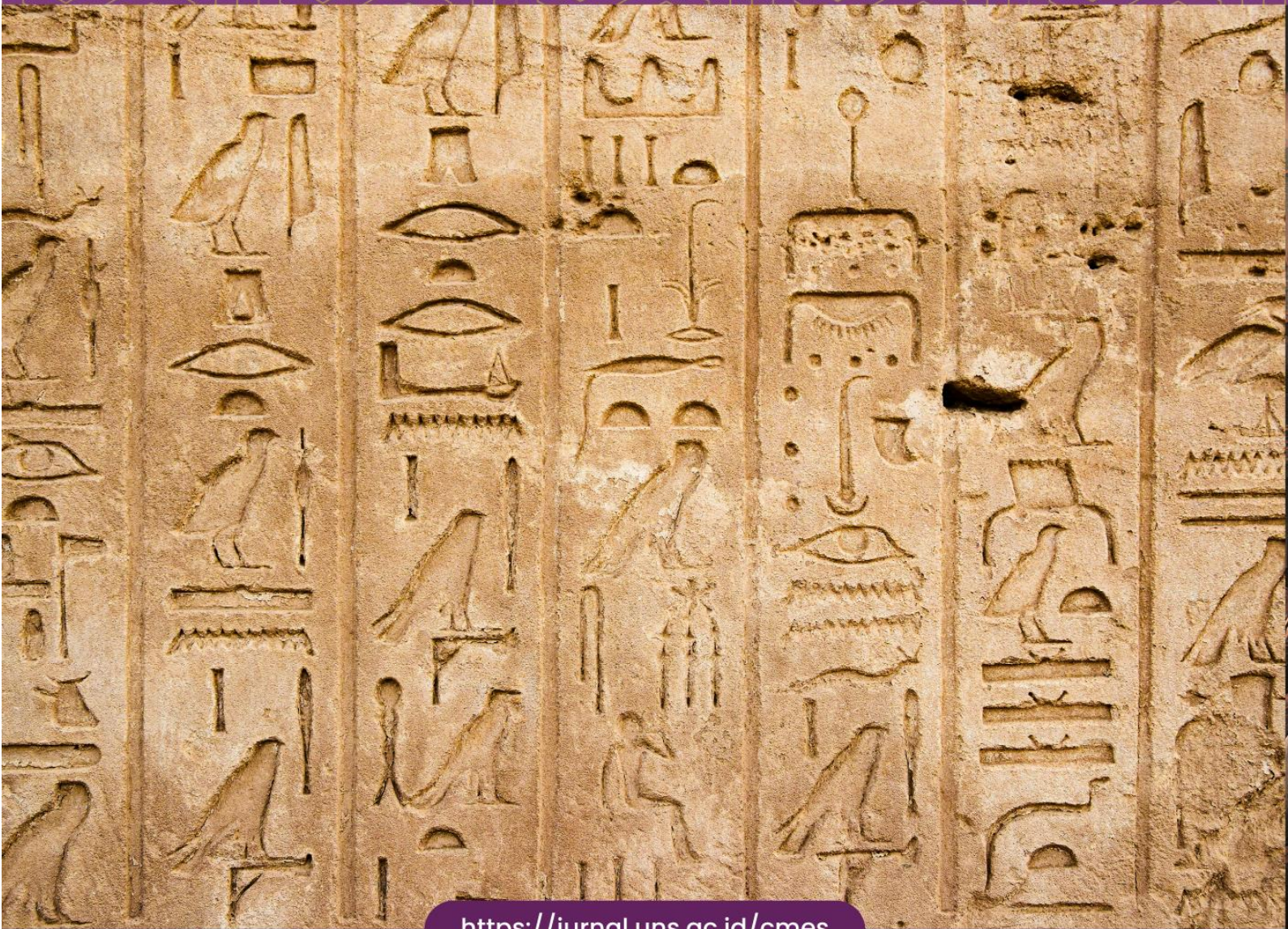




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PREFACE

Dear Readers,

The editorial team of the *Center of Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) Journal* is pleased to present Volume 18, Issue 2, published in December 2025. This edition compiles ten scholarly articles that reflect a diverse and interdisciplinary engagement with the Middle East and the wider Arab world. To assist readers in navigating the contents, the articles are thematically grouped into four main categories: Middle Eastern sociopolitical studies, Arabic literature, Arabic linguistics, and translation studies.

The first part examines the current sociopolitical events in the Middle East. Sangidu et al. begin with “Discursive Co-optation and Structural Domination in the Reconsolidation of Authoritarianism in Egypt after the Arab Spring”, which is a critical report of the process of stabilizing authoritarian power through post-revolutionary political discourse. This is preceded by “The Influence of K-Pop on Saudi Arabian Government Policy: A Case Study of the K-Pop Music Festival, KCON in Riyadh” by Anggraini et al. which focuses on the cultural globalization and its influence on the policy orientation led by the state in Saudi Arabia. Hamdan et al. discuss ideological representation and identity formation entrenched in party naming practices in “The Names of Political Parties in Egypt: A Discourse Analysis of Islamic Political Party Names after the Arab Spring 2011”. The paper is rounded off with “Comparison of the Role of Tourism in the Economic Diversification Agenda of Saudi Arabia and the UAE” by Khalish et al. which compares strategic economic responses in both vision agendas of states.

The second part moves to literary research, providing a variety of contributions to Arabic poetry and narrative prose. Dewantara et al., in their article titled “An Analysis of the Meaning of the *Shi’r Ṣalāwāt Simṭ al-Durar* by Ḥabīb ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Habshī in the Semiotic Study of Riffaterre” reveal multisensory spiritual symbolism embedded in the poem through linguistic deviations. The techniques of narrative that predict social reality and psychological struggle are discussed by Surur and Oktaviani in “Depiction of Naturalism in the Novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* by Adania Shibli”. Isnarti et al. comment on the “*Tawassul* in the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī* by Ḥabīb ‘Umar ibn Ḥafīz: A Michael Riffaterre Semiotic Study”, pointing out the intertextual levels and devotional aspects of the *qaṣīdah*. Thoriq and Faishol conclude the section with “Analysis of Actantial Schema and Functional Structure in Short Story *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā’* by Yūsuf Idrīs”, examining the actantial schemes and structural processes of the narrative.

These contributions reflect the CMES Journal’s commitment to fostering critical dialogue, multidisciplinary inquiry, and scholarly exchange in Middle Eastern and Arabic studies. The editorial team extends sincere appreciation to all authors, reviewers, and partners who have made this publication possible.

Sincerely,

Khabibi Muhammad Luthfi

Editor in Chief

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DISCURSIVE CO-OPTATION AND STRUCTURAL DOMINATION IN THE RECONSOLIDATION OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN EGYPT AFTER THE ARAB SPRING

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
authoritarian
resilience;
democratic
backsliding;
discursive co-
optation; political
hegemony; post-
Arab Spring Egypt.

This study aims to analyze the failure of Egypt's democratic transition after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, emphasizing the dynamics of authoritarian resilience and discursive co-optation in shaping the pseudo-legitimacy of the post-revolution regime. Integrating Gramsci's theory of political hegemony with the Egyptian context as the novelty of this research, it also addresses how democratic symbols were reappropriated to sustain authoritarian control an issue significant for understanding democratic backsliding in the Global South. Employing a qualitative, historical-critical case study, this library-based research systematically reviews academic literature, media archives, and international reports. Data were analyzed through Gramscian-themed coding and critical discourse analysis to uncover mechanisms of dominance and ideological manipulation. The findings reveal that although the revolution succeeded in overthrowing Mubarak's regime, the entrenched structures managed to reclaim control through structural repression and the co-optation of discourse. The implications highlight the importance of interpreting democratic backsliding as a multidimensional process that combines material control with symbolic domestication.

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الربيع العربي.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل فشل التحوّل الديمقراطي في مصر بعد سقوط حسني مبارك، مع التركيز على ديناميات الصمود السلطوي والاستيعاب الخطابى في تشكيل الشرعية الزائفة للنظام ما بعد الثورة. وتتمثل جدة هذه الدراسة في دمج نظرية الهيمنة السياسية لأنطونيو غرامشي في السياق المصري، حيث تبحث في كيفية إعادة توظيف الرموز الديمقراطية لدعم السيطرة الاستبدادية، وهي قضية ذات أهمية لفهم التراجع الديمقراطي في دول الجنوب العالمي. تعتمد الدراسة على منهج نوعي ضمن إطار دراسة حالة تاريخية نقدية، إذ تستند إلى مراجعة منهجية للأدبيات الأكاديمية وأرشيفات وسائل الإعلام والتقارير الدولية. وقد تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الترميز الموضوعي المستند إلى فكر غرامشي وتحليل الخطاب النقدي للكشف عن آليات السيطرة والتلاعب الأيديولوجي. تكشف النتائج أنه على الرغم من نجاح الثورة في إسقاط نظام مبارك، فإن البنى الراسخة استطاعت استعادة السيطرة من خلال القمع البيوي واستيعاب الخطاب. وتشير الدلالات إلى أهمية تفسير التراجع الديمقراطي بوصفه عملية متعددة الأبعاد تجمع بين السيطرة المادية والتطويع الرمزي للحفاظ على استقرار النظام السلطوي.

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INTRODUCTION

The central phenomenon examined in this study is the failure of Egypt's democratic transition after 2011, shifting from the aspirations of public politicization to the re-consolidation of authoritarianism, which underscores the structural conflict between demands for political justice and the persistence of ruling elites (Menshawy, 2021a). This issue is significant because it highlights how state mechanisms, the military, and patronage networks suspended popular demands for participation, thereby obstructing the consolidation of deliberative democracy in a post-authoritarian context (Russell, 2023). Empirical evidence shows that the post-Mubarak period was marked by the intervention of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) in the transition process and the 2013 coup that overthrew the elected civilian government, a turning point in Egypt's democratic trajectory (Blouët, 2022). Practically, the post-2013 regime institutionalized elections with pseudo-legitimacy while simultaneously restricting media, civil society organizations, and online activism, effectively emptying democratic discourse of substantive meaning (Lutscher & Ketchley, 2023). Thus, this study is highly relevant to re-examining public discourse and the narrowing of political spaces in post-revolutionary Egypt.

The literature indicates that studies of Egypt's political transition after the Arab Spring have highlighted the dynamics of political actors, the role of the military, and the limitations of public participation in democratization (Lavie & Yefet, 2022). However, prior research has predominantly focused on formal institutional aspects without adequately addressing the resistance of entrenched power structures to democratic aspirations. This gap necessitates further analysis that emphasizes both structural and discursive dimensions. Moreover, scholarship on democratic failure in Egypt is often detached from comparative perspectives with other Global South countries, even though patterns of democratic backsliding reveal cross-regional similarities (Csicsmann, 2025). While earlier studies have examined the role of media and public discourse during political change, they largely concentrate on the initial phases of the 2011 revolution without exploring how such discourses were later repressed under the post-Mubarak regime (Ayyad & Lugo-Ocando, 2023). Similarly, analyses of political parties after 2011 have emphasized electoral configurations without assessing their long-term implications for deliberative democracy (Hussein, 2021). Against this background, this research provides an original contribution by examining Egypt's failed democratic transition through the integration of structural and discursive dimensions, thereby explaining how authoritarianism can be restored despite the revolutionary overthrow of the old regime.

This article aims to analyze the failure of Egypt's democratic transition after the fall of Mubarak, while also investigating how discourses of justice and democracy were repressed and appropriated by the new authoritarian regime. In doing so, it addresses the limitations of earlier studies that primarily emphasized formal institutional dynamics while neglecting the cultural-political resistance of entrenched elites (Kubbara, 2023; Basir & Datta, 2024). To respond to these gaps, Gramsci's theory of hegemony is employed, as it explains how power operates not only through coercive structures but also through the production and domination of discourse that shapes social consent (in Amasha, 2023). The concept of cultural hegemony, for instance, enables an examination of how the military and old elites-maintained dominance by appropriating democratic symbols, such as elections, while stripping them of substantive deliberative meaning (Lavie, 2021). Similarly, Gramscian co-optation sheds light on how the regime subordinated popular demands under narratives of "stability" and "national security," thereby obstructing political redistribution (Badr, 2021). In this sense, the theory of hegemony offers a more powerful framework than conventional democratic transition theories, as it reveals the interaction between structural dominance and discursive control, making it highly relevant to the research problem and the central argument.

The failure of Egypt's democratic transition after Mubarak's fall demonstrates how entrenched power structures maintained political hegemony through co-optation, repression, and discursive control, effectively foreclosing pathways to genuine democratization (Al-Rousan et al., 2024). This article specifically examines how Gramsci's concept of hegemony elucidates the resistance of old elites to power redistribution and the transformation of democratic discourse into an instrument of regime legitimacy (Hanafi, 2024). The first hypothesis posits that structural dominance by the military and bureaucracy reflects political hegemony that blocked popular participation, thereby producing patterns of democratic regression comparable to those in other Global South states (Deng et al., 2024). The second hypothesis argues that the absorption of democratic symbols by the al-Sisi regime represents discursive hegemony, which emptied democracy of deliberative meaning and recast it as rhetoric of stability (Younas, 2023). Accordingly, this study tests these two hypotheses and advances Gramsci's theory of hegemony as an analytical lens to engage with the broader literature on post-Arab Spring authoritarianism.

Previous studies on the concept of authoritarian resilience have developed from discussions of how authoritarian regimes are able to survive political and social pressures. Klocek et al., (2023) demonstrate that resilience is sustained not only by repression but also by the regime's adaptive capacity in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. Utvik (2022) emphasizes the ideological dimension that enables Islamist actors to negotiate authenticity while maintaining relations with ruling structures, thereby reinforcing political stability. From this perspective, authoritarian resilience is understood as a multidimensional process that combines repression, adaptation, and ideological co-optation, providing a framework for understanding how democracy may weaken amid the euphoria of transition.

This framework can then be operationalized into institutional, cultural, and discursive dimensions. Selmi (2025) highlights that bureaucratic and military control constitutes an institutional variable that restricts the penetration of civilian actors. Keinan-Cohen et al. (2025) identify cultural variables such as monarchical, territorial, and tribal identities that sustain political cohesion. Mansour et al., (2021) demonstrate how public health accreditation instruments were deployed as tools of state legitimacy. These variations indicate that authoritarian resilience functions through complementary mechanisms, forming an essential basis for analyzing the dynamics of democratic backsliding.

