children.

Another mother visited Mostafa Amin at the time in his office and told him about her story of becoming a widow, and subsequently devoting her life to her children by not remarrying. She became like a father and mother at the same time to her children, until they were graduated from university and got married. However, they currently only visit her occasionally, she complained.

This prompted Ali Amin to write, in his famous column 'Fekra' (Idea), an article suggesting a special day to celebrate mothers.

His idea gained popularity, and his column's readers began suggesting dates to mark the occasion. Accordingly, 21 March was selected as a day to celebrate motherhood throughout the nation, as it signals the beginning of spring.

It was celebrated for the first time in Egypt in 1956, during the era of the late Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the Arab world later adopted the idea of celebrating Mother's Day.

**Daily News Egypt, March 20, 2020**

**Article 05, The Guardian**



**We all have non-biological mums. This Mother's Day, let's celebrate them too**

**By Nell Frizzell**

The woman who tucks in your label on the bus; the woman who packs up the leftovers for your lunch the next day; the woman who knits you a hat for winter; the woman who shows you where the kettle is on your first day; the woman who walks you to your first class in a new building; the woman who wipes toothpaste off your cheek before a big meeting; the woman who makes you a birthday cake; the woman who swearily, hilariously berates your ex: we all have many mothers, and are mothers to each other.

Mother's Day is, often, a celebration of the heroic, generous, sturdy and brilliant women who pushed children out of their bodies in order for humanity to survive. And well it should – you literally cannot thank your biological mother enough for bringing you into being. I can't think of a single item in the Argos catalogue that adequately says "this is in exchange for my existence". But what of all the other mothers? The non-biologicals. The step mothers, the foster mothers, the mothers-in-law and office mothers. The mother hen friends and benevolent godmothers. The world is packed with mother figures, and only one of them, possibly, gave birth to you.

A stepmother can be an excellent valve for when your own blood relations become infected first, the stepmother. A study brought out by Relate and Relationships Scotland a few months ago found that 57% of stepmothers reported a good relationship with their stepchildren, and I know plenty of people who cite their stepmother as a welcome bit of rational calm in their parental life. I've always had a good relationship with my own. Ever since the day she strolled up to me on our first meeting and announced, "I'm trying to reclaim the word cunt," things have been, I think, grand.

Perhaps this is because she married my father when I was an adult; perhaps growing up in a "blended family" (this always makes us sound like we were auditioning for a Kenco advert) had prepared me for a better step relationship; perhaps I'm just lucky that she's a nice woman; or perhaps – most likely – if children were educated away from the wicked stepmother archetype, a natural affection could be cemented under even the most unlikely situations. I mean, sure, she's sleeping with your dad, and she might have a different set of rules than you're used to, and she might even eat weird things on toast, but a stepmother can be an excellent valve for when your own blood relations become infected, as they sometimes do – an outside voice that's still invested in your larger happiness.

As for that most-maligned of the non-bio mums, perhaps we could take Mother's Day as an opportunity to recognise, too, the mother-in-law. I might not have one, in the strictest sense of having entered into a legal contract with their child, but boy oh boy have my boyfriends had mothers. And even single mothers of only sons, as in the present case, don't deserve the over-protective, critical, passive-aggressive reputation so beloved of 1970s standup comics in maroon blazers. Sure, I've had boyfriend's mums who've disliked me (my first boyfriend's mother looked at me like a dog that had just skidded its bottom across her hall carpet).

But on the whole, the women who heaved into being the men I ended up with have been kind, sympathetic, funny and have welcomed me in as a daughter, not a dangerous hanger-on. After all, why wouldn't you have an affinity with the woman who – to quite a large extent – built the person you have chosen to share your life

with? To quote my old friend Charyn, she did most of the hard work and you're just reaping the rewards.

Then, of course, there are the foster mothers – the women who choose to apply their mothering to some of the most vulnerable, most challenged, most in-need young people, both from Britain and abroad. Did you know that refugees, arriving alone and under the age of 16 to the UK should, legally, be placed with a foster parent? That means throughout Croydon, Leicester, Middlesbrough, Leeds, Essex, Liverpool and Scotland there are women opening their homes to children who have risked their lives walking out of warzones to try and find a place of safety. As one such woman I met recently put it, their job is simply to “love someone back to life”. Let's hear it for them this Mother's Day.

Not to mention the casual mothers who weave in and out of our lives like silk. My university mother was a student nurse, three years older and from my home town, who'd invite me round on empty Tuesday afternoons to drink tea, watch Dude, Where's My Car? and eat various forms of potato. My work mum used to read through my article pitches, despite having a job of her own, and gently guide me towards sounding less like a Year 8 prefect with an overdue book report. My house mother was a long-term flatmate who not only taught me how to clean the oven but would occasionally sneak into my room when I was out to fold my clothes and throw away the shoes held together with gaffer tape. I have been mothered by women without number and, I hope, have done my part in return.

