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Women`s Representation in Death posters in Southern Iraq: A genre Based Analysis

Maitham Sarhan Hussain Al-Hamad 

Wasit Directorate of Education

**Correspondence author:*
maithamal@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine women`s representation in death announcement posters in Southern Iraq using critical discourse analysis, genre theory, and feminist discourse analysis. Death posters constitute a culturally significant form of everyday public discourse that reflects broader social and ideological structures. Using a qualitative approach, the study examines thirty death posters collected from four major Iraqi cities in south Iraq: Kut, Amarah ,Nasiriyah, and Basra, the study analyzes lexical choices, visual representation, and naming practices. Findings show that women are predominantly portrayed through relational roles such as “wife,” “mother,” or “daughter,” rather than as autonomous individuals. Lexical patterns associate women with moral and religious virtues, while male subjects are more commonly linked to social status and individuality. The analysis also reveals absence of female images, reflecting symbolic invisibility and norms of modesty. However, professionally titled women receive some individual recognition, indicating limited discursive shifts within this conservative sociocultural genre.

Keywords: Genre theory, Lexical choices, social status

تمثيل المرأة في ملصقات النعي في جنوب العراق تحليل قائم على النوع الخطابي

م.م. ميثم سرحان حسن الحمد
مديرية تربية واسط

المُستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة تمثيل المرأة في لافتات النعي في جنوب العراق باستخدام التحليل النقدي للخطاب، ونظرية النوع الخطابي، وتحليل الخطاب النسوي. وتمثل هذه الافتات الخاصة بإشهار حالات الوفاة شكلاً مهماً من أشكال الخطاب الاجتماعي اليومي الذي يعكس القيم والبنى الأيديولوجية السائدة في المجتمع. واعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً لتحليل ثلاثين لافتة نعي جُمعت من مدن كبرى في جنوب العراق وهي الكوت، والعمارة، والناصرية، والبصرة، وكان التركيز على ممارسات التسمية، والاختيارات المعجمية، والتمثيل البصري. ولقد أظهرت النتائج أن النساء يُمتلن غالباً في تلك الافتات من خلال أدوارهن العائلية مثل "الأم" و"الزوجة" و"الابنة" بدلاً من تقديمهن كأفراد مستقلين. كما ارتبطت النساء بالقيم الأخلاقية والدينية، في حين ارتبط الرجال بالمكانة الاجتماعية والفردية. كذلك كشفت الدراسة عن الغياب شبه كامل للصور الشخصية للنساء في الافتات المختارة، مما يعكس الإخفاء الرمزي ومعايير الاحتشام الثقافية. ومع ذلك، حظيت النساء ذوات الألقاب المهنية والأكاديمية بدرجة أكبر من الاعتراف الفردي والتمثيل الصوري في لافتات النعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النوع، التسمية، الصوري

1. Introduction

One of the most visible and culturally entrenched public forums of Southern Iraq are the death announcement posters. These posters are found within the urban and semi-urban setting, on walls, close to mosques, and in communal gathering places and are not simply notices of death. They act as social texts that stand in-between personal loss and collective identity, and that encapsulate personal narratives within the boundaries of culture and religion. To date, death announcement posters have been little studied, especially from a perspective that focuses on discourse and gender. This negligence is remarkable because of the fact that the discourse that occurs every day is an important factor in creating and sustaining social identities and ideology (Fairclough, 2013). Everyday genres function with implicit norms and conventions and are also powerful yet frequently overlooked foci of ideological reproduction because they are not explicitly regulated as institutional genres.

Religious practices, tribal connections, and communal norms have a strong impact on public discourse in the sociocultural environment of Southern Iraq. These factors influence social practices, as well as modes of representation. Gender is highly regulated and culturally defined, with modesty, honor, and family affiliation being highly significant and influencing the portrayal of women in public (Ahmed, 1992).

In this context, the death announcement poster is a special artifact that can be used to explore the intersections of discourse, culture and gender. They are a genre that is very conventionalized,

meaning that they adhere to conventional representations of the world, but also subtly revealing changes in representation that could be evidence of social transformation.

This study seeks to explore how women are represented in this genre by addressing the following research questions:

1. How are women linguistically constructed in death announcement posters?
2. What conventions of a genre do these representations adhere to?
3. How are these representations related to gender ideologies as a whole?

This work focuses on a genre that is local and yet culturally significant, thereby adding to the larger discourse analysis, gender and socio-linguistic literature. It also fills a significant gap in the literature which is dedicated to the study of an under-researched terrain of everyday discourse in the Arab world.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is multi-layered theory that incorporates the theory of genre, critical discourse analysis (CDA), feminist discourse analysis and also the theory of gender performativity. This pairing enables a thorough investigation of the construction, regulation, and reproduction of gender representation in a genre of discourse within a culturally specific context. These theoretical perspectives are complementary and are employed to explore how gender identities are, represented, constructed, and reproduced within death announcement posters in the context of Southern Iraq.