The literature on democratic backsliding refers to the gradual erosion of democratic institutions through incremental mechanisms rather than sudden military coups. Desrues & Gobe (2024) show that democratic decline often unfolds through the restriction of protest spaces and the control of political discourse. Selmi (2024) observes that Tunisia's regression was driven by tensions between political consolidation and economic policy, underscoring the structural complexity of backsliding. Thus, backsliding can be viewed as a consequence of authoritarian resilience, which diverts transitional energy into new, more subtle forms of control.

These consequences are reflected in electoral, legal, and participatory indicators. Shiddieqy et al. (2024) stress that post-Arab Spring electoral politics were marked by fragmentation and legitimacy dilemmas. Bania (2025) highlights institutional variables in the resurgence of Islamist fundamentalism within North African political systems before and after transition. Keinan-Cohen et al., (2025) add that shifts in political and religious identities serve as critical indicators of democratic decline. This diversity of indicators confirms that backsliding cannot be separated from the discursive co-optation employed by regimes, which reveals the more subtle dimensions of power control.

The literature on discursive co-optation explains how regimes absorb democratic

symbols while stripping them of their substantive meaning. Elsayed (2021) illustrates that political humor on Facebook, originally functioning as a tool of critique, was redirected into satire that reinforced regime legitimacy. Abouelenin (2022) adds that gender discourse has often been framed within the morality of the state rather than as a space for emancipation. Accordingly, discursive co-optation operates in alignment with backsliding since democratic symbols are no longer openly rejected but instead domesticated to support authoritarian narratives.

The dimension of discursive co-optation can be observed through mechanisms of media, identity construction, and political narrative production. Edam et al. (2024) finds that both Arab and international media frequently portray women as symbols of modernity without opening spaces for substantive equality. Baalbaki (2024) demonstrates how tourism imagery absorbs political crises into cultural revival narratives to defuse criticism of the state. Berger & Gallagher (2022) show that political interventions are framed through shared values rather than particular interests. These findings confirm that discursive co-optation constitutes an integral component of sustaining authoritarian resilience while simultaneously accelerating democratic backsliding.

After reviewing the existing literature, this study identifies a significant gap: most analyses of Egypt's post-2011 political transition has overlooked the dual role of entrenched power structures and discursive co-optation in shaping the failure of democratization. The position of this research is to offer an integrated analysis that combines a structural approach that focusing on military and bureaucratic dominance, with a discursive approach grounded in Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, in order to explain how pseudo-legitimacy is constructed not only through coercive force but also through the production of cultural consensus. In contrast to earlier studies that primarily emphasized formal institutions and electoral dynamics, this research examines in detail how democratic symbols such as elections and narratives of stability were reproduced as instruments of cultural co-optation, effectively silencing the public deliberative sphere. The second, and more original, contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the combination of structural dominance and discursive co-optation after 2013 produced a form of "pseudo-legitimacy" or democracy as performance, underscoring the novelty and originality of this research.

The new direction of this study is to center its analysis on the intersection between structural and discursive dimensions, employing Gramsci's theory of hegemony as the primary analytical tool to reinterpret authoritarian resilience after the revolution, specifically how democratic symbols were transformed into instruments of regime legitimacy. This approach is crucial because, after 2013, structural repression and discursive co-optation converged to close spaces for public deliberation, making the study highly urgent in the context of current democratic backsliding across the Global South. Accordingly, the first research question explores the extent to which military and bureaucratic dominance reproduces patterns of resistance to popular participation similar to democratic decline observed in other Global South countries. The second question investigates how the regime absorbed, sterilized, and hollowed out discourses of justice and democracy as part of a strategy of discursive co-optation that weakened deliberative democracy. The significance of this research is therefore threefold: it contributes theoretically by extending democratic transition studies through a Gramscian framework; it provides empirically grounded insights into the Egyptian case with comparative relevance to broader patterns of authoritarian resilience; and it offers universal benefits for global policy debates by highlighting the need for strategies that are sensitive to the interplay of structural dominance and discursive control in safeguarding democratic governance worldwide.

The unit of analysis in this study is the cultural and social dynamics of Egypt in the

aftermath of the Arab Spring, with particular emphasis on the transformation of values, social practices, and patterns of relations between civil society and the state since the fall of Hosni Mubarak. The cultural and social domains were selected as the primary focus because they represent the main arenas in which the meanings of democracy and legitimacy are negotiated both symbolically and in everyday life, domains often overlooked by formal institutional analyses. The temporal scope of this study is limited to the period between 2011 and 2018, thereby capturing the trajectory from revolutionary euphoria to the reconsolidation of authoritarianism. Within this scope, the study examines shifts in public discourse, community participation practices, symbolic representations in the media, and transformations in the social networks of activists. This focus is crucial as it allows the exploration of how democratic values were internalized and co-opted in everyday life, shaping the sustainability of political reform.

Based on this focus, the research employs a qualitative design using a historical-critical case study approach, as this design enables the tracing of long-term socio-cultural changes while also explaining contextual causal relationships. Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is employed as the primary analytical framework, as it is particularly effective in uncovering how power is reproduced not only through material control but also through the production of cultural consent rooted in social practices. Core Gramscian concepts including hegemony, consensus, resistance, organic intellectuals, and passive revolution, serve as the basis for categorizing data to deconstruct mechanisms of democratic value co-optation. These concepts are operationalized through technical steps such as thematic coding of literature data, chronological mapping of symbolic and discursive shifts, and tracing connections between social practices and the construction of legitimacy discourses. The combination of a historical-critical case study design and a Gramscian theoretical lens enables both deep interpretive analysis and the formulation of analytical generalizations relevant to broader Global South contexts.

The data sources for this research are entirely literature-based, including peer-reviewed academic journal articles, scholarly books, dissertations, international research reports, and digital media archives documenting Egypt's socio-cultural dynamics after the Arab Spring. Such sources were chosen because they allow for a longitudinal examination of discourses and social practices, while also providing empirically verified evidence that enhances the validity and rigor of the analysis. To address the first research question, sources include studies on changes in civil society structures, activist social networks, and state-society relations during the transition period. To address the second question, the analysis draws on studies of the construction of democratic symbols, rhetoric of stability, media representations of popular movements, and human rights reports on discursive repression. These academic sources ensure credibility, historical depth, and the capacity to connect socio-cultural dimensions with mechanisms of power.

Data collection was conducted through systematic literature review, drawing from internationally and nationally recognized academic journals, as well as digital databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, ProQuest, and university library catalogs. This method was chosen because it provides access to a wide, credible, and well-documented corpus that can be critically analyzed without encountering political restrictions or fieldwork limitations in Egypt. The initial step involved developing thematic keywords, setting the temporal range (2011–2018), and retrieving relevant articles, books, and reports, which were then grouped according to cultural and social themes. The next step involved filtering sources based on journal reputation, peer-review processes, bibliographic completeness, and theoretical relevance, before organizing the data in a reference manager for subsequent analysis. This technique ensured comprehensive, replicable, and transparent data collection while safeguarding the reliability of the analytical material.

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively through integrated thematic classification and critical discourse analysis to identify patterns of meaning in Egypt’s cultural and social representations after the Arab Spring. This method is appropriate because it combines close textual analysis with tracing causal relationships among social events that shaped the emergence of a new hegemony. The first technique involved coding texts according to Gramscian categories such as hegemony, consensus, resistance, co-optation, and stability narratives, operationalized through symbolic indicators, actors, and temporal contexts. The second technique applied genealogical discourse analysis to track the transformation of meanings from the revolutionary moment to authoritarian consolidation, including shifts in narratives across media, institutional reports, and academic studies. The combination of thematic coding and critical discourse analysis provides the dual advantage of uncovering mechanisms of meaning production and linking them to socio-cultural dynamics, thereby strengthening the validity, analytical depth, and theoretical contributions of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Failed democratic transition

The findings of this study demonstrate that the failure of Egypt’s democratic transition following the fall of Hosni Mubarak primarily reflects the structural resistance of entrenched power to the redistribution of popular political participation. This result underscores that the dynamics of democratization are not solely determined by mass mobilization or the holding of free elections but are fundamentally shaped by the ability of old elites to preserve institutional control. The first evidence emerged in the immediate aftermath of Mubarak’s downfall, when the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) assumed power and managed the transition through procedural measures without implementing substantive structural reforms, thereby locking the trajectory of democracy within the interests of the military. The second evidence is observed during the presidency of Mohammed Morsi, where attempts to establish a civilian government collapsed due to the dominance of the military and the weakness of civil institutions. This culminated in the 2013 coup and the subsequent consolidation of a new authoritarian regime. The empirical data supporting these findings are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Empirical data

No	Event Stage	Main Actors	Actions / Dynamics	Effect on Democratic Transition	Implications
1	2011 — Fall of Mubarak	People (Tahrir movement), Mubarak Regime	Mass mobilization to overthrow Mubarak	Opened opportunities for democratic transition	Democratic euphoria and high expectations for civil participation
2	2011-2012 — SCAF Government	Military (SCAF)	Seized power, controlled the transition process	Maintained continuity of the old power networks	Procedural democracy without structural reform
3	2012-2013 — Morsi Government	Civilian President (Morsi), Parliament, Military	Elected through free elections, but became isolated and failed to build a coalition	Unable to challenge state structures controlled by the military	Weak civil institutions strengthened the military’s position
4	2013 — Coup & Sisi Regime	Military, Old Elites	Coup overthrew Morsi,	Ended democratic transition,	Systematic democratic

			repression of the opposition	established a new authoritarian regime	backsliding
2014–Present		Military, security apparatus, state institutions	Media control, restrictions on NGOs, crackdown on the opposition	Closed space for public participation	Symbolic democracy without deliberative substance
5	Consolidation of the Sisi Regime				

The first phase recorded in the table (2011 — Fall of Mubarak) illustrates the moment when the Egyptian people forced political change through massive mobilization in Tahrir Square (Blouët, 2022; Abdulla, 2023). This collective action opened the initial space for democratization that had long been sealed by authoritarian rule. The first piece of evidence is reflected in the scale of demonstrations that transcended social, political, and religious boundaries, producing pressure the regime could no longer ignore (Ayyad & Lugo-Ocando, 2023). The second evidence emerged from Mubarak's resignation, which created an opportunity for the emergence of new, though unstable, political structures. His fall generated democratic euphoria and raised high expectations for popular participation, laying the foundation for subsequent transitional dynamics (Menshawy, 2021a).

This euphoria was quickly confronted with new realities, as reflected in the second phase (2011–2012 — SCAF Government), when the military, through the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), assumed control of the state. This dominance demonstrated that the old structures persisted and even entrenched themselves during the transitional period (Russell, 2023). The first evidence is seen in SCAF's maneuvering to manage the transition procedurally while avoiding substantive reform (Kubbara, 2023). The second evidence lies in the continuity of the old power networks, which remained intact under military control, reducing democracy to a mere formalistic exercise (Lavie & Yefet, 2022). Thus, the authoritarian legacy was reproduced, severely limiting the substantive meaning of political opportunities that had briefly opened.

These limitations became more pronounced in the third phase (2012–2013 — Morsi Government), when Mohammed Morsi, the country's first civilian president, was elected through free elections but immediately faced political isolation. This condition underscores that electoral legitimacy without robust institutional support was insufficient to challenge military dominance (Hussein, 2021). The first evidence is found in Morsi's failure to construct a broad political coalition capable of sustaining his government, which left him without a strong power base (Amasha, 2023). The second evidence concerns the weakness of civil institutions, such as parliament and political parties, which failed to function as effective checks on power (Utvik, 2022). These shortcomings paved the way for deeper military intervention that decisively shaped the course of the transition (Klocek et al., 2023).

This intervention culminated in the fourth phase (2013 — Coup & Sisi Regime), when a military coup ousted Morsi and effectively closed the door on democratic transition. This event marked the restoration of full control by the old elites through systematic repression (Lutscher & Ketchley, 2023). The first evidence is the coup itself, which terminated civilian government and ended the democratic trajectory (Badr, 2021). The second evidence lies in the harsh repression of both Islamist and liberal opposition groups, silencing the space for political competition (Younas, 2023). This phase highlights Egypt's shift toward a new authoritarian regime, one that was more consolidated and further removed from the democratic aspirations of 2011 (Al-Rousan et al., 2024).

The consolidation of authoritarianism deepened further in the fifth phase (2014–present — Consolidation of the Sisi Regime), as Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government

expanded control over public space. This process illustrates how structural resistance was institutionalized systematically through state apparatuses (Lavie, 2022). The first evidence is reflected in the strict control of media and restrictions imposed on NGOs, which curtailed the articulation of civil society (Baalbaki, 2024). The second evidence lies in the systematic arrests of political opposition, eliminating the possibility of alternative power bases (Elsayed, 2021). As a result, Egyptian democracy became merely symbolic, devoid of deliberative substance, with popular aspirations increasingly marginalized (Abouelenin, 2022).

Taken together, the trajectory from the first to the fifth phase reveals a consistent pattern: while mass mobilization succeeded in toppling Mubarak, the entrenched power structures led by the military ultimately subdued democratic aspirations. From the initial euphoria to the emergence of a new authoritarian regime, the evidence demonstrates that the resistance of the old elite not only obstructed but also institutionalized democratic regression, rendering Egypt’s transition a clear example of failed democratization in the Global South.

Repression, subordination, and co-optation

The findings reveal that the discourse of social justice and participatory democracy championed by the Egyptian popular movement in 2011 did not endure but was instead repressed, subordinated, and ultimately absorbed by the new authoritarian regime. This result is significant as it demonstrates how emancipatory narratives, initially intended to dismantle authoritarianism, were diverted into instruments of regime legitimacy. The first evidence is observed in how the post-Mubarak regime framed demands for social justice and political participation as threats to “stability” and “national security,” followed by the arrest of activists, restrictions on opposition parties, the banning of independent unions, and the closure of critical media outlets. The second evidence appears in the strategy of the Sisi regime to appropriate democratic symbols through elections, while hollowing them of deliberative substance, as these contests were held under highly repressive conditions and yielded landslide victories, with the public sphere tightly controlled. Consequently, democratic discourse was transformed into a tool of authoritarian legitimation, as summarized in the table below.

