

November 2024

Evolving Narratives of Gulf Press Representations of Women with Disabilities

Shujun Jiang
United Arab Emirates University, UAE

Muhammed Musa
United Arab Emirates University, UAE

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jiang, Shujun and Musa, Muhammed (2024) "Evolving Narratives of Gulf Press Representations of Women with Disabilities," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 26: Iss. 6, Article 10.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol26/iss6/10>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Authors share joint copyright with the JIWS. ©2022 Journal of International Women's Studies.

Evolving Narratives of Gulf Press Representations of Women with Disabilities

By Shujun Jiang¹ and Muhammed Musa²

Abstract

People with disabilities make up 16% of the world's population, an estimated 1.3 billion individuals. Because many people rely on the media to make sense of the world, a skewed perception of people with disabilities has become dominant in society today. People with disabilities are largely depicted in the media as deserving of pity and charity and always dependent on others for survival. The media provides us with narratives that we use to create interpretations of the world around us and, consequently, become bases of norms and attitudes about issues and persons around us. This paper studies Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' news coverage of women with disabilities to gain insights into the kind of narratives the Gulf press constructs about them. Through a content analysis of national news agencies' news reports from Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this study reveals how Gulf media contributes to the consolidation of or liberation from established notions and perceptions about women with disabilities in Gulf society.

Keywords: Women with disabilities, GCC countries, People of Determination, Integration, Empowerment

Introduction

Human societies comprise multiple communities. We may belong to some communities but not to others. For the communities we do not belong to, we make sense of them through their social visibility or invisibility. In modern societies, the mass media are the representational institutions whose coverage could confer or deny visibility to social groups. How they choose to represent a community shapes the public's perception and understanding of those communities. Consequently, misrepresentation and underrepresentation have become twin categories used by the media to shape the visibility of a community. What kind of visibility is conferred on a community, on the other hand, determines their integration, isolation, or marginalization.

An estimated 1.3 billion people, or about 16% of the world population, people with disabilities (PWD) constitute a significant part of society (World Health Organization, 2023). Over the years, the modern media have portrayed PWD in such a way that disability has become associated with "tragic loss, weakness, passivity, dependency, helplessness, shame, and global incompetence" (Wendell, 1996, p. 63). Further, Nelson (2000) pointed to the media's dual role in simultaneously helping PWD to build a sense of community and constructing negative stereotypes that damage their self-esteem. Even as strides are made globally to foster inclusivity and diversity in media representations, the portrayals of people with disabilities, especially women, remain an area understudied in the Gulf region, where cultural norms shape media narratives and vice versa.

¹ Shujun Jiang is an Associate Professor in the Media and Creative Industries Department at United Arab Emirates University, UAE. She received her Ph.D. in the Media and Communication Department at the City University of Hong Kong. Her research focuses on media studies and public relations.

² Muhammed Musa is an Associate Professor in the Media and Creative Industries Department at United Arab Emirates University, UAE. Before he joined UAEU, he was a lecturer at Canterbury University, New Zealand. He got his Ph.D. at Leicester University, UK. His research areas are media and social change, journalism studies, and media and sports.

Women with disabilities (WWD) in the Gulf face compounded disadvantages due to the intersection of their gender and disability. They are underrepresented in leadership roles, as very few hold positions as legislators, senior officials, or managers (UN Women, 2022). This lack of representation extends to national coordination mechanisms on disability matters and gender equality institutions, further marginalizing their voices in policy discussions. Social stigma remains a pervasive issue, often leading to the isolation and hiding of individuals with disabilities by their families. This stigma can result in inadequate care and support, as well as barriers to social participation and integration. However, there are efforts from the media and advocacy platforms to challenge these attitudes and promote more inclusive narratives (Sargent, 2021).

Gaps remain in current research on PWD in the Gulf region, where studies often overlook the intersectionality of identities, specifically how disability intersects with gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, or socioeconomic status (Ahmed et al., 2011; United Nations Population Fund, 2022). Understanding these intersections is crucial for developing inclusive policies and interventions. There is also a need for research that examines how media representation can empower women with disabilities, promote their agency, challenge stigma, and improve their inclusion in society. This includes analyzing positive portrayals, role models, and narratives of resilience and success (Sargent, 2021).

This study investigates how Gulf news agencies, as news wholesalers, cover women with disabilities (WWD). Because news agencies are news sources for their client media in press and broadcasting, they set the agenda for the type of discourse perpetuated around WWD. Through a content analysis of news stories from news agencies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Kuwait, Qatar, the Sultanate of Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), our study seeks to inquire into Gulf news agencies' representations of WWD and how such portrayals shape perceptions thus fueling either inclusive or exclusionary attitudes towards WWD. Specifically, the study aims to understand the narratives of WWD depicted by the media, what roles WWD is taking within these narratives, the key players in the discussion surrounding WWD, and how the terminology used for WWD either works to integrate or isolate the community within the larger society. By addressing these research gaps, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how women with disabilities are portrayed in the media, the impact of such representations on society, and strategies to promote more accurate, inclusive, and empowering media narratives.

A History of Western Media Representations of People with Disabilities

The United States Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s drew attention to the exclusions suffered by Black Americans. They brought media attention to the need for the integration of marginalized minorities into mainstream society and institutions such as universities. Incidentally, while the press was focused on activism by Black Americans, another landmark development concerning civil rights was unfolding. According to Whitaker (1977), the admission of Ed Roberts, a post-polio quadriplegic, into the University of California at Berkeley was a turning point for the Disability Rights Movements. The experience of civil rights activism among racial minorities benefited people with disabilities because it brought awareness of the effects of media framing on public perception (Nelson, 2000).

Whereas the Civil Rights Movement had representatives from racial minority groups and women, the Disability Rights Movement had members from all demographics in the US. Despite the fact that most people know someone who is disabled, the media fails to represent people with disabilities as equal members of society. Media reinforce dominant stereotypes that are driven by

the medical definition of disabilities, which contributes to the idea that a person with disabilities needs charity (Imafidon & Baker, 2022). Nelson (2000), for instance, has argued that the isolation of PWD has led the media to treat them as objects of pity or, conversely, as deserving of applause for their heroics; both of these treatments are stereotypical. While scholars have criticized the media for playing a central role in the construction of public perception of PWD, the media has also negatively affected the self-image of PWD by reinforcing their sense of powerlessness (MacPherson, 1977).