2.1 Genre Theory as a Framework of Social Regulation

Death announcement posters are inherently communicative acts that can be viewed as structured communicative acts that can be analyzed in terms of genre theory. Swales (1990) defines genres as “communicative events” which share common functions and are recognized by the members of a discourse community. This was further highlighted by Bhatia (2004) who states that genres exist in professional and sociocultural environments and these environments in turn influence the form and content of communication.

Important, however, is the fact that current genre theory has shifted from structural descriptions to a focus on the ideological aspect of genres. Genres are not simply traditional forms, but rules that limit and regulate what is said, how it is said, and who can be said. In this sense, genres may be considered instruments of discursive control, that is, normative elements of the texts. Genre theory therefore allows us to consider death announcement posters as discursive practices that are governed by the norms at both structural and ideological levels.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis and the Reproduction of Power

Genre theory can be used to understand the norms of the genre; and critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be used to analyse the relationship between the genre norms and power and ideology. Fairclough (2013) conceptualises discourse as a social practice that stands in a dialectical relationship with social structures, simultaneously constituting and being constituted by them. Thus the language is not just a reflection but is also a contributor that helps to establish and perpetuate social inequalities.

Van Dijk (2008) is in agreement with this view, emphasising the cognitive aspect of discourse. He believes that discourse has an effect on the perception of social reality, as discourse creates mental models of social actors. Van Dijk also argues that discourse constructed social actors through various representational strategies that shape how individuals and groups are perceived. Ja'afar and Alhamad (2020), drawing on Van Leeuwen's Social Actor Representation framework, argue that "social actors may be discursively included or excluded to serve particular ideological purposes. The degree of inclusion and exclusion may vary from complete omission to explicit representation, depending on the communicative goals of the discourse".

CDA is also interested in the meaning of the absence of certain elements in discourse. Information that is missing can be as relevant as information that is stated. From CDA standpoint, the absence of particular social actors or representational elements may be understood as a form of discursive exclusion

This study, by means of CDA, not only describes the text but also critically analyzes how the discourse functions to maintain/generate gender hierarchy.

2.3 Feminist Discourse Analysis and Gendered Representation

The feminist view on discourse analysis is a lens that focuses on the construction of gender in discourse. According to Lazar (2005), discourse is an important means of maintaining gender inequality by establishing certain understandings of femininity and masculinity as normal.

Gendered subject positions is one of the insights of feminist discourse analysis.

The relational representations of women, as mothers, wives, or daughters, are found in many analyses of gender and discourse (Sunderland, 2004; Lazar, 2017).

Feminist discourse analysis is used to investigate the reproduction of such subject positions in death announcement posters in terms of linguistic and pictorial elements.

2.4 Gender Performativity and Discursive Repetition

Another theoretical perspective comes from Butler (1990) who has introduced the gender performative theory, and sees gender as a product of repeated social and discursive processes. Hence, discourse is central to the production of gender from this angle. Every act of representation helps to continually shape gender norms. Death announcement posters can then be interpreted as sites of discursive repetition of gender norms that are continually reproduced. The persistent and unchanging use of relational terms for women, the linking of femininity to moral qualities and the lack of female images all help to consolidate gender norms. Butler's framework also implies there can be disruption at the same time. It is interpreted in this study that there is a possibility of such disruption, albeit limited, in the use of professional titles for women.

2.5 Integrating the Framework

The present study The present study combines Critical Discourse Analysis, Feminist Discourse Analysis, Genre Theory, and Gender Performativity Theory to provide a wide-ranging account of gender representation in death announcement posters. CDA examines its ideological dimensions . Feminist Discourse Analysis focuses on gendered patterns of representation. Genre Theory explains the conventional structure of the genre, and Gender Performativity Theory clarifies how these patterns are reproduced through repeated discursive practices. All in all, these approaches allow for a critical explanation of how women's identities are constructed and represented within

this culturally significant genre. While death announcement posters are distinct from formal religious mourning rituals, both are influenced by the same religious and sociocultural values that shape public expressions of loss and remembrance.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Studies Related to Death Genre

Death-related discourse represents a burgeoning field of inquiry across linguistics, sociocultural and discourse studies. Obituaries and death announcement genres have been explored as deeply conventionalized communicative tools that serve not only to announce the death of an individual but also to construct social identities and reinforce cultural values. Researches have consistently shown that these genres are mostly shaped by cultural traditions, religious beliefs and social expectations. An early landmark study was conducted by Matiki (2001), who examined obituary notice within Malawian newspapers. The research illustrated that obituary discourse reflected both Christian religious doctrines and indigenous African traditions, indicating that death announcements are culturally embedded communicative practices informative texts.