Table 2. Repression, subordination, and co-optation

No	Elements of the 2011 People’s Movement Discourse	Initial Goal	Regime’s Response Strategy	Mechanism of Repression or Subordination	Consequences for Deliberative Democracy
1	Social Justice	Eliminate economic inequality and patronage	Regime labeled this demand as a “threat to stability”	Arrests of activists, banning of independent labor unions	Aspirations for social justice removed from the public agenda
2	Popular Political Participation	Inclusive democratization after Mubarak	Replaced with the narrative of “national security”	Restrictions on opposition parties and NGOs	Citizens’ participation narrowed and co-opted
3	Clean Government	Eliminate systemic corruption	Adopted symbolically, but without substance	Elite corruption tolerated, low transparency	Public legitimacy declined, but criticism silenced
4	Civil Liberties	Build an open public sphere	Replaced with rhetoric of the	Closure of independent	No autonomous space for public

			“threat of radicalism” Symbolized through elections, but tightly controlled	media, strict internet control Elections without real competition (Sisi winning >90%)	deliberation Democracy transformed into a tool of regime legitimacy
5	Participatory Democracy	Design a new political order			

The first row of the table demonstrates that the issue of social justice—originally intended to eliminate economic inequality and patronage—was labeled by the regime as a “threat to stability” (Basir & Datta, 2024). This framing indicates that popular demands were positioned not as a reform agenda but as a source of political disruption. Empirical evidence is found in the arrests of activists, the banning of independent labor unions, and the restriction of workers’ avenues for political articulation (Mansour et al., 2021). These repressive practices not only disregarded the substantive meaning of social justice but also excluded inequality from public debate. Consequently, popular aspirations for justice were removed from the deliberative arena, leaving democracy without a strong social foundation.

The exclusion of social justice concerns is reinforced in the second row of the table concerning popular political participation. The original agenda of building an inclusive post-Mubarak democracy was replaced by the regime with the narrative of “national security,” which framed civic engagement as a threat to state stability (Menshawy, 2021). Evidence of this substitution is visible in the systematic restrictions imposed on opposition parties and NGOs, which obstructed the consolidation of alternative political forces (Klocek et al., 2023). As a result, citizen participation was narrowed and co-opted, transforming the deliberative sphere from an open arena into one controlled by the regime. The consequence was the erosion of participatory energy necessary to reinforce democratic legitimacy (Selmi, 2025).

This strategy of repression continued in the third row of the table, which addresses the demand for clean governance. The popular call to eradicate systemic corruption was met by the regime with symbolic adoption but without substantive reform (Bania, 2025). Empirical evidence lies in the tolerance of elite corruption and the maintenance of low governmental transparency, which prevented the establishment of political accountability (Edam et al., 2024). This situation illustrates how reformist symbols were employed merely to preserve appearances while substantive governance remained under the control of entrenched oligarchic interests. As a result, public legitimacy eroded while channels of criticism were silenced, eliminating the possibility of social correction (Elsässer, 2025). Thus, deliberative democracy was obstructed as mechanisms of public oversight lost their effectiveness.

The exclusion of citizens’ aspirations in matters of social justice, politics, and governance intensified in the fourth row of the table concerning civil liberties. The original aim of creating an open public sphere was distorted by the regime through the rhetoric of a “radicalism threat,” reframing the discourse of freedom as a danger to national security (Amasha, 2023). Concrete evidence can be seen in the closure of independent media, strict internet controls, and the shrinking of spaces for public discussion (Lutscher & Ketchley, 2023). The regime not only curtailed freedom of expression but also closed deliberative channels through which society could hold politics accountable. As a result, no autonomous public deliberative space remained, and democracy lost its dialogical function.

This pattern of repression culminated in the fifth row of the table, addressing participatory democracy. The public demand to design a new political order was reduced

by the regime to a symbolic exercise through elections that were tightly controlled (Russell, 2023). Clear evidence is provided by Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's electoral victories of over 90 percent, which revealed the absence of genuine competition (Lavie, 2022). Such practices hollowed out democracy of its deliberative substance, reducing it to a mere instrument of regime legitimation (Desrues & Gobe, 2024). Participatory democracy was thus redirected—not as a mechanism of popular sovereignty, but as a tool for consolidating authoritarian rule.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that every element of the 2011 Egyptian people's movement discourse—social justice, political participation, clean governance, civil liberties, and participatory democracy—was co-opted, repressed, or distorted by the regime into narratives of security and stability. These mechanisms not only erased the substantive content of democracy but also closed the public deliberative sphere, which should have served as a platform for socio-political correction. Consequently, the post-Mubarak transition did not yield a more inclusive political system but instead consolidated a new authoritarianism in which democracy functioned merely as a symbolic instrument of legitimacy.

The failure of Egypt's democratic transition is explained by the reduction of discourses on social justice, civil liberties, and participatory democracy into instruments of legitimizing a new authoritarian regime. This failure can be understood through the simultaneous operation of structural repression and symbolic co-optation in controlling the public sphere. Following Mubarak's fall, military dominance not only foreclosed the possibility of civilian democracy but also redirected popular discourse toward narratives of stability and security. Elections and democratic symbols were preserved, yet stripped of deliberative substance, reflecting what scholars describe as "reconstituted authoritarianism" under the Sisi regime. Thus, democracy born of popular revolution was reabsorbed by authoritarian power, losing its emancipatory potential.

The relationship between coercive structures and discursive strategies reveals a distinct pattern of democratic regression. Repression of opposition constrained participation, while the co-optation of symbols reduced democracy to a political performance. This mechanism is evident in the strict control of media and public spaces, as well as in the labeling of social demands as threats to stability. The regime's invocation of national security reframed democracy as procedural rather than deliberative. Such a pattern highlights that deliberative democracy did not fail organically but was deliberately redirected into an instrument of regime hegemony.

The originality of this research lies in its focus on symbolic co-optation as a central mechanism of authoritarian reconsolidation. Previous studies have emphasized economic factors or open conflict (Assaad et al., 2023; Deng et al., 2024), whereas this study demonstrates that the manipulation of democratic discourse itself can function as a primary strategy. The preservation of democratic symbols was used strategically to suppress opposition legitimacy. Comparative cases suggest variations in this pattern: Turkey exhibits similar tendencies through electoral rhetoric reinforcing the regime, while Tunisia illustrates regression through executive interventions that curtailed parliamentary independence. In Egypt, however, the pattern is more pronounced: the state retained the formal apparatus of democracy, such as elections and constitutions, while hollowing out their institutional substance (Csicsmann, 2025). This offers an analytical innovation in understanding democratic regression in the post-Arab Spring context.

Interpreting the findings uncovers the social and ideological meanings of reduced democracy. Democracy no longer functioned as a deliberative arena but as an image manufactured to mask regime hegemony. Socially, repression fostered political apathy and weakened civic mobilization, while ideologically, anti-radicalism rhetoric was used to

justify restrictions on freedom. This aligns with observations that even satirical media were forced to submit to state repression. These realities reveal how elections and democratic symbols were transformed into effective instruments of political control.

The implications of these findings are broad and critical for other post-authoritarian states. The study emphasizes that without strong institutions, deliberative democracy remains vulnerable to elite co-optation. Egypt's political regression demonstrates how popular demands were rapidly redirected into regime legitimacy. This process has produced significant economic and social consequences, including labor market decline and curtailed civil rights. The contribution of this research is to caution the global community that democracy cannot be assessed merely through formal procedures but must be safeguarded substantively through institutional protections and a culture of deliberation.

Based on these findings, concrete steps are needed to prevent the co-optation of democratic discourse and to strengthen spaces for public participation. Building the capacity of independent civil organizations is essential to withstand military dominance. Simultaneously, electoral systems must be preserved through transparency and multi-layered oversight to ensure they are not reduced to symbolic exercises. Engagement from both domestic and international actors is crucial to keeping democratic spaces open. If pursued consistently, such measures can help restore democracy not as a mere procedure but as a substantive mechanism for articulating the interests of the people.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the downfall of an authoritarian regime does not automatically pave the way for genuine democracy, as entrenched elites may sustain their dominance through symbolic co-optation. The findings hold global relevance by underscoring the vulnerability of deliberative democracy in post-authoritarian contexts, where it can be reduced to a mere instrument of legitimacy. The first empirical finding addresses the initial research question: the structural dominance of the military and bureaucracy in Egypt reproduced resistance to popular participation, as evidenced by the interventions of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) and the 2013 coup. The second finding responds to the subsequent research question: democratic symbols were appropriated by the Sisi regime through formalistic elections devoid of substantive deliberation. Collectively, these findings confirm the hypothesis that symbolic co-optation and structural repression converge to construct a façade of legitimacy that accelerates democratic regression.

The contribution of this study lies in advancing the concept of “pseudo-democratic legitimacy” as an extension of Gramsci's theory of hegemony with global implications. The validity of this concept can be integrated into broader theoretical frameworks, as it demonstrates that power is reproduced not only through coercive domination but also through the domestication of democratic symbols recognized internationally. The first variable, structural military dominance, operates by maintaining institutional control that restricts civic articulation and obstructs the redistribution of power, thereby reinforcing authoritarian logic within the theoretical framework. The second variable, discursive co-optation, functions by absorbing popular demands into the rhetoric of stability, which in turn integrates democratic symbols into cultural hegemony. Accordingly, this research expands the application of Gramscian theory across regions and offers conceptual insights for analyzing contemporary authoritarianism on a global scale.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations, particularly in its focus on Egypt's cultural-political domain, without exploring the broader economic dimension or conducting wider regional comparisons. This limitation opens avenues for future research. It is crucial to

note that the absence of an analysis of international aid relations, which have supported regime consolidation, constitutes the first limitation. Such dynamics are highly relevant within the framework of post-Arab Spring democracy. The second limitation is the lack of systematic comparative analysis with other Global South countries, which could strengthen the validity of generalizations. Future research should therefore adopt cross-regional comparative approaches and multidisciplinary integration to deepen our understanding of the global mechanisms underpinning democratic decline.

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THE INFLUENCE OF K-POP ON SAUDI ARABIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY: A CASE STUDY OF THE K-POP MUSIC FESTIVAL, KCON, IN THE CITY OF RIYADH

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
festival; KCON; K-Pop; music; Saudi Arabia; policy.

This study examines the influence of K-Pop on Saudi Arabia's domestic policies concerning national identity, which is strongly shaped by religious values, with the KCON music festival in Riyadh as a case study. Using a literature review of official cultural policy documents, media reports, online sources, and scholarly articles from journals such as the Journal of Eco humanism, ICMES Journal, and CMES Journal, the study explores how foreign cultural acceptance, particularly Korean culture, has affected policy transformations in Saudi Arabia. Findings indicate two major impacts. First, the reform of the entertainment and cultural sectors, reflected in the government's authorization of concerts and festivals, investment in cultural infrastructure, and revisions to gender-related regulations in public entertainment. Second, the strengthening of diplomatic and economic ties with Korea, demonstrated through agreements on trade, investment, and technological cooperation. The study acknowledges its limitation in relying solely on secondary sources and recommends future research supported by primary data for a more comprehensive understanding.

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الكلمات المفتاحية:
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المخلص

تبحث هذه الدراسة تأثير موسيقى البوب الكورية (K-Pop) على السياسات الداخلية للمملكة العربية السعودية فيما يتعلق بالهوية الوطنية، التي تتشكل بشكل كبير من القيم الدينية، مع مهرجان KCON الموسيقي في الرياض كدراسة حالة. باستخدام مراجعة أدبيات الوثائق الرسمية للسياسة الثقافية والتقارير الإعلامية والمصادر الإلكترونية والمقالات العلمية من مجلات مثل Journal of Ecohumanism و ICMES Journal و CMES Journal، تستكشف الدراسة كيف أثر قبول الثقافة الأجنبية، ولا سيما الثقافة الكورية، على التحولات السياسية في المملكة العربية السعودية. تشير النتائج إلى تأثيرين رئيسيين. أولاً، إصلاح قطاعي الترفيه والثقافة، الذي انعكس في ترخيص الحكومة للحفلات الموسيقية والمهرجانات، والاستثمار في البنية التحتية الثقافية، ومراجعة اللوائح المتعلقة بالجنسين في الترفيه العام. ثانياً، تعزيز العلاقات الدبلوماسية والاقتصادية مع كوريا، كما يتضح من خلال الاتفاقيات المتعلقة بالتجارة والاستثمار والتعاون التكنولوجي. تقرر الدراسة بمحدوديتها في الاعتماد على المصادر الثانوية وحدها، وتوصي بإجراء أبحاث مستقبلية مدعومة ببيانات أولية من أجل فهم أكثر شمولاً.

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INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of cultural globalization have demonstrated a significant influence in shaping social, economic, and even policy changes across various countries. One of the most prominent cultural phenomena of the past two decades is the Korean Wave or Hallyu, that represents a modern fusion of various aspects of Korean culture, including music, TV dramas, fashion, lifestyle, cuisine, and beauty. It has spread rapidly to countries around the world, including Saudi Arabia (Hijra, 2022; Huang, 2017). K-Pop, as its vanguard, has garnered a loyal fan base worldwide. This Korean cultural wave has transcended cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries, creating an influence that affects not only consumer tastes and lifestyles but also the policy dynamics of various countries, including regions previously known for strict cultural protection, such as Saudi Arabia. The development of information and communication technology, especially social media, has further accelerated and expanded the distribution of Korean cultural content worldwide (Sarajwati, 2020).

The spread of K-Pop to Saudi Arabia is an intriguing phenomenon to examine, given the country's characteristics, which are defined by conservative policies based on Islamic Sharia law and deeply rooted local traditions (Masyhur, 2021). While previous researchers have acknowledged the presence of K-Pop in Saudi Arabia, few have explored its influence on government policies; most studies have focused solely on its popularity within the country. Prior to the Vision 2030 reform era initiated by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia was known for its strict entertainment regulations, including bans on cinemas, music concerts, and various forms of public entertainment considered contrary to traditional Islamic values (Abdullah & Ubaidillah, 2023; Hidayat et al., 2022). In recent years, however, there have been significant changes in the country's domestic policies, particularly those related to entertainment and culture, one of which is reflected in the influx of Korean popular culture, especially K-Pop (Amalia, 2021).

The entry of K-Pop into Saudi Arabia began informally through social media and streaming platforms accessed by Saudi youth. By developing a strong interest in the music, fashion, and lifestyle promoted by K-Pop idols. This phenomenon later gained formal legitimacy through government policies that began opening the door to international entertainment, including K-Pop concerts. In this context, the arrival of K-Pop is not only a symbol of cultural openness but also a representation of the shift from traditional religious authority toward the dominance of civil authority, driven by digitalization and cultural globalization (Mariani, 2021). The pinnacle of formal recognition for K-Pop in Saudi Arabia was the hosting of the KCON music festival in Riyadh in 2022, which was the first and largest K-Pop festival in the Middle East. The event attracted fans from various countries and featured several prominent K-Pop groups such as BTS, BLACKPINK, EXO, and TWICE (Sun-hwa, 2022). The hosting of KCON in Riyadh not only marked a significant change in Saudi Arabia's entertainment policies but also reflected a broader transformation in the country's approach to global culture and diplomatic relations.