In providing insight into the role of the media in building the disability community, Nelson (2000) lays out a periodization framework that captures four major historical moments in the process: the Dark Ages of Disability (the period before WWII), Awareness of Rights (the period immediately after WWII), Mobilization to Action (1950s to early 1990s), and finally, the Revolution of Technological Community (mid-1990s to present). As its title suggests, in the Dark Ages of Disability, the media dehumanized PWD, treating them as scarred, shunned, invisible, and isolated within the family. In the Awareness of Rights phase, the media began to realize the unfair treatment received by some PWDs. American soldiers with disabilities returning from the Second World War aroused the public's concern for justice and ethical treatment of disabled people. Nelson (2000) adds that "Along with coverage of civil rights abuses of Blacks and women, the press began to feature stories of obvious abuses of human dignity for those with disabilities" (p. 183). Despite this, many people with disabilities continue to experience isolation, stigma, and discrimination. According to Donaldson (1981), the image of PWD in the media was accompanied by "some sort of stress, trauma, overcompensation, character flaw or bizarre behavioral tendencies" (p. 415).

Further, the third stage, Mobilization to Action, was a period characterized by the demand for equal rights for those with disabilities. Ed Roberts' enrollment at the University of California at Berkeley and other similar stories of success (Whitaker, 1977) culminated in the passing of the landmark Americans with Disability Act (ADA) in 1990 that made discrimination based on disability illegal. The media, at this stage, began to raise awareness of injustices suffered by people with disabilities, some of whom were organizing to call public attention to their plight. Nelson notes that "Along with the change in self-awareness, there occurred in the media itself a new sense of dignity that those in this community deserved. This meant an effort to change descriptive terms that were seen as demeaning" (Nelson, 2000, p. 188). The Associated Press and other media organizations also started a campaign to stop using denigrating terms to describe people with disabilities. There was a call for the use of "person first" language rather than defining people by their disability, such as a "person who uses a wheelchair" rather than a "wheelchair-bound person."

Yet, more change was to come in the way in which the media discusses people with disabilities. In the 21st century, the arrival of the Internet impacted communication and interaction among people across the globe, so Nelson (2000) tagged the current stage "The Revolution of Technological Community." The emergence of virtual space made possible by the information revolution is a major turning point in activism, visibility, and a sense of community among PWD. Electronic bulletin boards, emails, chat rooms, vlogs, social media, and many more community-based platforms have led to the cultivation of solidarity among PWD and the possibility of self-definition beyond their disabilities. Through such virtual participation, people with disabilities joined political movements for equality alongside others committed to justice and equity.

The four periods in the history of disability movements speak to a specific geographical and cultural space, namely the West and the United States in particular. We discuss these changes in the United States in this paper because the Gulf's understanding and perception of disability has

been and is heavily shaped by dominant Western discourse. Thus, an understanding of disability in non-Western societies depends on Western models and a neo-liberal orientation that has been incorporated in the Gulf region. In the Gulf region, as was the case in other parts of the world, such as Africa and Asia, development models were often transferred from the West. Such a model focused on modernization as a singular development path for nations outside the Western orbit. Consequently, institutions and professions, including education, health, economy, politics, and the media, and their practices were transplanted to these nations as the panacea to their development problems (Frank, 1967; Amin, 1991). However, such a modernization pathway led to the continuous incorporation of non-Western nations into a Western neo-liberal social order that culminated in what is today referred to as globalization.

As a result of such complex factors, dominant and stereotypical ways of understanding disability worldwide are shaped by Western notions and definitions (Imafidon & Baker, 2022). Such an understanding of disability is predicated on the medical model and the charity model that neglect the socio-cultural realities of non-Western societies regarding definitions and approaches to disability (Etieyibo, 2022; Imafidon & Baker, 2022). To approach these disability issues in a broader and de-Westernized way, scholars are calling for an approach that will recognize the cultural and religious contexts of non-Western societies. Therefore, our study of media representations of women with disabilities in the Gulf will reveal the extent to which a more inclusive understanding of disability exists.

Cultural Variables in Gulf Media Narratives

As stated earlier, the media are primary sources for understanding societal issues, and thus, they affect perceptions and attitudes toward PWD. Going by the four historical moments in the history of the disability movement, mainstream media representations of PWD have largely reinforced negative stereotypes by depicting PWDs as objects of pity, inspiration, or burden rather than people with agency and autonomy (Jeffress, 2021), (2013). Furthermore, gender intersects with disability to amplify stereotypes and marginalization as women and girls with disabilities face unique challenges regarding societal expectations of femininity, the ideal human body, beauty standards, and caretaker roles (Nario-Redmond et al., 2017).

The idea of media representations arose from the cultural-critical paradigm of media studies scholarship that goes beyond the perception of media content as a reflection of reality. In this regard, media representations are seen as “central signifying practices” that produce shared understanding and perspectives on social issues and society at large (Hall et al., 1978, p. 4). Rather than just a mirror of society, media representations in fictional and non-fictional media create reality and, by so doing, normalize certain perspectives or worldviews over others. What the news media chooses to report and how they report an issue creates dominant ideologies in society. In this way, ideology becomes the hegemonic force that it is in contemporary society (Eagleton, 1991; Žižek, 1989).

From this perspective, media representations, in relation to the coverage or portrayal of WWD, a shared cultural meaning is produced and normalized in society through the symbolic content disseminated by the mass media. In the mainstream media's coverage of WWD, misrepresentation could lead to negative consequences for both political and social decision-making, which in turn could exacerbate inequalities in society.

The Gulf region is preponderantly Muslim; therefore, Islamic religious values shape media practices (Musa & Ahmed, 2023). Islam admonishes compassion and equal treatment of people as God's creation. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity and diversity

in media, particularly in countries such as the UAE and Qatar that are backed by deliberate government policies and pronouncements, the portrayal of women with disabilities remains underexplored. Limited research exists on how Gulf media represent this intersectionality.

In his study of media framing of disability in Saudi Arabian newspapers, Alsewaiah (2021) observes a pattern of underrepresentation and misrepresentation. He further observes that the perpetuation of stereotypes in the Saudi press negatively impacts PWD from achieving progress. Emam et al. (2020), in their study of two UAE newspapers' (*Gulf News* and *Khaleej Times*) representation of PWD, revealed that the group was positively represented, with empathy and empowerment being the dominant frames in the news reports examined.

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into the media representations of PWD in the Gulf, studies on some Gulf countries are limited, and discrepancies exist. Such gaps prompt more empirical research comparing countries in the region through a content analysis that could unveil how women with disabilities are represented and perceived across the region.

Theoretical Framework: Agenda-Setting and News Framing

In trying to gain insight into the implications of media representations for public perceptions and attitudes, we have explored the theoretical framework of agenda setting and framing. In Cohen's (1963) study of media and foreign policy in the United States, he made the famous conclusion that "the media may not be successful in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling them what to think about" (p. 13). Cohen's discussion of the power of the media in directing the public's thinking about issues led to the agenda-setting theory of the media.

In responding to the "limited effects" view of the media that characterized thinking in the 1960s to 1970s, McCombs and Shaw (1972) are credited with developing the agenda-setting hypothesis in a researchable form when they examined news media coverage of the 1968 US presidential election campaigns. They inquired about the content of political news campaigns across the mass media of the time, specifically the press, news magazines, and television. In addition, they surveyed people's views on the importance of the issues represented in the media.