In similar vein, Moses and Marelli (2004) investigated obituaries published in New York Times to find out that obituary writing functions as a discursive practice through which death, social perceptions of life, and memory are constructed. The study revealed a notable marginalization of women in comparison of men, arguing that gender plays a fundamental role in shaping memorial discourse. Genre-oriented studies have examined the rhetorical organization of death announcements. In his study of Ghanaian death announcement, Afful (2012) highlights a set of optional and obligatory rhetorical moves that work together to realize the genre's communicative purposes, namely announcing the death and providing information about the arrangement of the funeral. The study confirmed that death announcements represent a highly structured conventionalized genre whose recurrent patterns reflect the social norms, cultural values and communicative expectations of the communities where they are produced.

Similarly, Elekaei, Faramarzi, and Heidari(2015) utilized an analytic approach to investigate Iranian obituaries and death announcements. They identified a relatively stable rhetorical structure shaped by Iranian sociocultural traditions and Islamic beliefs. Their study also revealed noticeable gender-based differences in the announcement of the deceased, particularly regarding the personal and social information highlighted in the notices. The researchers concluded that death announcement function not only as communicative texts about a death of a person but also as a sociocultural artifact that reflect broader cultural assumptions concerning social identity and gender roles.

Collectively, these studies have established death announcements as culturally and socially embedded genre through that serve important religious, social, and commemorative purposes. Nevertheless, scholarly attention has mainly focused on their rhetorical characteristics, sociocultural functions and generic structure, while comparatively minor attention has been given to investigate how gender identities are visually and linguistically constructed in these texts.

3.2 Studies on Death Announcement within the Arab Context

Although death announcements constitute a prominent component of religious and public communication in Arab and Middle Eastern societies, they remain an unexplored area of research. Existing studies suggest that the discourse of death announcement is deeply influenced by family's affiliations, religious beliefs and communal values. A significant contribution to the study of death was conducted by Al-zubaidi(2014) who explored death announcements published in Iraqi newspapers. The study identified a highly rhetorical structure comprising of several recurring moves that reflect the influence of both Arab sociocultural traditions and Islamic beliefs. The study showed that reference to Allah, Quranic verses and expressions emphasizing submission to divine decree, all of which emerged as central features of Iraqi obituary discourse. Al-Zubaidi argued that death announcements mostly extend beyond their informative function, serving as a cultural text that simultaneously communicate information and reinforce religious values. Moving to the Iranian context, in 2017 Salahshour, using genre-analytic approach, examined death announcement notices and identified eight frequent moves organized in a fixed sequence. The study revealed the influence of broader socioeconomic and cultural changes on the evolution of this genre. The researcher suggests that death announcements are not static textual form; rather, they represent evolving social and cultural circumstances while maintaining their core ritualistic and conventional functions.

In similar vein, Sawalmeh (2019) compared Christian and Muslim obituary announcements in Jordanian context and revealed that highly structured rhetorical patterns are employed in both communities despite the differences in religious affiliation. The study confirmed that religious and sociocultural factors play a crucial role in shaping the structure and the content of death-related discourse.

Overall, these studies, across the Middle East, demonstrate that death announcements share common religious and cultural foundations while exhibiting local variations. Despite these contributions, studies in the region has mainly focused on the structural and sociocultural characteristics of death discourses, while without tackling the way in which women are represented within death announcement texts.

3.3 Gender representation in Death Discourse

Many studies have extensively examined gender representation in political communication, media discourse, and educational texts, relatively few studies have explored gender within death-related genres. Available studies suggest that death announcement mostly show broader social hierarchies and cultural expectations with representation of men and women. One of the most relevant contributions to this study is Muhammad's (2020) genre analysis of Kurdish death announcement notices. The study examined sixty funeral posters and identified three mandatory moves and several other optional components that reflected Kurdish sociocultural norm and Islamic traditional. Moreover, the study revealed obvious traces of gender bias in the selected texts. Based on the findings, there was a clear imbalance in representation, with male relatives occupying a more visible position within the notices, whereas female next of kin were either limited or completely absent from many of the notices. The researcher concluded that women representation in death posters is shaped expectations concerning family role and public visibility. Another

finding reported by the study concerning the role of professional identity. Muhammad (2020) observed that professional titles occasionally appeared in the identification of deceased individuals, thereby granting them social prominence and public visibility. These findings are of particular importance to the current study as they provide support the argument that death announcements posters are discursive texts where gender identities are shaped, negotiated, and reproduced. Nevertheless, previous studies have generally considered gender as a secondary observation rather than a key focus of analysis. Recent Iraqi discourse studies have also emphasized that linguistic choices play a significant role in constructing social identities and reflecting culturally shared values (Al-Zubaidi, 2024).

3.4. Cultural Specificities of Southern Iraq

The study focuses on Amarah, kut Nasiriyah, and Basra, which belong to the broader sociocultural landscape of Southern Iraq. As a matter of fact, these four cities differ in population sizes, social diversity and urbanization, however, they share common cultural characteristics shaped by strong kinship ties, Shia religious traditions and enduring tribal affiliations that continue to influence social practices and collective identities (Al-Khazraji, 2017; Al-Tameemi, 2016). Basra, for example, is generally more economically developed and socially diverse due to its historical role as a major commercial center, whereas Ammar, Kut, and Nasiriyah retained relatively stronger tribal characteristics. Despite these differences, the four cities share a common cultural framework that provides a suitable context for examining women's representation in death announcement posters.