So, this Sunday, don't just reserve those £3.99 hyacinths in a woven basket or that ring of Elizabeth Shaw chocolate thins for the woman who gave birth to you. Take this as an opportunity to celebrate all the mothers in your life; the biological and elected, the blood and the chosen.

**The Guardian: March 24, 2017**

#### **Article 06, The Guardian**



**Street serenades and Skype: Mother's Day in the time of Covid-19**

By **Amelia Hill**

On Mother's Day, Leena Martin will sing a serenade outside her mother's house in Edinburgh, accompanied by her three young children playing their xylophone, violin and french horn.

The family have always had lunch together on Mother's Day but this year, Martin's 73-year-old mother is self-isolating and plans had to change.

"I wasn't going to not see my mother on Mothering Sunday," said Martin. "We had to do something and the cross-generational aspect of the Mothering Sunday is part of the joy I don't want any of us to miss.

"The children's instruments – and my singing voice – don't naturally fit together in a trio but we've worked together, improvising a piece for their grandmother over the past week."

Martin's children are six, eight and 11. "I confidently expect chaos," she said. "The kids will probably trample on all Mum's lovely spring flowers in their excitement and get mud all over their instruments, but at least it will be a fun event for her to watch out of her window.

"My husband is going to video it too so mum can rewatch the hilarious chaos in the months coming up."

Martin is not alone. Families across the country are finding innovative ways to spend Mother's Day together even if they're forced to be apart.

Maria Lawrence and her adult son, Leo, will share their Mother's Day meal in York via Skype. Abioye Achebe will act as proxy son to his neighbour, Edith O'Sullivan, by eating lunch together on different sides of their garden fence in east London, and Alys Thomas will have a picnic with her husband and children outside the window of her mother's care home in Leeds.

Lawrence is self-isolating so her son will deliver a home-cooked lunch to her doorstep on Sunday morning. He has prepared the same meal for himself, and mother and son will eat at 1pm exactly, sharing the experience on Skype.

She said: "Leo will put his iPad, streaming Skype, facing him on the dining table and I'll do the same in my little flat. It'll almost be like I'm really there with him, albeit it as a strange, virtual guest. We'll heat up our lunch at the same time, so we'll be eating the same food at the same time. It's as close to breaking bread together as we can get at the moment."

Achebe's mother died five years ago, but on Sunday he will act as a proxy son to his neighbour Edith, who is self-isolating and so unable to travel to see her own son in Brighton.

"I don't have any symptoms of the virus yet," said Edith. "So if I wrap up warmly, Abioye and I can have a nice lunch together sitting on opposite sides of our garden fence. Fortunately it's a wire fence, so we can see each other through it.

"Abioye has always been a friendly neighbour but when he asked what I was doing for Mothering Sunday and suggested we have lunch together in the garden,

separated by the fence, I was so touched that, to be honest, I will think of him as a proxy son going forward.

“I’m not so crass as to say that opportunities can come out of this crisis, but equally we should be alive to the fact that some people are showing themselves to be kinder and more generous than we ever knew they were.”

Not all mothers, however, will have a family to give them cheer. Rebecca John’s adult son and daughter are both self-isolating and feel so ill they have told their mother they do not think they will be able to manage more than a quick call on the day.

“Whether I have a nice family lunch or not on Mothering Sunday pales into insignificance compared to the health of my children, but it’ll be a sad day on Sunday for us all,” said John. “It’ll be the first Mothering Sunday we haven’t spent together. Instead, I’ll spend it alone and worried. I guess this is the new reality for the time being. I can’t say I think very much of it.

**The Guardian, March 21, 2020**

#### **Article 07, The New York Times**



#### **For Mother’s Day, Save Women’s Lives**

Hundreds of deaths today alone could have been prevented.

**By Nicholas Kristof**

Happy Mother’s Day! Your mom is the best!

Save, of course, for mine. And my wife. And, I *rush* to add, my mother-in-law.

I can't think of any group of people more selfless and loving than mothers. But this celebration of motherhood is also hypocritical: For all our rhetoric, we routinely fail mothers here in the U.S. and around the world.

On this Mother's Day, if it's like the average day, another 830 women will die around the globe from pregnancy or childbirth. That's one woman dying every two minutes. Indeed, in much of the world, just about the most dangerous thing a woman can do is become pregnant.

In the United States, an average of almost two women die in childbirth each day, and nearly a dozen from cervical cancer. For all our warm thoughts about moms, an American woman is twice as likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth as a woman next door in Canada. A black American woman is more likely to die from pregnancy, according to data from a new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, than a Mexican woman.