To verify the claims of the agenda-setting studies and respond to their perceived limitations, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) conducted further research to verify if the issues that were given prominence in the media were also the issues that the public considered the most important. Respondents in the study were placed in a controlled environment and exposed to television news. The researchers discovered that respondents assigned greater importance to the issues that were prominent in the newscasts. As a result, Iyengar and Kinder (1987) concluded that "television news was a powerful determinant of what springs to mind and what is forgotten or ignored" (p. 16). For them, therefore, the power of the mass media is located in its ability to "command the public's attention (agenda setting) and defin[e] criteria underlying the public's judgments (priming)" (p. 63).

Although scholars of agenda-setting and priming ascribed to broadcast and print journalism have significant power to set the public's political priorities, years of careful research have shown that media effects are more limited (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). Until the mid-1990s, the best that could be said was that the media agenda affects the salience of some issues for some people some of the time. Based on that, the concept of framing was raised as an expansion of agenda-setting theory and priming. It reasserts a powerful media effects model. As Kosicki (1993) pointed out, "Media 'gatekeepers' do not merely keep watch over information, shuffling it here and there. Instead, they engage in active construction of the messages, emphasizing certain aspects of an issue and not others" (p. 113).

As an interpretive construct, framing has diverse meanings in media studies. A broader definition of framing includes the emotional connotation of key terms used in the context (Hall et al., 1978). Studies have found that the effect on the audience is quite different if people with disabilities are labeled as “disabled” or “handicapped,” or if they are referred to by using “person first” language (Green et al., 2005; Harpur, 2012; Yunker, 1987). The former emphasis on labels tends to focus on medical or deficit-based models, which view disabilities as problems to be fixed rather than recognizing the diversity of human experience and potential. Research found that such labels can lead to stigma and reinforce stereotypes about people with disabilities, promoting negative perceptions that affect how others treat them. Disability labels can also influence the self-concept of individuals, leading them to internalize negative societal views, which can damage self-esteem and limit their sense of potential. Further, deficit-based labeling can create additional social barriers, as it often leads to segregation or differential treatment in schools, workplaces, and social settings, further marginalizing people with disabilities. Therefore, scholars call for person-centered/person-first language and approaches, such as PWD, emphasizing ability, inclusion, and the individual’s overall humanity (Green et al., 2005; Harpur, 2012; Yunker, 1987).

In the UAE, “People of Determination” was creatively initiated to refer to PWD. It was introduced in 2017 by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The term was part of an initiative to promote inclusivity, respect, and empowerment for individuals with disabilities. By using the phrase People of Determination, the UAE sought to shift the focus from disability to ability, emphasizing the strength, perseverance, and resilience of individuals who face challenges rather than defining them by their impairments. It reflects a broader cultural and policy shift aimed at providing equal opportunities and enhancing accessibility for all (*People of Determination*, n.d.; *UAE’s determined*, 2023). The term has also been adopted by other countries in the region, reflecting regional trends to foster a positive, respectful narrative that emphasizes the strength, resilience, and capabilities of people with disabilities (*People of Determination*, 2023).

In the effort to investigate the news framing of WWD, we explored what terms are used in the news and how frequently they are used. Therefore, the study proposed the first research question:

RQ1: What terms were used by Gulf news agencies in referring to WWD, and did those terms imply integration or marginalization?

According to McComb’s (2005) definition, framing is “the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed” (p. 70). As this research aims to study the portrayal of women with disabilities (WWD) in the Gulf press, the news framing of this specific community provides a powerful narrative, constructing the perception, attitudes, and behaviors of the public and decision-makers. Therefore, we would ask the following research questions that represent “thematically related attributes” on the subject:

RQ2: What is the dominant narrative about WWD among Gulf news agencies?

RQ3: What is the nature of representations of WWD reported by Gulf news agencies?

RQ4: Who are the key players in fostering inclusivity or marginalization for WWD, as reported by Gulf news agencies?

Methods

To understand the news framing of WWD in the Gulf region, we conducted a content analysis of the news published by the national news agencies in the six Gulf countries. The news agencies studied are Emirates News Agency (WAM), Qatar News Agency (QNA), Saudi Press Agency (SPA), Bahrain News Agency (BNA), Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), and Oman News Agency (ONA).

National news agencies were chosen as the media source because news wholesalers are the main suppliers of news to client retail media in their countries and the entire region. Under the prevailing economic climate surrounding news media organizations, most of them are facing a financial downturn that is forcing them to either downsize or increase their dependence on news agencies as essential sources of news stories. In this regard, news agencies are early gatekeepers to clients or subscribing news media organizations as they set the agenda and frame essential issues regarding women with disabilities.

To collect the news, we used the database NexisUni,³ an academic search engine that contains full news articles archived from six news agencies. Keywords of women and girls, together with a variation of words including people with disabilities, people of determination, people of special needs, disability/disabilities/disabled, and handicapped, were used in the advanced search.⁴ As news items meeting the search criteria are few, we used a three-year time frame, from March 8th, 2021, to March 8th, 2024. The date was chosen because it is close to the initiation of the study, and it also marks International Women's Day, when there is often more coverage concerning women. All news agencies have both Arabic and English versions, except for WAM, which has news in seven languages: Arabic, English, Chinese, Hindi, German, Italian, and Persian. In our study, only the English version was chosen as this is the most internationally used language.

Following the above criteria, the search engine produced 167 pieces of news from WAM, 39 from QNA, 13 from SPA, 35 from BNA, 38 from KUNA, and six from ONA. After the screening, repeated or irrelevant news articles were removed, resulting in the final total of 238 pieces of news, specifically 144 from WAM, 33 from QNA, 11 from SPA, 22 from BNA, 23 from KUNA, and five from ONA. The numbers varied remarkably among the news agencies, with WAM having an exceedingly high amount while Oman had the least. The disparity is caused by the varied productivity of the news agencies, as well as whether they deemed these stories worthy of the cost of reporting.

Further, according to the framing theory, the following variables were coded to investigate the thematic attributes of news on WWD and to answer research questions 1 through 4. A codebook was developed for these four thematic attributes:

- 1) Terms: The terms coded for PWD included people of determination (POD), people of special needs, people with disabilities, disabled people, and handicapped people. (See footnote 4 below).
- 2) News Topic: The dominant narratives of WWD were reported by the Gulf press. The categories of topics on WWD were generated from a preliminary study in which the two researchers coded a sample of news items and agreed on the following categories: politics, economics, international relations, sports, education, law/policy, human rights, health, community, employment, and social

³ See <https://www.lexisnexis.com/en-ae/research/nexis-uni>

⁴ Some of these words are considered outdated or insensitive in some national cultures but were included in the keywords search because they may appear in the news articles in the Gulf region.

welfare and services.