3.5 Research Gap and Contribution

The reviews cited above show that the following observations are pertinent:

In this regard, it could be said that genres are practices that are socially and ideologically regulated.

- Discourse is a key instrument in the reproduction of power relations.
- Relational identities can be seen as structuring representation of gender.
- Representation in Arab contexts is heavily affected by cultural norms.

In spite of these findings, there is still a significant lack of research on vernacular and everyday genres, especially those concerning death and the process of mourning in the Arab world.

In this study, death announcement posters are investigated as a culturally-specific genre which mirrors and reinforces gender ideology. It brings together genre theory, CDA and feminist discourse analysis in order to offer a multi-dimensional description of how gender is being constructed in the context of everyday discourse. The gendered aspects of death talk, however, have not been discussed extensively (see, however, Muhammad, 2020, for a rare exception in a similar regional context)

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research design for this study is qualitative that uses critical discourse analysis (CDA) and genre analysis. Not patterns are being counted, but rather how meaning is made in a particular culturally bound genre through language and visuals. A qualitative study is especially suitable for this research as it offers an in-depth analysis of discursive patterns, structures of ideology and meanings within the context, and this cannot be achieved with quantitative research (Fairclough, 2013). The study will be centred on the recognition of conventions that are repeated and also significant deviations in the genre of death announcement posters.

4.2 Data Collection

The dataset consists of a corpus of 30 death announcement posters collected from four major cities in Southern Iraq:

- Basra
- Nasiriyah
- Amarah
- Kut

These cities were selected to ensure regional representativeness within Southern Iraq, as they share similar sociocultural characteristics while also offering some variation in urban context.

Selection Criteria

Posters were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Public visibility: Posters displayed in public spaces such as streets, walls, and near mosques
2. Recency: Posters produced within a relatively recent time frame to reflect current discourse practices
3. Gender variation: Inclusion of both male and female cases
4. Diversity of social roles: Inclusion of individuals with and without professional titles

The final corpus includes:

- 15 posters, for male deceased individuals
- 15 posters, for female deceased individuals

This balance, allows for a comparative gender-based analysis. Moreover, the actual personal names in death posters were hidden in the examples presented in this study to protect the privacy of individuals and their families. All posters included in the corpus were collected in January 2026. Restricting the corpus to recent materials helped ensure that the analysis reflects contemporary discursive practices and patterns of gender representation.

4.3 Data Preparation

Posters were taken of all posters and then transcribed into a text format. Special effort was made to conserve:

- Original wording
- Honorific expressions
- Religious phrases
- Structural layout

The visual elements (images, their presence or lack of, symbols, layout) were also observed and classified for analysis.

4.4 Analytical Framework

An analysis was performed with the help of a multi-dimensional coding framework that integrated CDA, genre theory and feminist discourse analysis. Three main analysis dimensions were found:

4.4.1 Naming Practices (Nomination)

This dimension examines how the deceased is identified within the poster. It focuses on:

- Use of full personal names
- Use of relational identifiers (e.g., mother of, wife of)
- Use of titles (e.g., Hajj, Doctor, Professor)

This category is grounded in van Dijk's (2008) concept of nomination, which highlights how naming practices reflect ideological positioning.

4.4.2 Lexical Representation (Evaluation)

This dimension focuses on descriptive language used to characterize the deceased. It examines:

- Adjectives associated with the individual
- Religious expressions
- Moral descriptors

Particular attention is given to patterns that associate women with moral and emotional attributes, and men with status and achievement, reflecting gendered evaluation strategies (Lazar, 2005).

4.4.3 Visual Representation (Visibility/Invisibility)

This dimension examines the visual components of the posters, including:

- Presence or absence of photographs
- Use of symbolic imagery
- Layout prominence

This category is informed by multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) and the concept of symbolic invisibility in gender studies.

4.5 Coding Procedure

The analysis followed an inductive coding process, consisting of the following steps:

1. Initial reading and familiarization with the dataset
2. Identification of recurring patterns across posters
3. Categorization of features into the three analytical dimensions
4. Comparison across gender categories (male vs female)
5. Identification of deviations from dominant patterns

Particular attention was given to cases that did not conform to expected norms, such as posters featuring professionally titled women. These cases were treated as analytically significant, as they provide insight into potential shifts in discourse.

4.6 Analytical Approach

The analysis combines:

- Descriptive analysis (identifying patterns)
- Interpretive analysis (explaining meaning)
- Critical analysis (linking patterns to ideology and power)

This multi-layered approach ensures that the study moves beyond surface-level description to uncover the underlying ideological structures that shape representation.