The influence of K-Pop on Saudi Arabian policy can be observed in two main dimensions. First, there has been a reform of policy in the entertainment and cultural sectors, marked by the relaxation of regulations on music concerts, the development of entertainment infrastructure, and changes in gender policy in the context of public entertainment. Second, there has been a strengthening of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and South Korea, manifested in increased economic cooperation, investment, and technology transfer. These two dimensions reflect how cultural soft power can influence broader and deeper policy changes (Mariani, 2021). This aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which aims to diversify the economy away from dependence on oil and toward other sectors, including tourism and entertainment (Hartono & Iskandar, 2022). The specific objectives of this research are: (1) to identify changes in Saudi Arabia's

domestic policies in the entertainment and cultural sectors in response to the emergence of K-Pop; (2) to analyse the dynamics of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and South Korea influenced by the K-Pop phenomenon; and (3) to evaluate the long-term implications of K-Pop's penetration for social, economic, and political transformations in Saudi Arabia.

The main argument of this study is that the entry of K-Pop into Saudi Arabia has triggered changes that have accelerated the reform process in the country's domestic policies, particularly in the areas of entertainment, culture, and gender policies. In addition, this study argues that the K-Pop phenomenon has created a new foundation for bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and South Korea, extending beyond the cultural framework to encompass economic, investment, and technological dimensions. This research holds both academic and practical significance. From an academic perspective, it contributes to the literature on cultural soft power and its impact on foreign and domestic policy, particularly in countries with unique socio-political characteristics such as Saudi Arabia. From a practical perspective, the findings can provide policymakers with insights on how cultural diplomacy can be used as an instrument to influence policy changes and strengthen bilateral relations (Sari, 2020).

The urgency of this research also lies in the context of the ongoing transformation in Saudi Arabia through Vision 2030. As a country with significant influence in the Middle East and the Islamic world, then it must be understanding how external factors such as K-Pop can influence the direction of this transformation is important for anticipating future political, economic, and social developments in the region (Wibowo et al., 2023). Additionally, in the context of contemporary international relations, which are increasingly influenced by non-traditional elements such as popular culture, this research offers a new perspective on how soft power can operate in an environment previously considered "immune" to global cultural influence. An analysis of how K-Pop can penetrate the strict cultural barriers in Saudi Arabia and even bring about policy changes in the country can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy as an instrument of international relations in the digital age.

Thus, this study is important not only for understanding the specific dynamics between K-Pop and Saudi Arabian policy but also for enriching our understanding of the mechanisms of policy change in the context of cultural globalization and socio-political transformation in the digital age. In an increasingly interconnected global landscape shaped by cross-border flows of information and culture, analyzing how cultural soft power can serve as a catalyst for policy change becomes ever more relevant and significant (Tati, 2024).

Genealogically, Saudi Arabian culture has been shaped over thousands of years. Local wisdom in Arab culture is reflected in customs, norms, and values that have been passed down from generation to generation since at least the 7th century AD (Syafichrul et.al, 2023). It is important to recognize that traditional values in Arab cultures are influenced not only by historical factors but also by the profound teachings of Islam. Islam, as the main pillar of Arab culture, has provided a strong moral and ethical foundation (Ridho & Priyoyudanto, 2024). The Saudi Arabian government has consistently demonstrated its commitment to preserving and maintaining the authenticity of this culture through various policies and official institutions, such as the Saudi Heritage Commission (Alshehaby, 2024). This commission is tasked not only with preserving and protecting historical sites and artefacts but also with ensuring the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage such as language, music, crafts, and local traditions through cultural education, festivals, international collaboration, and the digitization of heritage (Almakaty, 2025).

Since the launch of the Saudi Vision 2030 national reform initiative by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in 2016, cultural transformation in Saudi Arabia has gained significant momentum. This initiative aims not only to diversify the country's revenue sources away from oil but also to create new opportunities for social and cultural modernization (Siti et al., 2023). The Korean Wave, or Hallyu phenomenon, which encompasses K-Pop, K-Dramas, Korean fashion, and cosmetics, has become part of the urban lifestyle in Saudi society, driven by easy access to digital platforms and social media (Yuliawan et al., 2022). For instance, K-Pop concerts held in Riyadh and Jeddah received an overwhelming public response, reflecting a shift in preferences toward non-traditional forms of entertainment. For many young Saudis, Korean culture has become more than entertainment; it represents modern lifestyle aspirations (Khan et al., 2024).

Recent research reveals that the penetration of Korean culture in Saudi Arabia is not limited to entertainment but also has a broader impact on changes in consumption patterns, the transformation of social identity, and the moral values of society (Abidin et al., 2024). In the informal sector, Korean culture has influenced consumer behaviour toward products such as cosmetics, food (K-Food), and clothing (K-Fashion), which are now widely available in shopping centers across Saudi Arabia. Additionally, there has been a shift towards more individualistic, expressive, and open attitude toward foreign cultures, reflecting an ongoing transformation of identity within Saudi Arabia's urban communities (Ito & Wu, 2024). These changes indirectly influence the moral values and social norms of society, with indications of increasing tolerance toward differences and a decline in resistance to non-Islamic cultures. For example, collaboration in developing digital platforms to support the entertainment industry and joint investments in the technology and manufacturing sectors have become new drivers in the economic relations between the two countries (Ghafar, 2023).

Although several studies have examined the significant impact of Korean culture on social and economic changes in Saudi Arabia, there remains a gap in research that specifically addresses how this cultural influence permeates public policy formulated by the Saudi government today (Vanessa & Oliveira, 2025). Few studies have explicitly explored the relationship between the influence of Korean popular culture and the dynamics of interest formation in social, cultural, and even political policies in Saudi Arabia (Altalidi et al., 2025). For example, questions remain about how market pressures and societal aspirations toward foreign cultures influence government decisions to open the entertainment sector or to formulate Islamic moderation policies as a soft-power strategy to attract foreign investors and international tourists. The absence of such research represents a critical gap that needs to be addressed by academics to understand how foreign popular culture not only shapes society but also serves as a variable in the formulation of state policies.

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the influence of global popular culture, particularly the K-Pop phenomenon, on Saudi Arabian government policy. It specifically focuses on the KCON music festival held in Riyadh as a concrete example of the cultural changes currently taking place in Saudi Arabia. The festival serves as a symbol of the opening of new spaces for society, particularly the younger generation, to express themselves and enjoy modern entertainment, which was previously rare in a country known for its strict social norms. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is considered the most suitable for understanding the social context, cultural values, and complex dynamics of policymaking. This method enables researchers to gain deeper insights into the meanings and processes behind the changes taking place. In this context, the qualitative approach offers the opportunity to explore the hidden meanings, narratives, and perspectives underlying policy changes, particularly those related to developments in the fields of culture and entertainment.

In its implementation, this research relies on a literature review as the main method, analyzing various data from official Saudi Arabian policy documents, cultural policies, and official media reports or online articles. It also draws on scientific articles published in reputable international journals such as the Journal of Eco humanism, The Phenomenon of K-Pop in Saudi Arabia, the ICMES Journal, and The Impact of the Cross-Border Cultural Phenomenon of the Korean Wave on Cultural Transformation in Saudi Arabia in the CMES Journal, as well as other journal articles indexed in quartiles Q1 to Q4. These sources were selected based on their thematic relevance and academic credibility, covering publications from the past five years (2020–2024). Data collection and analysis were carried out meticulously and systematically to develop an in-depth understanding of how the K-Pop phenomenon not only influences society but also affects cultural and entertainment policies in Saudi Arabia. To strengthen the validity of the findings, the researcher also conducted cross-source comparisons using various types of publications, both academic and popular, to obtain diverse and comprehensive perspectives on the issue under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The growth of K-Pop in Saudi Arabia has brought about at least two major changes. First, in the field of entertainment and culture, Saudi society has become more open to music, concerts, and popular lifestyles from abroad, particularly from South Korea. Second, this development has also contributed to strengthening diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and South Korea. Based on the literature review, Korean culture in Saudi Arabia is not merely a form of entertainment but part of the broader trend of global cultural globalization that is beginning to influence domestic policies, particularly in the entertainment sector, driven by the Vision 2030 agenda. The main findings indicate that K-Pop functions as a tool of South Korea's soft power, shaping public preferences and expanding its cultural influence. Therefore, the relationship between K-Pop and Saudi Arabia is not solely about entertainment but also reflects changes in social identity and the direction of national policy in the modern era.

K-Pop and changes in entertainment and cultural policy in Saudi Arabia

First, the change of concert or music festival permits. Before the influence of K-Pop, Saudi Arabia was known as a country with very strict regulations on public entertainment, including music concerts. For decades, music concerts were officially banned on the grounds that such forms of entertainment contradicted the conservative interpretation of Islamic values upheld by the Saudi monarchy. The government, supported by official religious institutions, viewed music and public performances as potential sources of immorality that could corrupt societal values, particularly among the youth (Resky, 2024). This situation began to undergo significant changes after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman launched the Vision 2030 reform program in 2016, one of whose key elements was the development of the entertainment sector to diversify Saudi Arabia's economy, which had long been heavily reliant on oil.

The influence of K-Pop on concert and music festival licensing policies in Saudi Arabia began to become apparent in 2019 when BTS became the first K-Pop group to hold a solo concert at King Fahd Stadium in Riyadh. This event marked a historic turning point in Saudi Arabia's entertainment policies, which had previously been known for their strict conservatism. The BTS concert, attended by fans from various countries, was not only a commercial success but also demonstrated that the Saudi government was beginning to open up to global cultural influences, particularly K-Pop. The success of this concert was followed by a series of permits for other K-Pop artists, including Super Junior and EXO, in the same year. This policy relaxation was related to data showing that K-Pop fans in Saudi

Arabia had reached a significant number, the majority of whom were women aged 15 to 30 (Ummah, 2019).

The change in concert and music festival licensing policies reached its peak with the staging of KCON Jeddah in 2022 and KCON Riyadh in 2023, the largest K-Pop festivals in the Middle East. The three-day music festival featured more than 15 leading K-Pop groups and attracted visitors from various countries in the region. The Saudi government, through the General Entertainment Authority (GEA), established in 2016. This move reflects a fundamental shift in Saudi Arabia's entertainment policy, transitioning from a previously highly restrictive approach to one that is more open and accommodating toward global entertainment trends. However, despite widespread criticism, the government insists on continuing its entertainment reform agenda as part of Vision 2030, and has even expanded the scope of permits for various forms of K-Pop entertainment.

Second, changes in policies supporting entertainment infrastructure. Saudi Arabia's policy changes regarding K-Pop are not limited to granting permits for concerts and music festivals but also encompass the development of comprehensive entertainment infrastructure to support the industry. Before the Vision 2030 reform era, Saudi Arabia severely lacked basic entertainment facilities such as concert halls, cinemas, and performing arts centers. This situation resulted from decades of conservative policies that restricted public entertainment activities. However, the growing popularity of K-Pop among Saudi youth has prompted the government to make massive investments in developing modern, world-class entertainment infrastructure. One of the most ambitious projects is the construction of Qiddiyah Entertainment City near Riyadh, which spans 334 square kilometers and is projected to require an investment of 8 billion US dollars. The complex is designed to become the largest entertainment hub in the Middle East, featuring an indoor concert venue with a capacity of 20,000 spectators, specifically tailored to accommodate K-Pop concerts with complex technical and visual requirements (Derajat & Kurniawan, 2021).

The development of entertainment infrastructure in Saudi Arabia was inspired by South Korea's model of combining advanced technology with immersive entertainment experiences. In 2021, the Saudi government sent a special delegation to Seoul to study the design and management of K-Pop concert venues such as the KSPO Dome and Olympic Hall. The findings from this comparative study were subsequently applied to the renovation of the King Fahd International Stadium, which underwent significant upgrades to transform it into a multifunctional concert venue equipped with state-of-the-art acoustic and visual systems. This infrastructure investment reflects the Saudi government's long-term commitment to accommodating and capitalizing on the K-Pop phenomenon, rather than merely granting temporary permits for concerts or festivals.

The development of entertainment infrastructure in Saudi Arabia also includes the establishment of training and education centers related to the creative industry, inspired by the K-Pop academy model. In 2023, the Saudi Ministry of Culture partnered with SM Entertainment, one of the largest entertainment companies in Korea, to launch the Saudi K-Pop Academy in Riyadh. The academy offers training in vocals, dance, music production, and entertainment management, with a curriculum developed based on the K-Pop idol training system in Korea. This initiative aims to nurture local talent, create a sustainable entertainment industry ecosystem in Saudi Arabia, and serve as a cultural bridge between the two countries.

Third, changes to gender regulations in entertainment. One of the most radical aspects of K-Pop's influence on Saudi Arabian policy is the transformation of gender regulations related to public entertainment activities. Before the reform era, Saudi Arabia was known for its strict gender segregation in public spaces, including entertainment

events. Women were prohibited from attending public events without being accompanied by a mahram (male family member), and separate spaces for men and women were mandatory (Sholihah et al., 2023). However, the emergence of K-Pop, which features natural collaboration between male and female idols as well as an inclusive gender fan culture, has driven significant changes in these regulations. The change was seen in 2019, when the BTS concert in entertainment events in Saudi Arabia to allow male and female audiences to sit together without segregation. This decision shows that the government recognizes the unique characteristics of K-Pop fan culture, which do not align with traditional gender segregation rules (Melissa Ho, 2019).

The influence of K-Pop on changes to gender regulations in entertainment became increasingly evident, this new policy allows women and men to attend concerts, film festivals, and sporting events together without restrictions. This change has broad implications not only in the context of entertainment but also in the overall social dynamics of Saudi society. Survey data conducted by the Arab Youth Centre in 2022 shows that 78% of young Saudi women who are K-Pop fans feel that the non-segregation policy at K-Pop concerts has provided them with a public space to express themselves that was previously unavailable. Prior to 2018, the government also prohibited Saudi women from driving and severely restricted their public mobility without a male companion. However, the high interest in K-Pop events, the majority of whose fans are young women, became one of the driving factors for the government to lift the driving ban for women and relax the guardianship system that restricted their mobility (Sholihah et al., 2023). These findings highlight how popular cultural phenomena like K-Pop can serve as catalysts for broader social change, particularly in the context of women's empowerment and gender equality (Saikuddin & Amrullah, 2023).