- 3) Roles of Women and Girls: The nature of representations of WWD identifies them as athletes, employees, artists, inventors, students, activists, victims, and/or people in need.
- 4) Spokespersons and Key Players in WWD's Cause: The categories identified in coding were WWDs, country leaders, government officials, organization leaders, and company representatives.

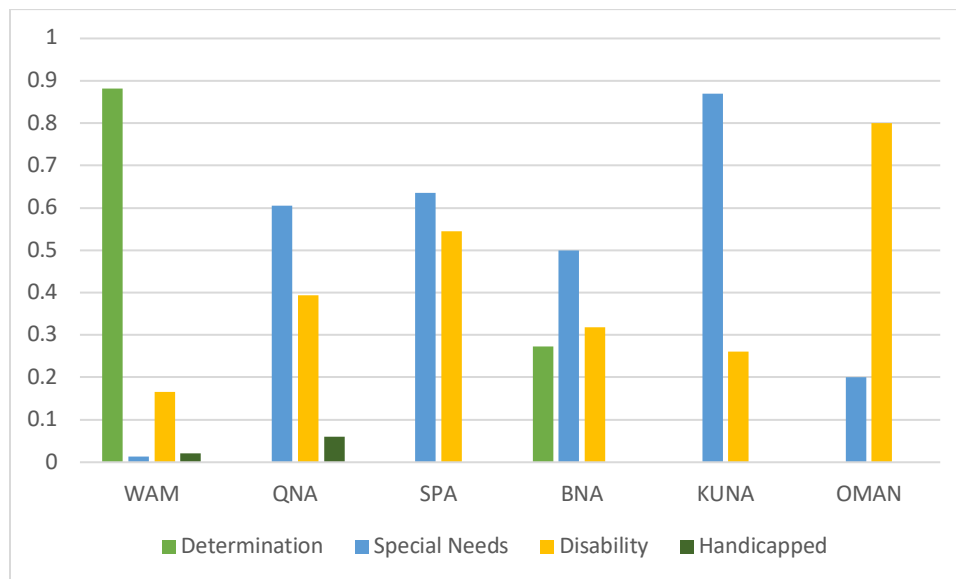
At the beginning of the content analysis, a pilot study involving 30 news items was conducted, during which the intercoder reliability between two coders was calculated. The scores of all variables reached 0.8 and above. In addition, the news title and publishing date were recorded for each news item.

Results

Terms Matter: People of Determination.

We found that different terms are used in news reports in GCC countries, as noted in Table 1. Some are innovative, some are traditional, and some are outdated. Because terms have emotional connotations in communication, they influence people's attitudes and behavior (Green et al., 2005; Harpur, 2012; Yucker, 1987). Figure 1 shows the four main terms (People of Determination, special needs, disabilities/disabled, and handicapped) used in GCC news by each country.

Figure 1: Terms used by GCC News Agencies to Describe People with Disabilities



Source: Data gathered by researchers

The WAM from the UAE uses People of Determination the most, accounting for 88% of the news. Particular to the UAE and other Gulf nations, People of Determination is an innovative term that conveys positivity, inclusion, and empowerment (*UAE's determined*, 2023). BNA from Bahrain also adopts the same term, with 27% of news using "People of Determination." Following

the example set by the UAE, Bahrain embraced this term as part of its broader efforts to promote inclusivity and empowerment for individuals with disabilities (*People of Determination*, 2023).

Because the term “people with disabilities” is fact-based, straightforward, and without confusion, it is used by all GCC news agencies, with ONA from Oman using it the most, accounting for 80% of news. Even in the UAE, where the use of POD is dominant, 17% of the 238 news articles in WAM used “people with disabilities/disabled.” However, some believe the words lack a positive connotation, especially when they are used without the “person first” approach (Nelson, 2000; Yunker, 1987). Talking about why he thought “disability” was a misnomer, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum from the UAE said, “Disability is, in fact, the inability to make progress and achievements. The achievements that people of determination have made in various spheres over the past years prove that determination and strong will can do the impossible and encourage people to counter challenges and difficult circumstances while firmly achieving their goals” (*UAE’s determined*, 2023).

“People with special needs” is a frequently used term that appears in all GCC news agencies. KUNA used it the most (87%), followed by SPA (63%), QNA (60%), BNA (50%), ONA (20%), and WAM the lowest (1%). In the Gulf region, “people with special needs” is considered to be a common term. It is widely used by all agencies. However, the word “handicapped” is rarely used, as it magnifies disabilities and has discriminatory indications (Green et al., 2005; Harpur, 2012; Yunker, 1987). Only five out of the total 238 news stories used the word.

Overall, regarding the terms used by Gulf news agencies, the study finds that people-first language and approaches were widely adopted in the region. Some countries have innovatively used the positive term “People with Determination” to foster a positive, respectful narrative that empowers women with disabilities.

News Topics in GCC Countries

Our study discovered that each country in the GCC had a different focus on news topics when reporting on WWD. To begin, in the UAE, the most prevalent topic was sports, with 45 of the 144 news articles, or 31%, reporting on sports. The UAE is very active in organizing and participating in sports events. Some events are specifically for PWD, including the Paralympic Shooting World Championship, Fazza International Para Athletics Grand Prix, IWBF Wheelchair Basketball World Championships, World Para Powerlifting Championships, Special Olympics, and many more. Some events are for the general public but actively integrate PWD (often called POD in the UAE) in their programs; for example, the Zayed Charity Run has a 2km program for POD, and the Nad Al Sheba (NAS) Sports Tournament has special programs and opportunities for POD to participate (*Zayed charity run*, 2023; *Nad Al Sheba sports tournament*, 2021). Unified Women’s Sports Day is a platform that brings women together in a friendly competition, promotes tolerance, integration, and cooperation among diverse societal groups, and, most importantly, provides a festive and empowering atmosphere for women and girls of determination (*Women’s Unified*, 2021). Other than events and competitions, the UAE also provides more sports activities for POD, including sailing and rowing, marine sports, and ice sports (*UAE Sailing*, 2024; *ZHO, Abu Dhabi Marine Sports Club*, 2022; *ZHO, ADISC partner*, 2022). The UAE believes sports are essential for POD because they bolster their empowerment and integration into society and help to build a healthy and inclusive community. In these sports news articles, WWDs are reported as professional and amateur athletes participating in various sports activities. Many are award-winning athletes whose achievements are recognized and commended in the news.