4.7 Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity is achieved through analytical transparency and consistency rather than statistical measures.

To enhance validity, the study:

- Uses a systematic coding framework
- Provides clear analytical categories
- Grounds interpretations in established theoretical frameworks

Reliability is addressed through:

- Consistent application of coding criteria
- Cross-comparison of patterns across multiple samples

4.8 Ethical Considerations

The study is based exclusively on publicly displayed materials, and therefore does not involve direct interaction with human subjects.

No personal or sensitive information beyond what is publicly available was used. The analysis focuses on discursive patterns rather than individual identities.

- CDA
- Genre

- Feminist analysis

5. Analysis

The analysis of the corpus brings out the recurring and systematic patterns in the representation of female in death announcement posters. They are not just stylistic or arbitrary; they are part of deeply entrenched ideologies that shape the representation of gender in this discourse type. The analysis is presented under four related dimensions: relational identity, lexical construction, visual representation as well as professional identity as a site of disruption.

5.1 Relational Identity as a Mechanism of Ideological Positioning

The most common and striking outcome is that in terms of women's representation, relational identification is the most common finding. In most female posters, the dead is never addressed by his or her personal name, but by relationship, as:

- “mother of X”
- “wife of X”
- “daughter of X”

Evidence from the collected data supports this pattern. For instance, several women posters refer to the deceased as "the mother of [Names]", "the wife of [Name]", or “the daughter of [Name]”, while the personal names of the deceased are omitted. However, in some cases, the woman is simultaneously identified through, sons, her husband brothers, or father, thus, foregrounding kinship relations as the principal basis of representation.

Table 1 Women identification in death announcement posters

Poster	Identification Pattern
F3	Wife of [Name] + Mother of [Names]
F7	Wife of [Name] + Mother of [Names] + Sister of [Names]
F12	Wife of [Name] + Daughter of [Name] + Mother of [Names] + Sister of [Names]
F21	Um [Name] + Wife of Dr. [Name]

The example presented in table one clearly show that females are frequently identified through kinship relations rather than by independent personal names. This is quite different from male posters, where it is usually the personal names of the deceased that are used, sometimes with honorifics.

The difference can be interpreted from a CDA perspective as an ideological nomination (van Dijk, 2008) that means that the naming of an individual is a reflection on how that person is positioned in society. The discourse categorizes women as relational subjects, that is, socially dependent entities, by creating a perception of women based on relations with others.

This relational framing is not descriptive; it has a normative function. It perpetuates the patriarchal notion that the social worth of women is in the family. Men, on the other hand, are placed in a position as independent players, having different identities, as a result of the broader gender hierarchy.

Furthermore, this pattern is understood by using Butler's (1990) notion of performativity. These multiple uses of the relational names in the various posters help to reinforce the gender norms. Every time it is represented, it feels natural and inevitable to construct femininity as relational.

5.2 Lexical Construction and the Moralization of Femininity

Lexical analysis gives evidence of a gendered nature in the descriptive language of the posters. Female subjects are keynoted overwhelmingly with moral and religious attributes including:

- “pious”
- “patient”
- “righteous”
- “beloved”

Table 2. Moral and Religious Lexicalization in Women Death Announcement Posters

Poster	Lexical Expressions	Function
F3	“forgiven by God, willing” “the late”,	Religious evaluation
F7	“passed to the vast mercy of Allah”	Religious framing of death
F12	“forgiven by God” “the late”,	Spiritual virtue
F21	“wife of Sheikh [Name]”	Social positioning

Evidence from the corpus supports this observation. For instance, one female death poster describes the deceased as “forgiven by God, willing,” and “the late”, and while her death is framed through the expression “passed to the mercy of Allah.” In the same poster, the deceased is identified as “the wife of Sheikh [Name] and “Um [Name]” combining relational identification with moral-religious evaluation. Related expressions emphasizing divine mercy, forgiveness, and spiritual virtue recur throughout the corpus. These attributes delineate a particular feminine ideal that emphasizes moral goodness, emotional fortitude, and religious piety. Notably, these attributes are not equated with neutrality, but rather they are culturally admired and gendered attributes.

Male subjects, on the other hand, tend to be linked to social roles, achievement or status, as in:

- professional titles
- community roles

The terms used to describe social status. The words that describe social status.

A feminist discourse perspective sees this as a type of discursive constraint (Lazar 2005) that shrinks the spectrum of acceptable portrayal of woman to a very restricted set of attributes. Women are not portrayed as accomplished, as experts, as public figures – even if they are.

This imbalance between the two points out the role of lexical selections in a certain perspective. Language is not only descriptive, it is prescriptive, that is, it prescribes an appropriate or desirable behavior. The repeated portrayal of women as 'morally' oriented traits solidifies a feminine model which emphasizes goodness over action.