Tragically, President Trump's actions appear to be increasing the risks to moms both in the U.S. and abroad. More on that in a moment.

In Cameroon I watched a mother of three named Prudence Lemokouno, 24, fighting for her life after suffering obstructed labor. An untrained birth attendant sat on her stomach, rupturing her uterus. Her husband took her by motorcycle to the hospital, but the staff wasn't interested in helping.

I pleaded with a nurse and warned that Lemokouno might die. The nurse shrugged and said, "That would be God's will."

Sure enough, Lemokouno died. The cause of death wasn't just obstructed labor but also an indifference to the lives of impoverished women like her, both at the local level and around the world.

Saving lives in childbirth is complicated, often requiring emergency obstetric services. But one inexpensive way to save moms' lives is providing contraception to those who want it. More than 200 million women worldwide don't want to get pregnant but can't get birth control — and so sometimes they die or suffer devastating injuries like obstetric fistulas.

Cervical cancer doesn't get as much attention as maternal mortality or abortion policy, but it's an excruciating way to die, and it is now believed to kill more women each year (about 311,000) than pregnancy and childbirth (about 303,000). Almost all those cervical cancer deaths are avoidable with an HPV vaccination, a Pap test or even a simple "vinegar test" screening followed if necessary by immediate treatment by a nurse.

Historically, neither Democrats nor Republicans have been great on global women's health. But Trump and his congressional allies have been particularly harsh, slashing programs that provide family planning or cervical cancer prevention in the name of

preventing abortion (even though no U.S. money goes for abortions in these programs anyway).

Marie Stopes International, a women's health nonprofit whose lifesaving work I've seen in the field, says it has had to cut 20 outreach teams in Madagascar that provided contraception, plus five more in Uganda, because the U.S. cut funding. In Zimbabwe, Marie Stopes had to reduce the number of sites it visits by half. The upshot will be more unwanted pregnancies, more abortions and more women like Lemokouno dying in childbirth.

In the U.S., Trump is proposing new rules for Title X, the family planning program, that would devastate women's health clinics around the country. Trump is also trying to weaken a teenage pregnancy prevention program in the U.S. and trying to chip away at insurance coverage of contraception.

"The Trump administration and its allies in Congress have sought by virtually every means possible to slash government support for contraception," the Population Institute writes in an important new report, "Senseless: The War on Birth Control."

Australia has been the model for tackling cervical cancer, vaccinating virtually all children for HPV, so the country is on track to eliminate this type of cancer as a public health concern. This shouldn't be controversial, yet it rarely registers as a national priority. If U.S. policy toward moms matched our rhetoric, we would adopt Australia's policy and save one American woman's life every two hours.

Americans are expected to spend \$25 billion this Mother's Day on flowers, earrings and meals. Go ahead: These women are worth it and more! But let's remember that a tenth of that sum would save large numbers of lives of moms around the world. The Mothers' Day Movement is a worthy effort to honor mothers in part by saving mothers' lives. So is We Care Solar and so is the Edna Adan Hospital in Somaliland. So let's celebrate the World's Best Mom not only with pink roses and sweet Hallmark verses, but also by reducing the number of women dying painfully and unnecessarily. If Mother's Day has meaning, so should women's lives.

**The New York Times, May 11, 2019**



### **After 4 Years of Silence, a Call to Mom on Mother's Day**

A son's attempt at mending a rift.

**By Sopan Deb**

*Call, I demanded of myself. Call her now.*

It was Mother's Day in 2018. I picked up the phone and dialed a cellphone number I had for my mother, knowing that she never used it. It was still on the family plan I had set up for us 10 years ago, and I noticed the usage was mostly zero. No one picked up.

I sighed and wondered whether there was no way to get in touch with her. A part of me would have been relieved. I called another number — one from my childhood several residences ago — with a somewhat ridiculous expectation that it still belonged to her. It didn't.

Buried in an email from 2014, I found yet another number.

My heartbeat steadily increased as I pressed each of the 10 digits. This time, the rings stopped short and I heard a soft greeting from my mother. The surprise in her voice when she recognized mine was evident, though she quickly covered it with a calm that I was also trying desperately to project. She sounded tired. The last time we had talked — four years prior — we were both angry.

My Bengali parents had raised me and my older brother in suburban New Jersey, their union the result of a tumultuous and ultimately doomed arranged marriage. Our toxic home environment oscillated between my parents' fighting and silence. They mercifully divorced when I was in high school after far too many years together trying to meet the inflexible expectation from South Asian culture that marriages last forever.