News topics from Qatar News Agency focused most on education. Nine out of the 33 news

articles, or 27%, are about education for PWD. Specifically, Qatar endeavors to develop vocational training programs targeting women and people with disabilities to meet the needs of the Qatari market for professionals and technicians and other related objectives (*Minister of Education*, 2023a). The Qatari minister, Her Excellency Minister of Education and Higher Education Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi, appears frequently in educational news. She stressed the importance of enhancing communication with parents to ensure the integration of school and home efforts in a way that contributes to enriching the integration of students with disabilities in the educational system (*Minister of Education*, 2023b). She also affirmed the commitment of the State of Qatar to support the least developed countries by strengthening comprehensive and effective national education systems, whether in distance classes or direct educational sites, and improving curricula that respond to the dynamic nature of education, training, and the labor market (*Minister of Education*, 2023c). Besides education, the topic of sports was the second most popular, occupying eight of the 33 news articles (24%). Unlike the UAE, whose sports events involve international athletes and championships, Qatar focuses more on domestic activities, such as National Sports Day, where people with disabilities actively participate, many of whom are women (*National Sports Day*, 2023).

Among the 11 news reports from Saudi Press Agencies, three were about aid, all related to the projects of King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in Yemen, Jordan, and other lower-income countries. Of the remaining eight news reports, three are about meetings and events, two are about awards and achievements, two are about mosque facilities for people with disabilities, and one is about human rights. Some highlights in these news stories were two girls, one from the UAE and one from Saudi. A girl from the UAE won the 2021 Ammar Award, the fifth Gulf edition for talented people with disabilities (*2021 Ammar Award*, 2021), and a deaf Saudi girl named Hind Al-Showaier was elected by the World Federation of the Deaf as regional director of the Federation for the Arab region (*Saudi Hind Al-Showaier elected*, 2021).

Furthermore, there were 22 news stories about WWD from Bahrain News Agencies. Among them, the most popular topic was services and welfare (six stories, or 27%), closely followed by education (five stories, or 22%). The mentioned services and welfare include disability allowance, rehabilitation centers, women's support centers, transportation, social welfare, health, and education (*SCW launches "Women's Support Centre" application*, 2021). Many of the educational news stories are also about support services, such as providing YouTube channels and devices dedicated to support learning, digital applications for people of determination designed by high school students, and designated classrooms for PWD (*High school students*, 2022). No individual women were specifically mentioned or highlighted in these news stories. As national news agencies are heavily influenced by government narratives in Gulf countries, government efforts to highlight disability issues often focus on broad initiatives that address the entire group rather than individual stories, especially in areas like healthcare, education, and social welfare. There is often a lack of in-depth understanding of the diversity within the community of people with disabilities. Besides, in many Gulf countries, conservative cultural norms still influence the portrayal of women in the media, and this is even more pronounced for women with disabilities. Families and communities may overprotect women with disabilities, often keeping them out of the public eye. This can further contribute to their lack of representation in news stories.

In the Kuwait News Agency, the most prominent news topic was international representation and collaboration concerning people with disabilities. For example, Kuwait joined the social affairs ministers of the Arab League member states in executing the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan, calling for pan-Arab coordination in the fight against COVID-19 and

underlining the necessity of protecting the most vulnerable in Arab communities. The ministers also discussed the promotion of legislation and policies relating to the social, health, and educational services necessary for decent living standards for people with disabilities for the coming decade. Kuwait also welcomed delegations from Gulf states to discuss narrowing the gender gap and empowering women. When participating in the Arab Multidimensional Social Development Forum, the ministers of Arab states also expressed support for the Palestinian people suffering because of the war with Israel, especially women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and children (*Arab social affairs*, 2021). Although no specific women with disabilities were covered, the Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and State Minister for Women and Child Affairs, head of the Supreme Council for disability affairs, Her Excellency Mai Al-Baghli was frequently quoted as the spokesperson in many news articles. She advocates for women's rights and the integration of PWD in building an inclusive community.

Over the three years, Oman News Agencies produced only five news reports related to WWD. Three were about services and welfare; one was about constructing a new rehabilitation center for special needs, and the last one was about the Honorable Lady's visit to a rehabilitation center. It is worth noting that individual PWD or WWD is never mentioned in all news; The only individuals mentioned with names are government leaders and officials, such as Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman. During her trip to the Governorate of Al Buraimi, she visited Al Wafa Centre for the Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities. She was briefed about the services rendered to all age groups of the disabled and the rehabilitation plans made to develop their intellectual and motor skills. She also spoke to those registered in the center to get firsthand knowledge about the extent to which they benefited from the services provided, as well as the difficulties and challenges posed to them (*The Honourable Lady visits Al Buraimi Governorate*, 2024). As shown, the news narrative tends to focus on the leaders' engagement and care. Yet the voices of WWD are hardly heard. Disability advocacy in the media is relatively new in many GCC countries, and as a result, there may not be a strong tradition of portraying individuals with disabilities as complex, multifaceted people with personal stories, ambitions, and achievements.

Diversified Roles of Women with Disabilities in News Stories

The study finds that the roles of WWD portrayed in the GCC news agencies' coverage are mostly positive and diversified. Of the 238 news stories, only four articles mentioned WWD as war victims and people in need. These women were not from the GCC countries but from other neighboring countries, such as Yemen, Palestine, and Afghanistan. Most news reports on WWD present positive narratives. They are depicted as heroes fighting for fulfilling lives and contributing to society in various careers and roles. The news stories show that women with disabilities are award-winning athletes, inspiring inventors, empowering activists, successful business owners, popular chefs, talented artists, and active volunteers. They are well-integrated into society, promote their values, and positively impact the community. For example, WAM in the UAE wrote a heartwarming story about how the national airline Etihad celebrated Emirati Women's Day by collaborating with Zayed Higher Organization (ZHO) for People of Determination to establish a chocolate factory. Women from ZHO are trained by Etihad's professional chefs to operate the factory and make handmade chocolate. This project will play an essential role in empowering women of determination and creating opportunities in the community (*Etihad, ZHO marks*, 2021).

Due to the different news topics in GCC countries, women's roles also vary. For example, in WAM of the UAE, half of the identified women (32) are athletes since sports are the dominant

news topic; the rest, about 30 women, took various other roles. The most identified women in QNA of Qatar are students (5), as the most covered topic is education, followed by athletes (2). In Saudi Arabia, talented women, leaders, and victims in Yemen were the ones mentioned. However, no specific roles for WWD are found in the news in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman. The rare mention of the roles of WWD in these Gulf countries is primarily due to cultural norms, social stigma, limited advocacy, and media prioritization of broader issues. The intersection of gender and disability creates additional barriers to visibility, resulting in the underreporting of WWD's roles and achievements. While some GCC countries are increasingly looking to international standards and norms regarding disability rights and to improve media representation, other countries should do more to adopt inclusive media practices that recognize the unique contributions and challenges of women with disabilities in the region.

Women Leaders Advocate for Women with Disabilities

While women of determination are positively portrayed and take on diversified, heroic roles in news stories, they are rarely the main characters or spokespersons. Their voices are hardly heard. The most highlighted characters and spokespeople in the news coverage across the GCC countries are country leaders, ministers, government officials, and organization leaders. Among all the spokespersons in the 238 news reports, only four feature the voices of WWD; two are from WAM, with one being a Pakistani activist and the other an athlete; two more are from QNA, with one as an artist and the other an athlete.