Moreover, this pattern helps to produce what Talbot (2019) refers as symbolic positioning, in which language is used to situate a person in a social role. In this instance the female role is reduced to a moralized one, without social participation, and marginalizes women's presence in the public sphere.

5.3 Visual Representation and Symbolic Invisibility

A near complete lack of female images in the corpus is one of the most important results. Male posters are commonly accompanied by pictures of the deceased, whereas female posters rarely have pictures. Rather, they make only use of a text or symbols.

This is no accident, but rather deeply entrenched norms about modesty and visibility in public space (Ahmed, 1992). But, from a discourse analytic point of view, it is also a symbolic invisibility. This is especially significant in the context of symbolic annihilation (Talbot, 2019). It is a concept of the marginalization and erasure from representation of certain groups. In this instance, the lack of female representation reduces women's representation in the public sphere, and women remain represented on the margins.

From a multimodal standpoint (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), images are significant in the process of meaning making. A photograph adds to the individuality, recognizability, and presence. The absence of this, therefore, carries implications in this regard.

Table 3. Multimodal Features in Women`s Death Posters

No.	Visual Element	Discursive Function
1	Black background	Symbolizes grief, mourning, , and solemnity
2	Red typography for the deceased's name	Draws attention to the identity of the deceased
3	Quranic expressions and references	Emphasize spirituality and religious legitimacy
4	Mosque or Hosseiniya (Shia`s community	Show the sacred nature of the mourning event

	center) references and religious symbols	
5	Female silhouette	Represents femininity symbolically rather than individually
6	Photograph absence	Limits the visual visibility of females as identifiable individuals

A distinctive visual crammer in death posters were displayed beside the absence of personal photographs. Religious expressions, black backgrounds and contrasting colours such as yellow, red and white contribute to construct of spirituality, mourning and collective remembrance. Religious references are observably displayed, while mosque-related expressions reinforce the sacred and communal scopes of the event. In some cases, generic silhouettes of veiled women are utilized instead of personal photographs. From a multimodal perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), these visual resources construct a recognizable mourning genre while simultaneously limiting the individual visual identity of the deceased. Thus, women are symbolically present within the visual design yet remain visually anonymous as identifiable social actors.

Then the discourse simply eradicates the image of women, even when their identity is publicly recognized. A paradox is that the figures of women are there as mourners, but not as visible figures.

5.4 Professional Identity as a Site of Discursive Disruption

Even though the dominant pattern is this, the analysis shows that there are also substantial points of difference, such as those in which women have professional or academic titles.

When this happens, the representation changes significantly:

- Full personal names are more likely to be included.
- The titles of professionals (such as Doctor, Teacher) are specifically included
- The focus on the relational identity is lessened but not completely removed

Table 4, Professional Identity in Female Death Posters

Poster	Professional Title	Representation Pattern
F22	Doctor	Professional title + full name
F25	Teacher	Professional title + full name
F28	Professor	professional title + full name

The examples presented in Table 4 show cases in which academic or professional titles contribute to greater visibility and individual recognition. In these examples, the deceased woman is more likely to be represented through her professional status and personal name, although relational references may still be present. Out of the 15 women posters examined, only three featured academic or professional titles alongside relational identifiers. Although relatively rare, these cases provide evidence of alternative representational patterns within the genre.

This indicates the presence of an alternative discourse on representation inherent in institutions, a discourse that foregrounds the individual and public contributions.

Theoretically, this can be seen as a discursive disruption. The prevailing genre norms of the film reinforce relational identity, whereas professional titles provide another model of identity that acknowledges women as individual actors. This disarrangement does not however, lead to a full stoppage. Relational terms are still present in many contexts, indicating that there is still a hold of traditional norms. This co-existence can be thought of as a hybrid discourse; a discursive place of encounter and convergence of different discourses. This discovery is in line with the general sociolinguistic observation in the Arab world whereby processes of modernization and the rise of women's role in education and working life are in process of changing the representation patterns over time (Al Zidjaly, 2014).

5.5 Summary of Analytical Findings

The analysis, reveals a coherent pattern of gendered representation:

- Women are constructed as relational and moral subjects
- Men are constructed as individual and socially positioned actors
- Women's visibility is restricted both linguistically and visually
- Professional identity introduces limited but significant variation

They are not standalone but linked together in a discursive system that perpetuates the gender hierarchy and that offers some possibilities of change but remains limited.

6. Discussion (Advanced Integrative Analysis)

The results of this research show that the death announcement posters in Southern Iraq are a discursive apparatus of gender regulation in which genre conventions, linguistic selection and visual work together to produce and normalize gendered hierarchies. This section combines analytical findings and the theoretical framework, illustrating the structuring, stabilizing and, sometimes, contesting of representation.

6.1 Genre as a Mechanism of Norm Enforcement

In terms of genre theory, the regularities that are observed are not coincidental, but rather they are a consequence of the normativizing power of the genre itself. Genres are institutionalised communication structures that control structure and meaning, as Bhatia (2004) states. The extent of conventionalization found in death announcement posters is present in the regulation of identity, as well, in the fixed openings, formulaic religious expressions and standardized layout of the posters.