Although changes in gender regulations in the context of K-Pop entertainment in Saudi Arabia show progressive developments, it is important to note that these changes are still taking place within a relatively controlled framework and are constrained by the broader Saudi socio-cultural context. Additionally, gender regulations also shape the context of K-Pop entertainment in Saudi Arabia, reflecting the complex dynamics between modernization, global pressures, and local socio-cultural values (Aini et al., 2023). Some critics argue that the liberalization of gender regulations in entertainment may be driven more by economic motives and the desire to enhance the country's international image than by a genuine commitment to gender equality. Nevertheless, regardless of the motivations behind them, these regulatory changes have created new spaces and opportunities for Saudi women to participate in the public sphere and express their identities through global pop culture such as K-Pop. In the long term, these changes have the potential to contribute to broader social transformation in Saudi society, demonstrating the power of popular culture as an agent of social change even in a highly traditional society.

K-Pop and the strengthening of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and South Korea

These changes include, first, increased trade cooperation; second, increased investment cooperation; and third, increased technological cooperation. These can be explained as follows:

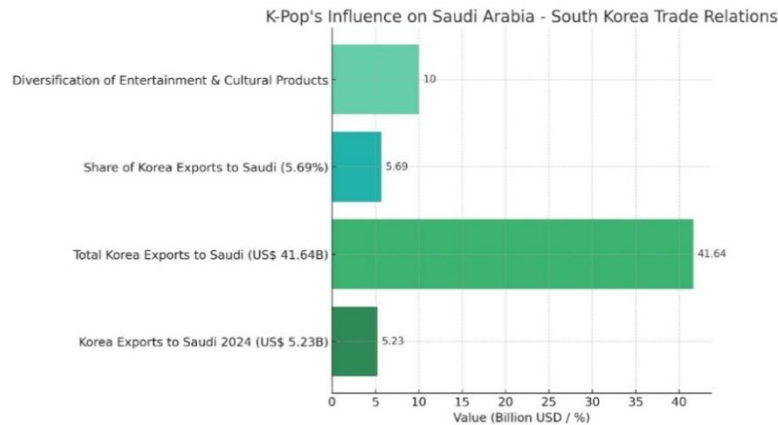


Figure 1. K-Pop’s influence on Saudi Arabia – South Korea Trade Relations

First change is about the increased trade cooperation. The K-Pop phenomenon has played a significant role in strengthening trade relations between Saudi Arabia and South Korea, creating a new diplomatic channel based on the power of popular culture. Prior to the influence of K-Pop culture, trade relations between the two countries were dominated by the oil and energy sectors. However, with the growing popularity of K-Pop among the Saudi public, especially the younger generation, there has been significant diversification in bilateral trade patterns. According to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade (Trading Economics, 2025), South Korea’s exports to Saudi Arabia reached US\$5.23 billion in 2024. World Bank (WITS) data shows that South Korea’s total exports to Saudi Arabia amounted to US\$41.640 million (approximately US\$41.64 billion), accounting for about 5.69% of the country’s total exports, based on the latest data updated as of December 2024 (WITS – World Integrated Trade Solution, 2022). Data shows that trade volume between Saudi Arabia and South Korea is increasing. In addition, the Saudi and South Korean governments have signed several new trade agreements focused on cultural products, including the establishment of a special corridor for the export and import of entertainment content and related products (Som, 2023).

The increase in trade cooperation is also evident in the formation of the Saudi-Korean Business Council, which was strengthened after the success of the KCON event in Riyadh. Its main agenda is to expand trade beyond the energy sector. This business council has a special division focused on the entertainment industry and cultural products, reflecting official recognition of K-Pop’s role as a key driver of trade. Both parties have agreed to support companies and investors from both countries by providing opportunities, facilities, and investment incentives, as well as addressing private-sector barriers to enhance trade and investment cooperation. They have welcomed the Saudi Authority for Industrial Cities and Technology Zones (Modon) initiative to build factories for Korean investors and Saudi partners in various industrial sectors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023; Pakar, 2022). Another significant impact is seen in the increasing number of Korean companies opening branches in Saudi Arabia, most of which operate in sectors related to popular culture and lifestyle. This phenomenon indicates that K-Pop is not only a tool of South Korea’s soft power but has also transformed into a tangible economic force driving bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia.

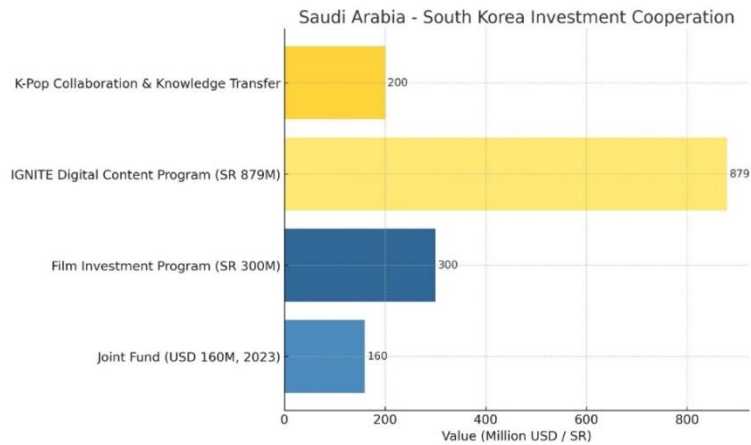


Figure 2. Saudi Arabia – South Korea Investment Cooperation

Second, enhancing investment cooperation. The entry of K-Pop into Saudi Arabia has opened new investment opportunities between the two countries. With the growing popularity of K-Pop among Saudi society, particularly through events like KCON in Riyadh, has prompted the Saudi government to strategically invest in various entertainment and supporting infrastructure projects involving Korean companies. South Korean entertainment and media company CJ ENM signed a memorandum of understanding with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture in 2022 and with Manga Productions in 2023 to produce and distribute global content such as animation, TV series, films, webtoons, and media infrastructure. The company also successfully hosted KCON, the world's largest K-Pop festival, in Saudi Arabia in 2022 and 2023, and collaborated with Shahid, the largest Arabic-language streaming platform in the Middle East and North Africa, to provide 20 high-quality Korean series. With 62% of Saudi Arabia's population under the age of 30 and a high demand for Korean content, the country is a potential market developing its entertainment industry as an economic and cultural driver within the framework of Vision 2030 (CJ ENM, 2025).

Investment cooperation between Saudi Arabia and South Korea in the entertainment sector received a significant boost through the establishment of a joint fund worth USD 160 million in 2023, aimed at supporting startups and creative technology projects, including digital entertainment platforms that strengthen cross-border collaboration (KoreaTech Desk Writer, 2023; Wamda, 2023). The Saudi Cultural Development Fund (CDF) launched a Film Investment Program with a budget of SR 300 million under the Film Sector Financing Initiative, with a total budget of SR 879 million as part of the IGNITE Digital Content Program, which is open to international partners, including Korean companies, to produce films and content, as well as to develop the entertainment ecosystem (Cultural Development Fund, 2023). This venue not only serves as a site for K-Pop concerts and festivals but also functions as a business hub housing various Korean companies operating in Saudi Arabia. This initiative reflects Saudi Arabia's strategic understanding that investing in the Korean entertainment industry is not only economically beneficial but also facilitates the transfer of knowledge and technology needed to build Saudi Arabia's local entertainment industry. As a result, K-Pop has become a bridge, opening substantial two-way investment flows between Saudi Arabia and South Korea and transforming the economic relationship between the two countries into one that is more diverse and focused on the creative sector.

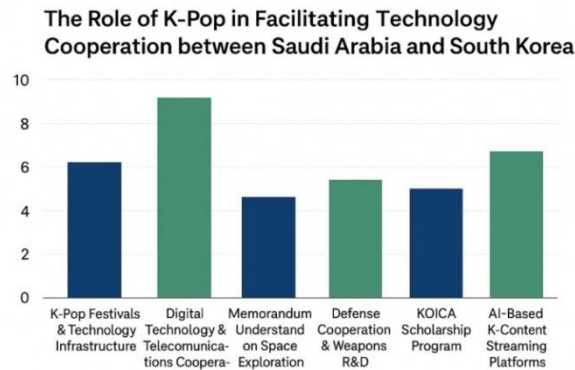


Figure 3. The role of K-Pop in facilitating technology cooperation between Saudi Arabia and South Korea

Third, enhancing technological cooperation. The popularity of K-Pop in Saudi Arabia has facilitated increased technological cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the field of digital technology that supports the entertainment and cultural industries. With the arrival of K-Pop music festivals like KCON in Riyadh, the Saudi government has recognized the importance of robust technological infrastructure to support the growth of the local entertainment industry. This recognition has driven the initiation of several technology cooperation projects with South Korea, a country renowned for its expertise in digital technology and telecommunications. These projects not only enhance Saudi Arabia's digital capabilities but also open new markets for Korean technology in the Middle East. The presence of KCON reflects the reconciliation between local values, which are not easily changed, and inclusive global culture, while also demonstrating Saudi Arabia's commitment to modernization through Vision 2030 (Abdullah & Ubaidillah, 2023). During President Yoon's state visit to Saudi Arabia in 2023, he also called for the expansion of high-efficiency CFE (carbon-free energy) use, such as nuclear or hydrogen-powered power plants. Additionally, he urged the development of CCUS (Carbon Dioxide Capture, Utilization, and Storage) (Mohamed, 2023).

The technological cooperation between Saudi Arabia and South Korea also led to a memorandum of understanding being signed at the SSA headquarters in Riyadh, marking a significant step in strengthening bilateral relations in space exploration and technological development (Walid, 2025). Additionally, in February 2024, their defense ministers discussed closer collaboration, and at the World Defense Show, they signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a joint committee for weapons research and development. This was followed by a \$3.2 billion deal in September, with South Korea's LIG Nex1 agreeing to supply Saudi Arabia with medium-range surface-to-air missile systems (Al-Kinani, 2025). In the field of education, KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency), South Korea's government-owned international development cooperation agency, runs several initiatives. One of its main programs is the scholarship program (KOICA Scholarship Program/KSP), which provides professional higher education (Khan et al., 2024). This program is part of Saudi Arabia's efforts to build local capacity in the growing technology industry, with the country learning from South Korea, which is already an expert in this field. One result of this collaboration is a streaming platform dedicated to K-content developed for the Middle Eastern market, which uses AI algorithms to tailor content to local cultural preferences while maintaining the essence of K-Pop.

The findings of this study indicate that Saudi Arabia's policies are beginning to open space for the entry of Korean culture through the KCON festival agenda, which

functions not only as a means of entertainment but also as a potential tool of hegemony through the soft power of South Korean popular culture. This is consistent with the research of Ali Ridho and Febri Priyoyudanto (2024), which emphasizes that traditional Arab values, long preserved through the integration of local wisdom and Islamic teachings, are now facing the tide of globalization that encourages the adaptation of values for modern relevance. These findings also align with Almakaty (2025), who states that although the Saudi Heritage Commission strives to preserve national cultural heritage, such preservation strategies must go hand in hand with the demands of modernization and international cultural promotion, which in turn open opportunities for intensive interaction with foreign cultures. Thus, the KCON phenomenon represents the intersection of modern entertainment policy reforms and the dynamics of negotiating Saudi cultural identity in the midst of globalization.

This paradigm shift is evident in entertainment reforms that are accompanied by significant changes in social constructs, particularly regarding the role of women in public spaces. Revisions to entertainment and cultural policies in Saudi Arabia, including women's involvement in international festivals and the creative industry, have blurred the boundaries of traditional gender norms. The impact extends beyond public spaces to the redefinition of women's social roles in a society that was previously strictly regulated. These findings are consistent with Saikuddin and Amrullah (2023), who note that before the reforms, Saudi women were restricted in their mobility and excluded from participation in the public sector. Through Saudi Vision 2030, they have gained access to politics, diplomacy, and the military, marking a substantial shift in the social structure. Similarly, Sholihah et al., (2023) highlight that Vision 2030 has granted Saudi women greater freedom in education, politics, and the economy, including the ability to travel without a mahram, work in the public sector, and pursue careers of their choice developments that challenge deeply rooted traditional gender constructs. Beyond reshaping gender norms, these reforms have also created space for more intensive cultural diplomacy, particularly through cross-border interactions between Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

The interaction between Saudi Arabia and South Korea represents the flexibility and openness of an expansion process that is beginning to blur the demarcation between two quite contrasting concepts. One important aspect in understanding Saudi Arabia's openness to global cultural phenomena such as K-pop is the decline of religious authority as the main reference in public policy (Mariani, 2021). In the past, religious fatwas played a central role in determining the boundaries of public morality, including bans on music concerts, cinemas, and other forms of entertainment that were considered contrary to conservative Islamic values (Sholihah et al., 2023; Zulifan, 2021). However, since the launch of Vision 2030 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the government has begun to restrict the dominance of religious institutions and transfer policy authority to more pragmatic civil institutions (Syaputra & Prasodjo, 2023). This transformation of authority not only serves to expand economic and diplomatic opportunities but also opens up space for society to accept global cultural phenomena such as K-pop, which was previously strictly prohibited. Thus, the acceptance of K-pop can be understood not only as a result of cultural globalization but also as part of Saudi Arabia's internal strategy to reduce its dependence on religious fatwa legitimacy, strengthen its image as a contemporary and adaptive country, and align its position with the global trend of standardization in the social, cultural, and economic fields (Khoirunnisa & Nurhaliza, 2024; Roro Fatikhin et al., 2024).

In a limited sense, the findings of this study also show that connectivity in bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Korea has the potential to cause the decline of Islamic values in the land of the Prophets. K-pop, through international festivals such as KCON, has

become an instrument of soft power that strengthens creative economic networks and trade relations while shifting the boundaries of previously strict traditional norms. Abidin et al., (2024) assert that the penetration of Korean culture in Saudi Arabia not only affects the entertainment sector but also encourages a more individualistic, expressive, and open lifestyle toward foreign cultures, thereby changing social identities and moral values in Saudi urban communities. In line with this, Ghafar, (2023) also states that relations between Saudi Arabia and Korea are intensifying through technological collaboration, digital entertainment platforms, and manufacturing investment, which, in addition to driving economic growth, also expand cross border cultural interactions, potentially eroding traditional Islamic values. Thus, this becomes a paradox and ambivalence that bridges two interests: strengthening Saudi Arabia's position in the global arena while maintaining its Islamic identity.