In terms of the gender of the spokesperson, it is noted that more spokeswomen are being included. Previous studies found that spokespersons in the news are usually dominated by men (Dai & Xu, 2014; Kimani & Yeboah, 2011). In GCC countries, some progress has been made in narrowing the gender gap, yet the gap still remains. For example, in KUNA news, more spokeswomen were represented in the news (seven news articles) than spokesmen (six). In the UAE, 19 women were quoted versus 62 men. In QNA, three women were quoted compared with ten men. These women were mostly Sheikhas, first ladies, country leaders, ministers, government officials, and organizational leaders. Their active engagement and advocacy are strong driving forces behind the empowerment of women with disabilities.

In the UAE, H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union (GWU), Chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation (FDF), and Honorary Chairperson of the Emirates Red Crescent (ERC), has made a great contribution in empowering women and supporting their engagement in economic, social, and cultural areas in the Emirates and abroad (Nahyan bin Mubarak, 2022). Women make up one-third of the country's ministers and comprise 50% of the members of the Federal National Council. They play key roles in sectors such as education, business, entrepreneurship, technology, space exploration, climate change mitigation, and environmental protection. The UAE has achieved global recognition, ranking first in 30 indicators of women's competitiveness in both 2022 and 2023. In government institutions, women represent 46.6% of the workforce and hold 66% of public sector positions, including 30% in decision-making roles and 15% in technical and academic positions (UAE submits fourth national report, 2023). In Qatar, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Her Excellency Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi, is an advocate for developing an effective education system for women and people with disabilities. In Bahrain, Hala Al-Ansari, the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW), was quoted in the news on executing laws to support people with disabilities with disability allowance. She praised His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's

issuance of the Execution Law in Civil and Commercial Matters, highlighting HM's commitment to advancing the kingdom's justice system. The decree law is a key step toward modernizing legislation, particularly in promoting family stability. She also acknowledged the efforts of Justice Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa and the Equal Opportunities Unit in implementing SCW recommendations aimed at safeguarding the dignity and rights of Bahraini families, which are in line with the government's priority on family affairs (*SCW Secretary-General*, 2021).

In Kuwait, Mai Al-Baghli, the Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and State Minister for Women and Child Affairs, is a very popular spokeswoman who is frequently quoted in the news. She affirmed that disabled people play an important role in society, underlining the need to activate the articles of the law on the rights of people with disabilities (*KUNA: Disabled people*, 2022).

Our analysis indicates that women leaders in GCC countries are receiving more media attention in promoting the rights of WWD. Even though the number is not comparable to that of male leaders, their roles and active involvement reflect government-led reforms and initiatives in the region. Most GCC countries have ambitious national development plans that emphasize the role of women in leadership and economic participation. These plans prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women as key aspects of modernization and economic diversification (*Bahrain economic vision 2030*, n.d.; *Saudi Vision 2030*, n.d.).

Designated Government Organizations Are Powerhouses

The results of the study show that some key organizations are powerhouses promoting the causes of POD and WWD. For example, the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) in the UAE is an umbrella for all humanitarian bodies, social services, people of determination institutions, and any future bodies for humanitarian goals. ZHO provides a range of integrated services that aim to help people with disabilities to be included in the community. These services include training and education, vocational and therapeutic rehabilitation, psychological care, family counseling, and educational and sports activities. Among the 144 news articles from WAM, ZHO appeared in 10 news titles and about one-third in the main news bodies. In Bahrain news, a frequently mentioned organization is the Bahraini Catalysts Disabilities Association. It is a charity organization whose objectives are encouraging and motivating people with disabilities whose health conditions prevented them from enrolling in education to continue in their educational pursuits; aiding women with disabilities to find suitable work and fulfill themselves; discovering and developing sports activities for women with disabilities in cooperation with sports, cultural, and social clubs; and training cadres to motivate them. The organization appeared in two of 22 news titles from BNA. Other charity organizations and government departments in GCC countries, such as Red Crescent Societies, National Foundations, National Human Rights Committees, and Supreme Councils, are vital players in aligning and consolidating the efforts of care and aid for WWDs.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the context of mass media as agenda setters, this study interrogated Gulf news agencies' coverage of women with disabilities. This three-year content analysis reveals a trend toward inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment in media narratives across the region. The major news topics on WWD covered by GCC news agencies, such as sports, education, service and welfare, aid to developing countries, and regional collaboration, are all about efforts to integrate WWD into society in GCC countries. Previous studies have shown how media representations of people with

disabilities have centered on negative stereotypes that have stigmatized people with disabilities and, by so doing, exacerbated the negative effects of their disabilities by rendering them powerless, alienated, and invisible (Alsewaiah, 2021; Jeffress, 2021; Nelson, 2000). However, evidence from our study of the representations of WWD by news agencies in the GCC reveals a deviation from those dominant patterns seen elsewhere worldwide. As 98% of news coverage in the GCC press is positive and encouraging, this finding changes the stereotype that media has created for POD previously. It also revolutionizes the image of GCC countries in the cause of POD. Women with disabilities are no longer portrayed as weak or helpless. In contrast, they are determined to overcome difficulties, bravely embrace challenges, and contribute to our society through various roles and positions.

Our study also found that across the GCC, there is a resort to “person first” language when referring to WWD. This can be seen in the three main terms primarily in use among the GCC news agencies, such as “people of determination,” “people with disabilities,” and “people with special needs,” rather than the demeaning and helpless terms such as “wheelchair-bound” or “handicapped.” The key here is in the prefix “people” before the disability in recognizing their equality as members of society with equal rights (Yuker, 1987). Some GCC countries’ favorable terms reflect their resolution to eliminate discrimination and promote inclusion and integration. In their study of journalism in Muslim societies, Musa and Ahmed (2023) pointed to the influence of the Islamic value of compassion on journalistic practices, which may also be in play in the Gulf region. Quantitatively, the WAM news agency of UAE disseminated more news stories on WWD within the sample period than the other news agencies. WAM had 144 news stories, while the Qatari and Kuwaiti news agencies had 33 and 23, respectively. Bahrain news agency had 22 and Oman 5. Some GCC countries have made great strides in empowering women and narrowing the gender gap, yet others are less advanced due to the degree of economic, political, and social development, openness of the country, and leadership.