They each tried, in their own way, to be parents. But I never learned even the basics about them, like where either was born, their birthdays, how they got to this country or how many siblings they had. There were no family vacations, game nights or holiday traditions. Much of my childhood was spent eating dinner alone in front of the television or with a friend's family, seeking the warmth I so craved.

We became increasingly estranged after I left for college in 2006, the distance between us gradually widening as might happen with an old acquaintance. My father called sporadically from somewhere in India, where he had unexpectedly moved back to when I was a freshman in college, but from my mother there was only silence. As the years without contact piled up, the space between us felt increasingly insurmountable.

A prerequisite to ending any estrangement is at least one party *wanting* to reconcile.

My brother, nine years older than me, cut ties definitively and decisively. When I was 19 years old, he got married, leaving our mother and father behind. While my brother built a new family for himself, he remained close with me. His wife and in-laws welcomed me at every holiday table. I have never faulted my brother for his approach. Some parents commit unforgivable sins. We do not owe our affection to those who share our DNA but have not earned a place in our lives.

But the discord gnawed at me. Around my 30th birthday, I decided that I needed to sit down with each of my parents, face to face, and try to address the deep-rooted issues keeping us apart. I worried about how they were managing on their own. And if nothing else, I did not know how much longer they would be around. I did not want them to die without us giving our relationships a chance.

There were unanswered questions I had for each of them. With my father, I needed to ask him why he disappeared to India without telling me and never came back. With my mother, I needed to understand why she locked herself in her room for the better part of my eighth-grade year. I wanted to hear their stories before it was too late and perhaps make sense of my own.

It occurred to me that I had not tried to understand my parents' struggles as immigrants or what they hoped their lives would be. To end our entrenched estrangement, I realized I would have to learn to empathize with my parents as humans and take responsibility for my role in our family's disintegration. I could have and should have reached out to them more.

That Mother's Day marked the beginning of an effort to give my mother and me the chance to get to know each other. Journalistic instincts engaged, I inched in slowly and kept my emotional distance when I could, starting with a polite lunch over my favorite mustard fish curry at her apartment. As the months passed and trust started to build, we made our way to my kitchen counter in Manhattan, rehashing the past as my girlfriend made lamb curry.

I learned about the books my mother read as a child in Durgapur, the difficulties of assimilating when she first emigrated to Canada as a young adult and her struggles with depression that had gone untreated. I walked her delicately through the way

those struggles had affected me. Through the conversations with her and similar conversations with my father during a trip I took to India, I began to see my own history in a new light.

I told each of them what I wished I had done better. My parents, like many immigrants in the generation before me, had built their lives from nothing, whereas I had the privilege to contemplate my emotions and aspirations. Said another way: They aspired to survive. I aspired to live. I made a conscious effort to translate between our divergent worldviews. The conversations were challenging and sometimes hit dead ends. Often I needed to look in the mirror as much as I needed them to see me. After growing up in a household in which feelings other than anger were rarely shared, just being heard was cathartic.

During one difficult phone conversation with my mother, I told her how remarkable I found the woman I had to come know: an immigrant who started with very little in Durgapur and was repeatedly forced to change her life, often without any say in determining her own path, whether through immigration, marriage or divorce.

“Thank you,” she said. “Maybe. I don’t know. One thing for sure: I tried my best to build a family.”

As her tears subsided, she broached one more topic. “The turkey thing.” *The turkey thing?* I had to search my memory for a second. And then I remembered. This was how she wanted our call to end?

When I was about 8 years old, a flock of turkeys planted itself on our front lawn. As I left to walk to a friend’s house, with my mother watching me from our steps, it started drizzling. I jogged to get out of the rain, which turned into an in-fear-for-my-life sprint as the turkeys began chasing after me.

My mother jetted out and got in her car to disperse them. I have never been able to overcome my resultant fear of animals.

“You were the talk of the town,” my mother said, cheering up. “Every time I see someone: ‘Remember, Shambo was running with the turkeys!’ It’s funny now, but it wasn’t funny back then.”

Despite the terror we both felt at the time, it is definitely funny now. But she probably remembers the turkey story for a different reason. So many of our stories come from a place of darkness, but in this one she was the protective force she meant to be as a mother. As we laughed about our shared history, she wasn’t just a footprint from my past. She was my mother.

But even as I found peace in those moments of joy, I struggled to create familial bonds from scratch. Some schisms will take a long time to fix. Some grudges will permanently cling to us. But I take comfort in knowing that I am taking all the steps I can toward reconciliation. I hope my parents feel the same.

A year or so after that Mother’s Day phone call, I awoke to an email from my mother.

“I am getting to know you more,” it said. “There are so many things in my mind I wanted to tell you. But always remember I love you, no matter what.”

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