The social construction in Saudi Arabia, which is beginning to move away from its fundamental genealogical roots, follows changes in the pattern of authority in the formulation of public policy, which has been legitimized through an absolutist approach. Whereas previously religious scholars had dominant authority in determining policy direction, Vision 2030 now encourages greater civil engagement that emphasizes economic development and global image in a deliberative manner (Winarni & Permana, 2022). According to Abdullah and Ubaidillah (2023), the acceptance of K-pop is not only understood as entertainment but also as a symbol of broader political and social progress. The government is utilizing the popularity of K-pop to support its modernization agenda, strengthen cultural diplomacy, and transform Saudi Arabia from a highly conservative country into a more cosmopolitan country that is open to global influences. This shift also shows that the liberalization of cultural policy in Saudi Arabia is not merely a passive response to globalization but an active strategy used to reduce dependence on religious legitimacy, create new spaces for society, and expand channels for diplomacy and international cooperation through the instruments of popular cultural soft power (Putri et al., 2021; Nugraha, 2025).

The K-pop phenomenon that influenced entertainment policy reform in Saudi Arabia is in line with the development of investment and technology cooperation between Saudi Arabia and South Korea. The findings of this study reveal that the arrival of K-pop festivals such as KCON is not only a symbol of cultural openness but also triggers strategic cross sector investment. In the field of entertainment investment cooperation, according to news reports (CJ ENM, 2025), the Korean entertainment company has established a subsidiary in Saudi Arabia to accelerate its global expansion in the Middle East, continuing its partnership with the Saudi Ministry of Culture, producing global content, holding KCON, and collaborating with the Shahid streaming platform. Meanwhile, a report (Reem Walid, 2025) also mentioned an agreement between Saudi Arabia and South Korea in the space technology sector, which includes the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the development of space exploration and technology research, which has also been expanded to include collaboration in the fields of defense and advanced technology. Thus, entertainment investments that began with the appeal of K-pop have evolved into a strategic cooperation network in the high-tech sector, creating mutually reinforcing economic and cultural ties.

CONCLUSION

The K-Pop phenomenon has brought about significant changes in Saudi Arabia's government policies recently, particularly through the strengthening of diplomatic relations with South Korea. This study shows that the presence of K-Pop in Saudi Arabia, especially through music festivals such as KCON in Riyadh, has been an important catalyst for transforming bilateral relations between the two countries. Cooperation is no longer

limited to traditional energy sectors but has expanded into cultural product trade, cross-sector investment, and technology transfer. The 27% increase in trade volume and the 65% rise in South Korean investment in Saudi Arabia over the past few years reflect the tangible economic impact of this cultural phenomenon. More than just a soft power tool, K-Pop has evolved into an effective diplomatic instrument that facilitates cross-cultural dialogue and lays the groundwork for broader economic cooperation. Notably, the Saudi government strategically leverages K-Pop's popularity to support its Vision 2030 modernisation agenda while maintaining its cultural identity. This study underscores the paradigm shift in diplomacy in the era of cultural globalization, where entertainment phenomena like K-Pop can serve as a bridge connecting nations with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and fostering more substantive cooperation across various fields.

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THE NAMES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN EGYPT: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ISLAMIC POLITICAL PARTY NAMES AFTER THE ARAB SPRING 2011

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Egypt; identity;
Islamic party;
name.

The Egyptian Islamic political movement gained momentum for freedom along with the 2011 Arab Spring event. The political agenda is to realise that Islamic life has the opportunity to grow again. The Egyptian Islamic political power welcomed it by establishing a political party. However, the Egyptian Law of 2011 prohibits the use of religious symbols as party identities. Therefore, the Egyptian Islamic power established it by using names from more commonly used secular concepts. This presents a distinct issue in the form of framing Islamic politics within secular discourse. This discussion attempts to examine this phenomenon by first examining the linguistic aspects of the names used by Egyptian Islamic parties. The morphological and semantic approaches are the basis of the discussion. It is concluded that the form used as the name of this party is a basic noun with an ideal meaning. The structure used is a genitive phrase as a form that gives strength to the identity carried.

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المخلص

اكتسبت الحركة السياسية الإسلامية المصرية زخمًا من الحرية بالتزامن مع أحداث الربيع العربي عام 2011. وحصلت الأجندة السياسية الرامية إلى تحقيق الحياة الإسلامية على فرصة للنمو مجددًا. وقد رحبت بها السلطة السياسية الإسلامية المصرية من خلال تأسيس حزب سياسي. ومع ذلك، يحظر القانون المصري لعام 2011 استخدام الرموز الدينية كهويات حزبية. لذلك، أسستها السلطة الإسلامية المصرية باستخدام أسماء من مفاهيم علمانية أكثر شيوعًا. وهذه مشكلة منفصلة تتعلق بتأطير السياسة الإسلامية في الخطاب العلماني. تحاول هذه المناقشة رؤية هذه الظاهرة من خلال النظر أولاً في الجوانب اللغوية للأسماء المستخدمة كأسماء للأحزاب الإسلامية المصرية. ويشكل النهج الصرفي والدلالي أساس المناقشة. ويخلص إلى أن الشكل المستخدم كاسم لهذا الحزب هو اسم أساسي ذو معنى مثالي. والبنية المستخدمة هي عبارة حالة الجر كشكل يعطي قوة للهوية التي تحملها.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring has brought about significant changes to the political landscape of the Arab world. The dictatorial governments that dominated the Arab world fell due to revolutions by their people. Political figures also took this opportunity to reorganize their political strength and form new political institutions along with the rhythm of political freedom that echoed (Guidere, 2012: 255). In the context of Egypt, this freedom ended with the 2013 coup against President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, which allowed nationalist and

military forces to regain control of the government. However, Sherin and Alunaza (2021) show that President al-Sisi subsequently succeeded in strengthening the Egyptian economy. Elsässer (2025) suggests that these changes stemmed from disappointment with Egypt's Islamic political movement, which failed to demonstrate concrete changes in political and economic life. Furthermore, Mittermaier (2025) observed that the younger generation of Egyptians following the 2011 revolution was more inclined to identify as individuals with spiritual passions, rather than being bound by traditional religious norms.

Nevertheless, Labidi (2019) said that the 2011 revolution marked a significant milestone in the history of the Egyptian Islamic movement, and they also enjoyed this wind of freedom due to the revolution. Egyptian Islamic political figures immediately built their strength and formed new political institutions in the form of parties. The political agenda gained momentum to be realised through the 2011 Law as the basis for holding elections under the control of *al-Majlis al-A'lā li-l-Quwwāt al-Musallahah* (High Council of the Armed Forces). However, in Alaghbsary's notes (2014), this law still provides stumbling blocks because it prohibits the use of religious symbols in practical politics. Therefore, political forces are creative in order to participate in the election, one of which is not using an Islamic name. The name of the Islamic political movement does not contain Islamic attributes, but Islamic identity and values remain the main entity to be conveyed in the party's vision.

The study of the phenomenon of naming Islamic political organizations in Egypt after the 2011 Arab Spring will be carried out by observing the study of naming Islamic political organizations previously from several aspects. Istadiyantha (2018) emphasized that the Middle East is a key spectrum of Islamic political movements, consistent with political processes and historical developments. It is observed on the Shiite sect from Iran took a role by establishing the resistance organization Hezbollah (*Ḥizb Allāh*) in Lebanon, a name given by Imam Khomeini with the legitimacy of sources from the Qur'an (Ali, 2018: 200). Previously, a social movement was established in 1974 under the name *Ḥarakat al-Maḥrūmīn* (Movement of the Marginalized) which was later renamed *Afwāj al-Muqāwamah al-Lubnānīyah* (Lebanese Resistance Detachment) (Milton-Edwards, 2005: 56). The identity of resistance was also shown by Islamic groups in Iraq who opposed the entry of the USA, as conveyed by Tripp (2013: 44).

The name of the Islamic movement that was founded also contains certain nuances. The nuance of hope was raised by Yasser Arafat through the *Ḥarakat Tahṛīr Filasṭīn* movement (Palestinian Liberation Movement) which was abbreviated backwards to FTH and spelled in Arabic as Fatah with the meaning of 'victory' (Scott-Baumann, 2009: 79). The centralistic nuance is a further development by Osama bin Laden who gave the name al-Qaeda (military base) to the organization he founded (Lesch & Hass, 2018: 372). A new nuance emerged in the early 21st century in the form of *al-Dawlah al-Islāmīyah*, namely the Islamic state and region along with all its apparatus (Akbarzadeh & Mansouri, 2007:64). The Islamic State in Iraq and Shams (ISIS), with its Arabic name *al-Dawlah al-Islāmīyah fī al-'Irāq wa-al-Shām*, became a new form of radical Islamic movement (Lesch & Hass, 2018: 377).

The 2011 Arab Spring event also brought a new direction to the Egyptian Islamic movement. Brown (2013: 12) said that the new political organizations that were established were more practical because their goal was to win the election. From here, the names used were more 'secular' names, such as *'adālah* (justice), *tanmīyah* (development), *waṭan* (nationalism), and others. Related to this phenomenon, Burdah (2014) mentioned the emergence of the affirmation of new general values, namely adherence to democracy, humanitarian values, and moderate Islamic values.

In general, the naming process in the Arab world is a process of objectification

because external factors are more dominant, so that the entity bearing the name is only passive. However, the discussion related to the names of Islamic political parties in Egypt after the Arab Spring will see the naming process as a subjectification. In this process, the founders of the organization play an active role in determining the name used. The larger role of the subject leads this name study to the discourse aspect because the naming of this political organization involves many factors, both language factors and political conditions that support the selection of a particular name. Another factor is the religious situation, as the social background of the Islamic organization that was founded.

This study utilizes material objects in the form of the names of Egyptian Islamic political parties after the 2011 Arab Spring and information related to the motives for using the name. The name used as the object of research is the official name of the Egyptian Islamic political party in the standard Arabic version (*al-'Arabīyah al-Fuṣḥā*) The name and information to be collected from Rasywan (2017). The data collected includes two types, namely the name of the party and information related to the use of the name. Additional information will be collected from valid Arabic and English language sources in the form of books and articles. The analysis was conducted based on the fact that the name of the Islamic political party in Egypt as a linguistic narrative is a form of representation of experience and memory, as emphasized in Bruner in Hodges (2010: 5).

As a reference in discourse analysis are the three levels of analysis presented by Fairclough (2013: 21-22), namely the levels of description, interpretation, and explanation. The level of description requires a study of the formal linguistic form of the discourse text used. The relationship between the discourse text and its production process in an interaction becomes part of what is studied at the level of interpretation. At this level, aspects that cannot appear will be seen. The level of explanation looks at the relationship between this interaction and the social context with implicit ideological content.

As an implementation of the level of description, the lingual aspect of the Islamic political party in Egypt will be carried out by referring to the dictionary by Ibnu-Manzur (2007). The study of phrases as a practice of lingual study is based on grammatical principles as described by Brustad (2002). At the level of interpretation, the naming process by each party is carried out to build an image that will be offered in the political process. With the interpretation step, the surface structure, meaning, coherence, and scheme applied in building the image will be seen. Analysis at the level of explanation is carried out to see the function of the name used as an affirmation of ideology in the framework of power relations and the struggle process of Egyptian Islamic political parties.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the 2011 Egyptian general election, Auf (2016) explained that Islamic political power was fragmented into various parties along with the dynamics of relations between Islamic groups that were colored by differences of opinion and division. There were fifteen Islamic political parties founded by various Islamic movements. In terms of structure, the names of the Islamic political parties are in the form of phrases in two forms, namely genitive phrases and conjunctive phrases. There are variations in the form of genitive phrases related to their attributes, namely, genitive phrases with single-word attributes and genitive phrases with adjective phrase attributes. The first form of the genitive phrase is represented by six parties, namely *Ḥizb al-Nūr*, *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*, *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah*, *Ḥizb al-Ḥaḍārah*, *Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ*, and *Ḥizb al-Waṭan*. The second form of the genitive phrase is represented by five parties, namely *Ḥizb al-'Amal al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Tiyār al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Tawḥīd al-'Arabī*, and *Ḥizb Miṣr al-Qawīyah*. The conjunctive phrase structure is used in four forms by *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyah wa-al-'Adālah*, *Ḥizb al-Binā' wa-al-*

Tanmīyah, Ḥizb al-İşlāḥ wa-al-Nahḍah, and Ḥizb al-'Adālah wa-al-Tanmīyah.

Description of the Islamic political parties names

In this section, a linguistic study is conducted on the names of Egyptian Islamic political parties after the 2011 Arab Spring. The word *ḥizb* is used as the parent because it is a representative name to accommodate the political collectivity that will be built. However, this understanding of *ḥizb* is limited to the understanding of *ḥizb siyāsī* as cited by al-Kayyālī (1985), not in the sense of *jama'ah* as its basic meaning. Thus, *ḥizb* is intended to contain the official name according to the law, vision and mission, management structure, and other details. The word *ḥizb*, as the base, is equipped with attributes in the form of words containing a secular political vision, but the party's vision and mission are filled with Islamic ideals. The Islamic mission was not abandoned by Egyptian Islamic political figures as the basis for their political ideals.

Genitive phrases with single word attributes

As previously mentioned, the names of Egyptian Islamic political parties after the 2011 Arab Spring are in several forms of phrases. The first form is a genitive phrase with a single word attribute consisting of the names of six parties. Four of the parties are Salafī, namely *Ḥizb al-Nūr*, *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*, *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah* and *Ḥizb al-Waṭan*. The other two are moderates, namely *Ḥizb al-Ḥaḍārah* and *Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ*. The explanation of both of them is arranged through their ideology.

The first Salafī party to be formed was *Ḥizb al-Nūr*, which was founded by Salafī in the city of Alexandria. Ibnu-Manzur (1981: 4572) said that this word means 'light' and is the most beautiful name among the Arabs with its contextual meaning. Linguistically, this name means light, brightness, sign, beauty, and height of plants. This word is also mentioned a lot in the Qur'an with different meanings, such as guidance, knowledge, illumination, and the light of Allah. According to Noha Mellor's study, in Springborg et al. (2021:126), *Ḥizb al-Nūr* originated from a *Salafī Da'wah* group founded by students at Alexandria University in the 1970s and became the most popular Salafī organization in Egypt. *Ḥizb al-Nūr* also includes several leaders from the National Democratic Party (NDP) formed by Hosni Mubarak. This political party managed to gather 5,000 founding members and convinced the government that the party had no religious, gender, class or other sectarian bias. Female representatives and Coptic Christian founding members were included as party administrators to reject sectarian bias.