The discrepancies in the number of news stories could indicate how proactive the media is in each country on matters of WWD. However, a closer look at the focus of news stories will provide a more cogent explanation of the discrepancies. In news stories of the UAE’s WAM, sports news is the most prominent news topic, accounting for 31%. The country runs professional and amateur sporting events for the general public, including women with disabilities. In addition to this, the UAE has government-supported agencies, such as the Zayed Centre for People of Determination, that play a role in the integration of POD. QNA’s news stories focus mainly on education, accounting for 27% of the total. This reflects the country’s deliberate policy of integrating WWD in educational pursuits and achievements. In Bahrain, the most primarily reported news stories on WWD are about service and welfare, which account for 27% of the total. The government accords special welfare packages to WWD, such as disability allowance, rehabilitation centers, women’s support centers, and support in health and education. In Kuwait, KUNA’s news stories focus on international representation and collaboration, indicating that WWD represents the nation abroad. It also shows that the government seeks external collaboration on WWD matters. The most significant focus of news stories in the Saudi Press Agency has to do with the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre. Overall, the tone of the news stories from news agencies in the GCC is positive, as only four news stories are about war victims. Most other news stories celebrate the achievements and contributions of WWD to society. The different news frames constructed by the GCC countries are mainly due to the various political, social, and economic situations in each country.

The trend in the centrality of government as a driving force in public welfare in GCC countries has manifested in news media stories about government institutions such as the Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination (ZHO) in the UAE and the Bahraini Catalyst Disabilities Associations, which advocate for POD. Both organizations are frequently mentioned in the news in their coordinating roles in bringing together several other agencies involved with the welfare and rights of POD. Some countries are reaching out actively in regional and international collaboration, such as the Arab League and the United Nations. The increasing international attention to PWD at all levels reflects a growing understanding that disability should not be an obstacle to the involvement of this vital segment of society. Activities and work are initiated that enable them to actively engage in building the community. Their active contribution to all aspects of social, economic, and political life also reinforces the bonds of justice and equality for all individuals.

However, the findings also show that the voices of WWD are rarely heard or quoted in all the countries' media studied. Instead, it is repeatedly the voices of ministers, leaders, and governmental spokespersons. This hierarchy of news credibility in journalistic stories about WWD places officialdom as the recognized or primary definers of reality in news values (Hall et al., 1978). It was also found that women leaders, such as first ladies and ministers, played an essential role in advocating for WWD. Yet individual women with disabilities need more opportunities to be heard. Traditionally, the Gulf region, like many other parts of the world, tends to view disability from a collectivist lens, which often sees individuals through the prism of their association with a group. As a result, coverage of people with disabilities may focus on the group as a whole rather than on the unique identities, abilities, and stories of each individual. Nowadays, social media provides a good platform for self-advocacy and representation; there is growing advocacy in the region for more inclusive and nuanced media representation. Social media and platforms for self-advocacy are allowing women with disabilities to share their personal stories, contributing to the shift toward portraying people with disabilities as unique individuals. Therefore, providing women with disabilities access to training and education in media production skills can equip them with essential tools for advocacy and empowerment.

Finally, the limitation of this research is that it only focused on the news coverage in GCC countries in the past three years. To understand the media representations of WWD from a broader perspective, future studies can be done by comparing news over a longer time period and across different regions. Additionally, beyond the news coverage in traditional media outlets, the representation of women with disabilities on social media deserves exploration, as it has become a powerful platform for disability advocacy and promoting gender equality worldwide.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the use of AI software, specifically OpenAI's ChatGPT and Grammarly, in editing and improving the writing of this paper. The AI tools were utilized to improve grammatical accuracy and the overall presentation of the text. All intellectual content, including research ideas, data collection, analysis, and conclusions, were developed independently by the authors.

References

- Ahmed, D. A. A., Hundt, G. L., & Blackburn, C. (2011). Issues of gender, reflexivity and positionality in the field of disability: Researching visual impairment in an Arab society. *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(4), 467-484.

- Amin, S. (1991). The ancient world systems versus the modern capitalist world system. *Review (Fernand Braudel Centre)*, 14(3), 349-385. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40241188>
- Arab social affairs officials call for inter-Arab coordination against COVID-19. (2021, December 23). Kuwait News Agency. <https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=3018702&language=en>
- Bahrain economic vision 2030. (n.d.) <https://www.bahrain.bh/>
- Cohen, B. (1963). *The press and foreign policy*. Princeton University Press.
- Dai, H., & Xu, X. (2014). Sexism in news: A comparative study on the portrayal of female and male politicians in the New York Times. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 4(5), 709-719. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2014.45061>
- Donaldson, J. (1981). The visibility and image of handicapped people on television. *Exceptional Children*, 47(6), 413-416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440298104700602>
- Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: an introduction*. Verso Press.
- Emam, S., Bouri, S., Soliman, N., Fahim, B., & Alhamami, H. (2020). Representation of people with special needs in UAE newspapers: Gulf news and Khaleej Times as a case study. *KIU Interdisciplinary Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 1(3), 90-104. https://kijhus.kiu.ac.ug/assets/articles/1607428951_representation-of-people-with-special-needs-in-uae-newspapers-gulf-news-and-khaleej-times-as-a-case-study.pdf
- Etihad, ZHO marks Emirati Women's Day. (2023, August 26). WAM. <https://wam.ae/en/article/hszrcxb5-etihad-zho-mark-emirati-womens-day>
- Etieyibo, E. (2022). Disabilities in an African cultural worldview. *Review of Disability Studies*, 18(1-2). <https://www.rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/1140>
- Frank, A. G. (1967). *Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical studies of Chile and Brazil*. Monthly Review Press.
- Green, S., Davis, C., Karshmer, E., Marsh, P., & Straight, B. (2005). Living stigma: The impact of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. *Sociological Inquiry*, 75(2), 197-215.
- Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: Mugging, the state, and law and order*. Palgrave.
- Harpur, P. (2012). From disability to ability: Changing the phrasing of the debate. *Disability & Society*, 27(3), 325-337.
- High school students design application for People of Determination. (2022, June 13). Bahrain News Agency. <https://www.bna.bh/En/Highschoolstudentsdesignapplicationforpeopleofdetermination.aspx?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDpifveKXQQ5%2Bxsm3g9VFthA%3D>
- Imafidon, E., & Baker, C. (2022). Understanding disability in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Review of Disability Studies*, 18(1-2), 1-5. <https://rdsjournal.org/index.php/journal/article/view/1199/2583>
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kimani, R., & Yeboah, A. A. (2011). Beyond unequal visibilities: Are women treated differently from men in the news? *African Communication Research*, 4(3), 433-448. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333512846_Beyond_unequal_visibilities_Are_women_treated_differently_from_men_in_the_news
- Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Problems and opportunities in agenda-setting research. *Journal of Communication*, 43(2), 100-27.