In this context, the uniform use of the pejorative gender pronouns for women may be interpreted as a "norm" of the genre and not a personal style. This is not just allowed in the genre, it's encouraged. It thus confines women to a limited choice of acceptable "positions," whose criteria for representation are those of conventional notions of femininity.

This resonates with the opinion of Hyland (2007) regarding genres as ways in which discourse communities keep coherence. In the current context, coherence is realised by the observance of common values, one of which is the centrality of the family tie as a key element in the identity of women. So the genre serves as a space of social reproduction, reflecting and reinforcing norms.

6.2 Discursive Construction of Gendered Hierarchies

The imbalance in the representation of men and women in this case is not enough to see a pattern of ideological structuring, from a CDA point of view. The differential use of naming practices (full personal names for men, relational identifiers for women) is illustrative of how discourse constructs social hierarchy through representation (van Dijk, 2008).

This asymmetry is further reinforced by lexical patterns. This stereotype of women as moral beings and men as social beings is a form of what Fairclough (2013) calls discursive naturalization, the process of making up socially constructed differences as natural and obvious.

Importantly, the patterns do not work alone. The naming and lexical selection combined with visual representation constitute an integrated ideological impact:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • positions women in relation to others. | Naming |
| • "Lexical choices" characterise them as moral. | "Lexical |
| • absence renders them less publicly visible | Visual |

These combine to form a multi-layered representation that systematically excludes women from the public sphere.

Together, these elements create a multi-layered representation that systematically limits women's presence in the public sphere.

6.3 Gender Performativity and the Repetition of Norms

The patterns are sustained with the help of Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity. Multiple posters representing the relational and moral subject of women helps to reinforce gender norms.

Every act of representation is an act of performance, and reaffirms the notion that femininity is always linked with family and morality. This repetition over time creates the look of naturalness, so that other representations seem to be deviant or inappropriate.

In this respect, death announcement posters may be considered as a component of a larger chain of discursive repetitions that constantly perform gender norms. Its strength, however, is in its degree of familiarity: it is considered normal and ordinary and so its ideological impact can be overlooked.

6.4 Visibility, Invisibility, and the Politics of Representation

There are very few images of women, emphasizing visibility as a component of power. The point of representation is not simply inclusion, as feminist scholars have stated, it's presence and prominence (Talbot, 2019).

In this study, the lack of female images can be seen as a symbolic invisibility which reduces the visual presence of women in public discourse. This lack is frequently explained as a cultural norm of modesty, but, at the same time, it has implications for the perception and value of women.

While this invisibility understood as kind of discursive exclusion, it might be interpreted within the local context as a form of expressing respect (iḥtirām) and modesty (ḥayā') related to social and prevailing religious values.

Images serve an important role in the construction of identity from a multimodal perspective (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). They give instant, unique and recognizable feedback. Without their presence, therefore, they are less visible and strengthen their marginal status.

This brings about a paradoxical discursive phenomenon: women's deaths are publicly recognized, but they are absent from the images.

6.5 Professional Identity and Emerging Discursive Shifts

Some of the women have professional titles, which brings a big point of difference in the text, indicating possible discursive shifts. The examples show that there are other ways of representing the genre besides the traditional one, but it is still present.

In a CDA approach, this could be seen as a type of micro-level resistance, in which dominant norms are somewhat undermined. There is a competing discourse, a professional discourse, which highlights the individual, competence, and public contribution.

The persistence of relational identifiers together with professional titles, however, shows that this change is not complete. The professional identity is not necessarily in competition with the traditional norms, it simply coexists with them and allows a hybrid representation.

The hybridity is part of the broader sociocultural trends in the Arab world, where there is a mix of modernity and the influence of deeply embedded traditions (Al Zidjaly 2014). The genre, therefore, is a place of negotiation, and is a place where opposing ideas are expressed and worked out.

6.6 Contribution to Discourse and Gender Studies

The results of this research have implications for several lines of research.

First, they make an extension of genre theory, in which they use vernacular genres, which are largely and often neglected in academic studies, as a site of ideology regulation. Death announcement posters are not marginal texts but rather integral to daily communication and as such, have an important role in the creation of social meaning.

Second, this study makes a contribution to the CDA movement by giving empirical proof of the reproduction of gender hierarchy in a particular culture. It emphasises the multi-semiotic aspects of understanding representation.

Third, the study contributes to feminist discourse analysis, with the analysis of gender in a non-Western context demonstrating how global trends of gender inequality are influenced by local cultural norms.

6.7 Synthesis

Overall, the results indicate that death announcement posters are a discursive system in which:

- Genre, conventions regulate representation.
- Language constructs identity.
- Visual practices shape visibility.
- Cultural norms define acceptability.