- KUNA: Disabled people play big role in Kuwait society -- minister Al-Baghli* - 03/12/2022. (2022, March 12). <https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=3071233&language=en>
- MacPherson, M. (1977, May 19). Newly militant disabled waging war on discrimination. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/05/09/newly-militant-disabled-waging-war-on-discrimination/b9cfef2f-32b4-4ffd-ab04-42f4e6373c41/>
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of the mass media. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 176-187.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1993). The evolution of agenda-setting research: Twenty-five years in the marketplace of ideas. *Journal of Communication*, 43(2), 58-67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01262.x>
- Jeffress, M. S. (Ed.) (2021). *Disability representation in film, TV, and print media*. Routledge eBooks.
- Minister of Education opens technical and vocational tracks exhibition for students with special needs*. (2023a, May 27). Qatar News Agency. <https://www.qna.org.qa/en/News-Area/News/2023-05/17/0071-ministry-of-education-opens%C2%A0technical-and-vocational-tracks'-exhibition-for-students-with-special-needs>
- Minister of Education stresses the importance of communicating with parents to enrich the integration of students with disabilities into the educational system*. (2023b, December 3). Qatar News Agency. <https://www.qna.org.qa/en/newsbulletins/2023-12/03/0060-minister-of-education-stresses-importance-of-communicating-with-parents-to-enrich-integration-of-students-with-disabilities-into-educational-system>
- Minister of Education to QNA: Qatar is committed to supporting education in least-developed countries*. (2023c, March 4). Qatar News Agency. <https://www.qna.org.qa/en/News-Area/News/2023-03/04/0008-minister-of-education-to-qna-qatar-committed-to-supporting-education-in-least-developed-countries>
- Musa, M., & Ahmed, S. (2023). Journalism in Muslim societies: Alternative theories and practices of fairness and justice. In B. Mutsvairo, S. Bebawi, & E. Borges-Rey (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to journalism in the Global South*. Routledge.
- Nad Al Sheba sports tournament returns this Ramadan under COVID-19 precautionary measures*. (2021, March 17). WAM. <https://wam.ae/en/article/hszrbysz-nad-sheba-sports-tournament-returns-this-ramadan>
- Nahyan bin Mubarak praises Sheikhha Fatima's support for Emirati Arab women*. (2022, June 16). Emirates News Agency – WAM. <https://www.wam.ae/en/article/hszrey1s-nahyan-bin-mubarak-praises-sheikha-fatima%E2%80%99s>
- Nario-Redmond, M. R., et al. (2017). Perceptions of disability through children's literature: Exploring the intersectionality of ability, gender, and ethnicity. In K. Mallory & K. K. de Haydu (Eds.), *Gender and disability: Intersectionality, sexuality, and ageing*. Springer.
- National Sports Day: Unique edition following historical hosting of World Cup -2-*. (2023, February 8). Qatar News Agency. <https://www.qna.org.qa/en/newsbulletins/2023-02/08/0050-national-sports-day-unique-edition-following-historical-hosting-of-world-cup--2->
- Nelson, J. A. (2000). The media role in building the disability community. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 15(3), 180-193. <https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327728JMME1503-4>
- People of Determination*. Government of Bahrain National Portal. (2023, August 6), <https://www.bahrain.bh/wps/portal/en/BNP/HomeNationalPortal>

- People of Determination | The Official Portal of the UAE Government.* (n.d.). <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/people-of-determination>
- Sargent, C. (2021). Disability rights in the Middle East: Opportunities and obstacles. *Current History*, 120(830), 346-352. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2021.120.830.346>
- Saudi Hind Al-Showaier elected Regional Director of World Federation of the Deaf.* (2021, November 30). SaudiPressAgency. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/w1658038>
- Saudi Vision 2030.* (n.d.). <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en>
- SCW launches "Women's Support Centre" application.* (2021, April 25). Bahrain News Agency. <https://www.bna.bh/en/news?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDstmSN%2F6AqE7KaO%2BEZLTY28%3D>
- SCW Secretary-General: Execution Law in Civil and Commercial Matters to strengthen family stability.* (2021, September 17). <https://www.bna.bh/en/.https://www.bna.bh/en/SCWSecretaryGeneralExecutionLawinCivilandCommercialMatterstostrengthenfamilystability.aspx?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2BDvgwrFPTc9uxDQjaS9zrZaI%3D>
- The Honourable Lady visits Al Buraimi Governorate,* (2024, January 17). Oman News Agency. <https://omannews.gov.om/topics/en/102/show/115578>
- UAE Sailing and Rowing Federation announces future plans.* (2024, March 5). WAM. (n.d.-f). <https://wam.ae/en/article/b1zoxp9-uae-sailing-and-rowing-federation-announces-future>
- UAE submits fourth national report under UN Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights.* (2023, May 8). Emirates New Agency - WAM. <https://www.wam.ae/en/article/hszrh150-uae-submits-fourth-national-report-under-universal>
- UAE's determined stand over People of Determination.* (2023, February 27). Khaleej Times. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/opinion/editorial/uaes-determined-stand-over-people-of-determination>
- UN Women. (2022, December 22). *Facts and figures: Women and girls with disabilities.* <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/women-and-girls-with-disabilities/facts-and-figures>
- United Nations Population Fund. (2022). *Disability in the Arab region: A challenged vulnerability.* https://arabstates.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/14385_-_disability_in_the_arab_region_-_final_report_web_version_-_opt.7.pdf
- Wendell, S. (1996). *The rejected body: Feminist philosophical reflections on disability.* Routledge.
- Whitaker, J. (1977, April 6). Handicapped gather at HEW to agitate for rights enforcement. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1977/04/06/handicapped-gather-at-hew-to-agitate-for-rights-enforcement/bc5c3562-5257-4176-b838-3890c6f16b24/>
- Williams, K. (2003). *Understanding media theory.* Arnold Publishers.
- Women's Unified Sports Day to kick off October 22.* (2021, October 22). Emirates News Agency - WAM. <https://wam.ae/en/article/hszrdc2h-women%E2%80%99s-unified-sports-day-kick-off-october>
- World Health Organization. (2023, March 7). *Disability.* <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health#:~:text=Key%20facts,earlier%20than%20those%20without%20disabilities.>
- Yuker, H. E. (1987). Labels can hurt people with disabilities. *Etc: A Review of General Semantics*, 44(1), 16-22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42579311>
- Zayed Charity Run kicks off tomorrow in Egypt.* (2023, December 29). Emirates News Agency -

- WAM. <https://wam.ae/article/aqdqmxh-8th-zayed-charity-run-kicks-off-tomorrow-egypt>
- ZHO, *Abu Dhabi Marine Sports Club Sign MoU*. (2022, March 3). Emirates News Agency - WAM. <https://wam.ae/en/article/hszre9i7-zho-abu-dhabi-marine-sports-club-sign-mou>
- ZHO, *ADISC partner to develop abilities of people of determination in ice sports*. (2022, November 26). Emirates News Agency - WAM. (n.d.). <https://wam.ae/en/article/hszrfywc-zho-adisc-partner-develop-abilities-people>
- Žižek, S. (1989). *The sublime object of ideology*. Verso Press.
- 2021 Ammar Award Honors Winners of its Gulf Edition. (2021, November 2). SaudiPressAgency. <https://www.spa.gov.sa/en/2a1df3eec9>