The system is stable and dynamic, it is stable because it reproduces gender norms, but dynamic in its ability to take on limited amounts of change.

7. Conclusion, Implications, and Future Research

7.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the representation of women in death announcement posters in the southern part of Iraq using a combined genre theoretical, critical discourse analysis and feminist discourse analysis. The results show that this popular genre is not apolitical, but is discursively regulated as a system for production, normalisation and construction of gender identities.

In the corpus, the most common representation of females is that of relational identity, in the form of being identified as mother, wife or daughter, not as an individual. This is an ideology of women's identity that is tied to family roles, as part of a larger pattern that leads to a collectivised identity model. In contrast, full names and social titles of male subjects always signify individuality, authority and public presence.

The analysis also showed an obvious gendered imbalance in the representation of words. Women are linked to moral and religious traits and men to social status and achievements. This lexical distinction helps to shape gendered subject positions, in which being female is related to being 'virtuous' and 'emotional', while being male is related to being 'aggressive' and 'public'.

Perhaps most strikingly, the study revealed an almost complete lack of representation of females in the images, which shows a form of symbolic invisibility, reducing women's visibility in public discourse. This lack is part of the cultural norm of modesty and is also a device of discursive exclusion.

The research also highlighted situations where there was variation in the discourse, especially when a professionally titled woman was involved. In these cases, the identities of the institutions can at least counterbalance dominant modes of representation, thus providing alternative subjectivities that focus on the individual and public contribution. But these disruptions are rare and coexist with traditional representations, with hybrid representations.

In general, the results show that death announcement posters are a conservative, but nevertheless dynamic genre that reflects both the gender ideology and the social evolution.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

One of the key contributions of this study to the theoretical work in discourse studies and gender studies is its attempt to move beyond the theoretical limits of previous work. This study has several important points to make in the theoretical discourse and gender studies.

First it extends genre theory by providing evidence that the vernacular everyday genres, which are not typically studied in academic discourse, are important in the construction of social meaning. This is not simply a communicative tool, but also a structuring or norm-enforcing device of death announcement posters, which affects the representation and understanding of identities.

Secondly, the study is important for critical discourse analysis because it is based on empirical evidence of the reproduction of a gender hierarchy in a culturally specific context. It emphasizes that several semiotic dimensions (linguistic, structural and visual) should be taken into account when considering the ideological effects of discourse.

Third, the study contributes to the feminist discourse analysis by examining the representation of gender in an Arab sociocultural matrix. Many current studies examine the media in the West or institutional discourse, but as this study shows, the same patterns of gender inequality are evident, albeit with culturally specific forms.

In conclusion, performativity theory has shown the importance of repetition as a way of reproducing gender norms. The study exemplifies the process of gendered identity naturalisation in the cycles of representation, and its crystallisation and inevitability.

7.3 Practical Implications

First, it shows the critical awareness as an important aspect of everyday communication. However, it is important to realize that seemingly mundane texts, like an announcement poster for a death, have an ideological dimension that can support more reflective and inclusive approaches to representation.

Second, the results indicate that there is the potential for discursive change. The inclusion of women with professional titles suggests that there are other possibilities for representation in the genre. Promoting such representations may help to move towards more inclusive ways of constructing identity, over time.

Third, the study could be useful in an educational or media setting where the importance of discourse in the formation of social attitudes is important. The application of critical discourse awareness in education may contribute to disrupting the gender norms that have become entrenched.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

- The study has its own limitations. Limitations of the study are discussed.
- The study has some value but it is not without its limitations.
- Although 30 posters were adequate for qualitative analysis, it may not represent the extent of variation in the genre.
- The study is limited to the area of southern Iraq; results may not be generalised to other areas, which may have different sociocultural dynamics.

- The analysis process is mainly qualitative and interpretative, suitable for the aims of research, but in the future the use of quantitative methods is recommended to complete the analysis.

7.5 Directions for Future Research

Further studies are possible as a result of this study.

1. Comparative Studies Future studies could examine death announcement posters from other regions or countries to assess whether there are cultural differences that affect the representation of gender.
2. Diachronic Analysis A comparison of over time may help to understand the changes of gender representation in relation to social transformation.
3. Multimodal Expansion Other visual and design features, such as typography, colour, and layout, could be the subject of further research to better understand multimodal meaning making.
4. Audience Reception Studies It may be possible to understand how audiences comprehend these posters, thereby gaining insight into the relationship between discourse and social cognition.
5. Digital Contexts As social media becomes a more popular way of communicating there is potential to explore in future studies how death is being represented in digital media and whether social media provides more alternative representations.

7.6 Final Reflection In conclusion, this study highlights the need to look at everyday discourse as a space where ideology is produced. However, death announcement posters which are often overlooked do reflect the level of social norms which are reproduced in routine communicative practices. The study highlights the genre, and not only contributes to the academic research, but also prompts reflection on the potential of language, culture, and power in determining how individuals are remembered, represented, in death.

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