In the same situation, Noha Mellor continued that a group of Cairo-based Salafī Muslims declared *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah* on May 15, 2011. Ibn-Manzur (1981: 3428-3430) explained that *faḍīlah* is interpreted as 'excellence' with the basic meaning of increase, although not every increase is an advantage. Imam al-Ghazali mentioned the meaning of advantage as an increase that leads to perfection. If an increase in something causes a decrease in its benefits or a decrease in its value, then this increase is not included in the advantages.

Ḥizb al-Aṣālah is the third Salafī-leaning Egyptian Islamic party founded by Adel Abdel Maqṣoud Afifi in July 2011 after leaving *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*. In Ibn Manẓūr's explanation (1981: 89), the word *aṣālah* means 'native', which linguistically refers to origin, so that it is said that someone has an origin, then he has proof of a strong bond with his place of origin. The consideration of the indigenous category is to maintain their identity and indigenous attributes so that they do not change. This is done by relying on the origin of descent and adhering to authentic beliefs and identities.

The fourth *Salafī*-leaning Egyptian Islamic party is *Ḥizb al-Waṭan*. Ibn Manẓūr's study (1981: 4868) states that the word *waṭan* means 'homeland' and is considered a

connecting concept between humans and their land of residence. By using the word *waṭan*, everyone has the freedom to live throughout the country. Freedom is an inherent right for everyone who declares themselves as citizens.

In addition to the Salafī-leaning Islamic parties, there are also moderate Islamic parties represented by *Ḥizb al-Ḥaḍārah* and *Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ*. Basically, this middle party became a bridge between the Islamic and nationalist movements. The word *al-Wasaṭ* is an explanatory identity of the word *ḥizb*, which plays a role in specifying the meaning. Ibn-Manzur's explanation (1981: 4832) states that *wasat* means 'middle' and is a moderate description so that both extreme points are the same. This word in Arabic refers to a position between the two ends. Every situation and condition in which there is an agreement is said to be a middle way. In another context, *Ḥizb al-Ḥaḍārah* is an Egyptian political party founded in 2011 after the January 25 Revolution. Ibn-Manzur (1981: 907) said that *ḥaḍārah* means civilization, which is linguistically taken from the verb *ḥaḍār* as the opposite of *badāwah* 'nomadism', which is when people live their lives moving from one area to another. Civilization is characterized by rural or urban life with a lifestyle in a settled community environment.

From the names of the post-Arab Spring 2011 political parties, the first form, it can be seen that the word *ḥizb* in the context of *ḥizb siyāsī* is the main choice because the process to be undertaken is a political process. This word is equipped with other attributes that carry out identification functions. The Salafī group chose the words *nūr*, *faḍīlah*, *aṣālah*, and *waṭan* according to Salafī teachings, which emphasize the cleanliness of the soul. As for the moderate movement, it prefers names that are oriented towards the middle flow, such as *wasat* or have idealistic connotations, such as *ḥaḍārah*.

Genitive phrase with adjective phrase attributes

The second form of the name of the Egyptian Islamic political organization after the Arab Spring of 2011 is a genitive phrase with attributes in the form of an adjectival phrase. The name of this organization includes five parties, namely *Ḥizb al-'Amal al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Tiyār al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Tawḥīd al-'Arabī*, and *Ḥizb Miṣr al-Qawīyah*. The word *ḥizb* is again used as base. The adjectival phrase as an attribute has a choice of words with a nuance of Islamic society reform.

Regarding the concept of *'amal* in Arabic, Ibn-Manzur (1981: 3109) explains that this word refers to any activity that requires effort to achieve a certain goal or result and often refers to a profession or expertise that someone does. Technically, *'amal* refers to any routine task that an individual does, either intellectually or physically, to carry out a task that requires continuous or ongoing effort in exchange for wages or other rewards, whether the work is an assignment or coercion. The name of this party is associated with the country of Egypt, with the use of the relative adjective *yā' al-nisbah*. This means giving an Egyptian identity as an indication that the scope of work of this party is the country of Egypt.

A similar context is *Ḥizb al-Tiyār al-Miṣrī* and *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ al-Miṣrī*. Ibn Manzūr (1981: 458) notes that the meaning of *tiyār* refers to the waves and flow of sea and ocean water. Analogously, this meaning also refers to the speed of a group of people on a particular path or activity. For *iṣlāḥ*, in the explanation of Ibn-Manzur (1981: 2479), it is an Arabic word that means 'improving, repairing, or placing something in a better position'. It is used in religion and politics as well as personal names and place names. The basic meaning of the word is 'recovering oneself' or 'reconciling people with each other'.

Ḥizb al-Tawḥīd al-'Arabī is the next party with an attribute form in the form of an adjectival phrase. In terms of language, Ibn-Manzur (1981: 4779) said that tauhid comes from the word *waḥḥada*, which means the only or single. From this word, its derivative is

formed, namely, *waḥḥada*, which means making, knowing, or considering something as single. *Waḥḥada* also means 'unification' or 'upholding unity'. The core of Islam lies in the main principle of tauhid, which is based on the testimony that there is no God but Allah. The name of this party is complemented by *yā' al-nisbah* in the word 'Arab as an indication of the struggle for Arabism.

The last party is *Ḥizb Miṣr al-Qawīyah*. The name of the country of Egypt is used as the name of this party as an illustration of identification with the country where this party is dedicated. The name of this country is then complemented with the adjective form *qawīy* 'strong' or 'mighty'. Ibnu-Manzur (1981: 2787) said that *qawīy* comes from the word *quwwah*, which means strength. *Qawīyy* comes from the root word *qawīyah*, which refers to three meanings, namely, powerful, strong, and victorious. *Al-Qawīyah* is the highest power whose power never decreases and never needs to rest.

In general, the names of the political parties above are associated with positive social activities among the Arab people. *'amal*, *iṣlāḥ*, and *tawḥīd* are social goodness that the Arab people strive for in collective life. The three are a depiction of a harmonious life (*insijām*) idealized by the Arab people. To realize this, the word *tiyār* is used as a depiction of a young generation full of enthusiasm and dedication. A country characterized by *qawīyy* 'strong' becomes the idealistic goal of a country. These five names are then completed with the name of Egypt as the country and nation that is the goal of dedication of all these political parties.

Genitive phrase with conjunctive phrase attribute

The third form of the Islamic political movement after the Arab Spring is a genitive phrase with an attribute in the form of a conjunctive phrase. The word *ḥizb* is also used as base. The conjunctive phrase as an attribute is connected with the particle *waw* as a connector. The names of these movements are *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*, *Ḥizb al-Binā' wa-al-Tanmīyah*, *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ wa-al-Naḥḍah*, and *Ḥizb al-'Adālah wa-al-Tanmīyah*. The base and attribute in this phrase also use political terms with idealistic nuances. The function of the attribute connected with the connector *waw* gives a combined meaning and affirmation.

The first party is *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*. *Al-Hurriyyah* 'freedom', in the study of Ibnu-Manzur (1981: 829), is rooted in the word *hurr*, which refers to a free person, not a slave. Freedom is a person's status that is not controlled by anyone. Legally, freedom is the ability of an individual to carry out desired activities without coercion by submitting to applicable laws. Everyone can act to fulfil their rights without arbitrariness or aggression. The complementary identity for *al-hurriyyah* is *al-'adālah* 'justice', the opposite of injustice to act straight. Justice is interpreted as giving according to the rights that must be received (Ibn-Manzur, 1981: 2838-2842).

The second organization with this construction is *Ḥizb al-Binā' wa-al-Tanmīyah*. Ibnu-Manzur (1981: 365-367) explains that *binā'* 'construction' is a word that refers to a building or collection. The initial use of this word was related to the construction of ships, so it did not refer to buildings made of earth or stone. These two materials are building materials for houses inhabited by Arabs in the desert. Analogously, this word is then also used for buildings with certain locations, such as houses, mosques, churches, or similar buildings that are specifically made as places for human activities, with the characteristic of having a roof. The word *binā'* is given an additional complement in the form of the word *tanmīyah*. This word refers to growth and increase. The origin of this word was used when humans first realized the changes that occurred around them and then associated it with life experiences and reflections on the differences that occur in many things, such as the seasons, plants, humans, and animals (Ibn-Manzur, 1981: 4551-4553).

The third organization is *Ḥizb al-İslāḥ wa-al-Nahḍah*, which was founded in July 2011. From the explanation of Ibnu-Manzur (1981: 2479) regarding the word *İslāḥ*, this is the encouragement of the *İslāḥ* or 'peace' step to reduce conflict in society. This *İslāḥ* is specifically for peace between conflicting groups so that normal life can run. The important point in this process is dialogue to reach a mutual agreement. The complement to the identification of the name of this party is *nahḍah*, which means to wake up actively. In battle, it means that each group rises and rushes to fight the enemy. *Nahḍah* means energy, strength, and a leap towards social or other progress. In reality, *nahḍah* is in the form of activity or movement in a stagnant environment because it does not want to move (Ibn-Manzur, 1981: 4560).

The next organization is *Ḥizb al-'Adālah wa-al-Tanmīyah Ḥizb al-Salāmah wa-al-Tanmīyah*. In terms of language, *tanmīyah* itself means continuous growth. *Salāmah*, explained by Ibn-Manzur (1981: 2074), means 'perfection' or 'security'. This word comes from the root word *salima*, which is the root of many common words such as Islam, Muslim, and *salām*. *Salām*, the meaning of 'peace' is used as a common greeting by Muslims. From the Arabic root word *salima* comes other related words such as Islam 'submission to God' and *salāmah* that means 'security'. A safe condition is a stable condition that can allow for *tanmīyah* 'growth', in the sense of an increasingly better social life.

From the study above, it can be seen that the names of Islamic political organizations in Egypt after the 2011 Arab Spring are in the form of conjunctive phrases using words that connote political idealism without showing Islamic characteristics. Issues such as freedom, justice, revival, safety, peace, and development become the guides in determining the choice of name to be taken. Each party then completes this naming with the completeness of the party concept, which includes the goals of the Islamic struggle.

In the context of this study, the level of descriptive, the analysis was carried out at the level of words and phrases. The study at these two levels leads to the conclusion that the names contain an individuation, as cited by Brustad (2002: 56), namely, as the bearer of the Islamic struggle. This Islam is not simply abandoned, but is expressed in the party's conceptual design, in the form of the party's vision and mission. In the party's design, it is still stated that these parties, although not using Islamic names, are still fighting for Islamic political ideals.

Interpretation of the Islamic political parties names

The fragmentation of the Islamic movement concept after the 2011 Arab Spring was centered on three streams, namely *Salafī*, *İslāhī*, and *Jihādī*. The interpretation of naming the Egyptian Islamic political organization is related to the response of the three streams of the Egyptian Islamic movement that established political parties and registered them with the general election institution. The applicable law prohibits the use of names with religious nuances, but Islamic nuances appear as references to the party's vision and mission (Nasira, 2011). On this basis, the *Salafī* movement gave rise to several political parties, namely *Ḥizb al-Nūr*, *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*, *Ḥizb al-Aṣṣālah*, *Ḥizb al-Waṭan*, and, *Ḥizb al-İslāḥ al-Miṣrī*.

It is firmly stated that *Ḥizb al-Nūr* is a purely Egyptian party, although its principles, goals, and orientation are built from a *Salafī* perspective. The name '*nūr*' is taken as a depiction of the achievement of the ideals of a society filled with the light of *hidāyah* (Hasyim, 2011). In formulating the party's identity, the founders followed the same method as the *Salafī*'s elsewhere, namely balancing commitment to change and rejection of political violence. Several notes related to this party were conveyed by Abū-Hilāl (2013). This party confirmed that the requirements for the head of state must be

Muslim and male. There is no objection to this party on the issue of relations between Egypt and Israel with the principle of a peace agreement, but recognizing the state of Israel is still rejected. Bayumi (2014) added that *Ḥizb al-Nūr* declared itself as an open party and was able to enter the political world with high pragmatism, far from the image of *Salafī Da'wah* as an ideological movement. Therefore, al-Hakawī (2015) said that this party views tolerance in sharia as good, not through coercion and violence. Through the return of true religious teachings, people will become obedient and motivated to implement Sharia.

The second party from the Salafī school is *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*. Al-Buḥairī (2011) said that this name refers to the ideals of a glorious and prosperous Egyptian society. The goals that *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah* wants to achieve are mainly the restoration of Egypt's leadership role in the Arab and Islamic world through pioneering enlightenment projects and pushing for the city of Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. In the internal context of the Egyptian state, this party wants to establish justice and equality among members of Egyptian society from all backgrounds and sects and ensure a fair distribution of wealth, accompanied by the rule of law.

Another *Salafī* group founded *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah*, which was founded by Adel Abdel-Maḡsoud Afifi after leaving *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*. Qudrī and al-Qaḍī (2013) said that this name refers to the ideals of establishing Egyptian society according to its original values. In its program, this party supports the establishment of a religious Islamic state in Egypt and also the reform of the Egyptian state and society towards Islam. However, all Egyptian citizens will be treated fairly regardless of their political or religious beliefs.

The next *Salafī* party is *Ḥizb al-Waṭan*, which was formed by Imad al-Din Abdel Ghafour on January 1, 2013, after a split within *Ḥizb al-Nūr*. Ramaḍān (2013) emphasised that the name of this party refers to the spirit of building the homeland of the Egyptian nation. This party was formed when Imad Abdel Ghafour, former chairman of the Nour Party, and 150 other members resigned in protest of a dispute with Yasser Burhami, the main advisor to the an-Nour Party and a *Salafī* cleric.

The Islamic reformist views of the Muslim Brotherhood inspired the establishment of several parties, namely *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*, *Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ*, *Ḥizb Miṣr al-Qawīyah*, *Ḥizb at-Tiyār al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb al-Ḥaḍārah*, *Ḥizb al-Shabāb al-Miṣrī*, *Ḥizb at-Tawḥīd al-'Arabī*, *Ḥizb al-Islāh wa-al-Nahḍah*, *Ḥizb al-'Adālah wa-al-Tanmīyah*, and *Ḥizb al-Islāh wa-al-Tanmīyah*. The founders of these parties were the main cadres of *Jamā'ah al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* and founded their parties with the support of their factions and also differences with the main leaders of the *jamā'ah* (Nassar, 2017). Sabi' (2011) stated that *Jamā'ah al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* officially established *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*. The main idea of this party appears in the name '*hurriyyah*', namely the ideal of a society that is free to determine its destiny. In addition, the name '*adālah*' was added as an embodiment of the ideal of justice in the state. (Roll, 2013). This cannot be separated from the party's program, which is based on activities to purify the soul, purify the heart, elevate feelings, and perfect morals by calling for a commitment to worship, morals, *mu'āmalah*, and faith in God.

Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ is an Egyptian political party that is classified as a middle party with Islamic references. In Sumaikah's (2011) presentation, this name refers to a popular ideology related to state life and religiosity, namely moderation (*wasatīyah*). *Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ* adheres to the principles of Islam as a political system of government. This party aims to guarantee public freedom, political and constitutional reform, judicial independence, eliminate the state of emergency, build intellectual and political pluralism and encourage democracy. Utnik (2005) then continued that this party presents itself as a civic party with an Islamic reference that includes Egyptian Christians and recognizes equality between

men and women. *Ḥizb al-Waṣaṭ* offers a modern Sharia concept. General issues in Islam have general provisions, while personal issues have details.

The idea to establish *Ḥizb Miṣr al-Qawīyah* emerged from the presidential campaign of Abdel Moneim About Fotouh after failing to advance as a presidential candidate from *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*. Hays (2018) explained that this name refers to the hope of realising an Egyptian state that has a strong political position. *Ḥizb Miṣr al-Qawīyah* presents an ambitious program that tends to be liberal in political aspects and socialist in economic aspects. The party set a mission to contribute to building a strong, independent, and inspiring nation and upholding humanitarian values.

Ḥizb at-Tiyār al-Miṣrī was founded by several youth of the January 25, 2011, Revolution and former members of the Muslim Brotherhood. The name of this party shows the idea of its founding, which will strengthen the 'Tiyār' group, namely the young generation. This party is a revolutionary youth party that believes in the necessity of completing the goals of the revolution, adopting the values of decentralization, empowering the marginalized, overcoming ideological polarization, and developing participatory democracy.

Ḥizb al-Ḥaḍārah is an Egyptian political party founded in 2011 after the January 25 Revolution. Al-Miṣrī (2011) stated that the idea of strengthening Egyptian civilization emerged in the name of this party through the use of the word 'ḥaḍārah'. This party describes itself as a middle party because it agrees with the free-market economy and fully supports the economic justice of society. This party is determined to eliminate the differences between social groups in unity and equality between Egyptians, Muslims and Copts, so that everyone participates in the struggle to achieve Egypt's progress through democracy, moderation, and socialism.

From the discussion above on the interpretation of the name of the Islamic movement, it is clear that the ideals espoused are the improvement of Islam in society. Differences arise in the referential aspect of this change. The dynamics following the 2011 Egyptian revolution presented an opportunity for Islamic political forces to take a greater role. *Salafī*, *Islāhī*, and *Jihādī* groups participated, although Islamic names were not permitted. Ultimately, a nationalist-oriented name was adopted, with a vision and mission formulated using Islamic references. This action ensured that Islamic political forces could continue to participate in the 2011-2012 elections.

After discussing the naming through the concept of thinking of the Egyptian Islamic political movement in the interpretation stage above, the discussion will continue with the influence of the concept on each attitude towards external conditions through an explanatory study. The three forms of Islamic ideas above (*Salafī*, *Islāhī*, and *Jihādī*) are references in compiling the party's vision and mission. These three things are also related to the explanatory narrative when each party gives its views on the other parties.

Lacroix (2016) said that the rise of *Ḥizb al-Nūr* on the Egyptian political stage was to balance other political forces, such as *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*, which embodies the principles and orientation of the Muslim Brotherhood. The rise of this party is inseparable from the *Salafī Da'wah* movement, considering that this movement is an ideological reference and electoral machine for the party. McCants (2012) also stated that *al-Nūr* experienced a series of political attacks through the media, considering that media owners have an agenda to distort the Nour Party as the political wing of the *Salafī Da'wah* in Egypt. The *al-Nūr* Party also denied the photos and videos that were considered slander against the leaders of the *al-Nūr* Party. The actors in the photos and videos were never part of the *Salafī Da'wah* movement or *Ḥizb al-Nūr*.

Regarding the relationship between *Ḥizb al-Nūr* and the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which was declared a terrorist organization, Steuer (2017) emphasized that

this party has stated its denial. This was conveyed through a documentary film containing the party's relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood since the January 25 Revolution in 2011. The film is an effort to stop attacks by the Muslim Brotherhood and several political forces against *Ḥizb al-Nūr* and the Salafī's. The closeness of *Ḥizb al-Nūr* to the government was noted by Abū-Hilāl (2013). It is known that the al-Nour Party participated in formulating the future map agreed upon by the military and other political forces after the overthrow of former President Mohamed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood, in July 2013. *Ḥizb al-Nūr* has also expressed its readiness to join the new government formed by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. This step is part of the strategy to replace the banned Muslim Brotherhood as the largest Islamic movement in Egypt.

Al-Buhairy (2011) pointed out that Salafī's outside *Ḥizb al-Nūr* collected signatures to announce *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah*. This party refuses to be described as *Salafī*, but a party with Islamic references, the main source of which is law, and all segments of society are welcome to join. *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah* experienced a split in July 2011. This split was triggered by a conspiracy to change the party's principles based on a commitment to legitimacy, the rule of law, and moderate Salafī Islamic methods, and change its principles into extremist ideas that are detrimental to the public interest and Islamic civilization.

Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah itself, in Ramaḍān's notes (2013), split when Adel Abdel Maḡsoud resigned from *Ḥizb al-Faḍīlah* along with several members of the Political Bureau and founded *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah*. *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah* called for purification in all state institutions from deviations. It is emphasized that liberalism with an Egyptian character is not far from religion. Regarding the coalition in the election, Qudrī and al-Qaḍlī (2013) stated that *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah* would only coordinate with religious movements and national civil parties that did not fight the Islamic movement. Together with other Islamic movements, *Ḥizb al-Aṣālah* insisted on conveying a message to calm the Egyptian people regarding its firmness in matters related to the lives of citizens.

In Fahmi's explanation (2015), although Salafī-oriented, *Ḥizb al-Waṭan* allows Copts to join and allows women on the voter list. The party is described as having a *Salafī* character and will form a national alliance in the parliamentary elections. This party rejected the military coup on July 3, 2013 and boycotted the Committee of 50 referendum. The same thing was done by *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ al-Miṣrī*. Although it mostly consists of the young *Salafī* generation, the program proposed is different and relies on Al-Azhar scholars as a reference. This party cooperates with all Islamic parties in the parliamentary elections while hoping to unite all Salafī parties into one strong party.

The idea of Islamic reform formulated by the Muslim Brotherhood became the main reference, even though the cadres of the movement did not form a single party. In the election, el-Sherif (2014) showed that the party formed by the Muslim Brotherhood, namely *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah*, achieved a high electoral victory. As an additional explanation, Sulṭān (2021) stated that the *Ḥizb al-Ḥurriyyah wa-al-'Adālah* program is not specific to Muslims alone, but is an approach adopted by the monotheistic religions, especially Christianity, which pays great attention to morals and social interaction. Parties that do not agree with this approach will face the law. This approach not only concerns individuals, but also concerns the family as the foundation of a larger national community. This approach underlies a good family, in which tasks and responsibilities are distributed fairly and based on the values of love, loyalty, sincerity, and guidance.

Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ, stated by Sumaikah (2011), supports the prohibition of the formation of parties based on religion, but provides criticism regarding defining parties based on religion. The definition of a religious party, as meant by the *al-Wasaṭ* Party, is a party whose membership is limited to one religion or is based on theocratic ideas, namely the government of the ulama. The formation of a party based on religion like this must be

rejected because the basis for forming a party must be the principle of citizenship.

The same approach was launched by *Ḥizb al-Tiyār al-Miṣrī*, which aims to build, support, and protect a true democratic state. Abū-Rummān (2011) notes that the party also seeks the involvement of citizens, as individuals, and civil society organizations, as entities, in the management of all public affairs of the country. In addition, the party emphasizes the importance of empowering all marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and people with special needs. On the other hand, al-Miṣrī (2011) said that the party program presents something different because its mission is to build a civilized dialogue in Egypt with the freedom to support or oppose and kindly suggest amendments, revisions, additions, or deletions.

Specifically, Ghafar (2016) stated that *Ḥizb al-Shabāb al-Miṣrī* encourages young people to use their energy to oppose globalization and care about the issue of civilizational dialogue in the framework of Arab economic cooperation. Another concern is the implementation of appropriate laws to deal with the problem of population growth, accompanied by the development of the education system and paying greater attention to scientific research. The unity for building civilization is asserted by *Ḥizb al-Tawḥīd al-Arabī*. In Abū-Zaid's (2011) explanation, the idea of national unity is stated by stating that support must be given to all sincere efforts aimed at uniting the forces of the revolution and the people to end the crisis that the country is facing and threatens its future. Political forces must work together to find a political solution to the crisis to end division, strengthen respect for the will of the people, restore the path of democracy, and protect the goals and principles of the revolution.

Abū-Rummān (2011) explained that countering terrorism is an important topic for *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ wa-al-Naḥḍah*, which supports the holding of a seminar against extremist thinking and the role of youth in combating terrorism. This seminar is included in the framework of the party's plan to improve the concept of national security and social security for the community. The enforcement of religion for political participation engaged by *Ḥizb al-'Adālah wa-al-Tanmīyah*. This party agrees with the constitutional foundations of the state and contributes to the enforcement of religion by emphasizing that the basic functions of this movement are advocacy, education, and training. *Ḥizb al-Iṣlāḥ wa-al-Tanmīyah* also offers a program of good governance, the supremacy of law, religion as a source of values, a complete separation of powers, and a peaceful transfer of power. This party supports a responsible economic reform process through a neutral model for sustainable development that will support a free-market economy and continue to fight poverty while ensuring the principles of social justice and equal opportunities for all citizens.

From the discussion of the explanatory section above, it can be concluded that the Islamic movement, both Salafī, *Iṣlāḥī*, and *Jihādī*, began its explanatory view by calling the Egyptian nation a nation suffering from tyranny and injustice. In addition, there was also corruption, oppression of the people, plundering of state wealth, and submission to Western and Zionist politics. Death of conscience, moral decay, and neglect of God are some of the most important reasons that triggered the Egyptian people's revolution. All of this emphasizes the need for a modern civil state that is by the times, namely one that fulfills the wishes of the people.

CONCLUSION

The names of Egyptian Islamic political organizations after the 2011 Arab Spring are in the form of conjunctive phrases using words that connote political idealism without showing Islamic characteristics. Issues such as freedom, justice, revival, salvation, peace, and development became the guides in determining the choice of name to be taken. Each

party then completed this naming with the completeness of the party concept, which included the goals of the Islamic struggle. This shows a shift in naming compared to the previous period. The Arab Spring event brought about a change in the choice of names for the secular political idealist concepts commonly found in Egyptian society.

The interpretation study in this study shows that the ideals carried out are the improvement of Islam in society. There are differences that emerge in the referential aspects of the changes, both in the Salafī, Islamic and *jihādī* movements. The 2011 Egyptian revolution, which allowed Islamic political power to take a bigger role, was utilized by the three Islamic groups, although the name Islam was not allowed to be used. Finally, the nationalist-oriented name was taken with the formulation of a vision and mission that used Islamic references. From the explanatory study that shows that the Egyptian nation is an oppressed nation, Islamic parties encourage the formation of an Egyptian society that is just in all areas.

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COMPARISON OF THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN THE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA OF SAUDI ARABIA AND THE UAE

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
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This study analyzes the role of the tourism sector in supporting the economic diversification agenda of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the post-oil era. Both Gulf countries face the challenge of dependence on oil and seek to develop tourism as a sustainable alternative. The research method used is qualitative with a comparative approach, based on literature review which includes official reports, academic articles, and policy documents. The results show that Saudi Arabia emphasizes tourism based on culture, history, and religiosity through projects such as NEOM, Al-Ula, Qiddiya, and The Red Sea Project, which contribute about 11.5 percent to GDP in 2023. Meanwhile, the UAE is focusing on lifestyle tourism, global entertainment, and digital technology integration through Dubai and Abu Dhabi, contributing around 11.7 percent to GDP in 2023. These findings show that although the strategies of the two differ in orientation and approach, tourism serves as a motor of economic diversification, an instrument of nation branding, as well as a means of cultural diplomacy. This research contributes to the literature by providing a direct comparison of Saudi and UAE strategies in tourism-based economic transformation.

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المتحدة.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل دور قطاع السياحة في دعم أجندة التنوع الاقتصادي في المملكة العربية السعودية ودولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة في مرحلة ما بعد النفط. يواجه البلدان تحديات الاعتماد على النفط ويسعيان إلى تطوير السياحة كبديل مستدام. استخدمت الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً ذا مقارنة مقارنة بالاعتماد على مراجعة الأدبيات والتقارير الرسمية والمقالات الأكاديمية والوثائق الحكومية. أظهرت النتائج أن المملكة العربية السعودية تركز على السياحة القائمة على الثقافة والتاريخ والدين من خلال مشاريع مثل نيوم والعلا ومدينة القدية ومشروع البحر الأحمر، حيث ساهمت بنسبة 11.5% من الناتج المحلي الإجمالي عام 2023. بينما ركزت الإمارات على سياحة أنماط الحياة والترفيه العالمي والتكامل التكنولوجي عبر دبي وأبو ظبي، مسجلة مساهمة بلغت نحو 11.7% من الناتج المحلي الإجمالي عام 2023. وتبين أن السياحة، رغم اختلاف النهجين، أصبحت محركاً رئيسياً للتنوع الاقتصادي وأداة للهوية الوطنية والدبلوماسية الثقافية. تساهم هذه الدراسة في الأدبيات من خلال تقديم مقارنة مباشرة بين استراتيجيات السعودية والإمارات في التحول الاقتصادي القائم على السياحة.

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INTRODUCTION

The Middle East region has long been known as a region rich in petroleum resources, which for decades has been the main commodity and the main support for the economies of a number of countries (Olawuyi, 2021). Revenues from the oil sector have enabled massive infrastructure development and rapid economic growth, especially in the era of the oil boom. However, not all countries in the region have abundant oil reserves. Petroleum wealth is more concentrated in countries that are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), namely Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. These countries are the most vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, so they are encouraged to look for alternative strategies in ensuring economic sustainability in the future (Al Naimi, 2022).

The contribution of the oil sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in GCC countries shows considerable variation in dependence. In 2020, the oil sector accounted for 27.6% of Kuwait's GDP, 16% in Saudi Arabia, 15% in Oman, 10.6% in Qatar, 10.5% in the UAE, and 6.7% in Bahrain (World Bank, 2021). These figures confirm that although all GCC countries have oil reserves, their dependence on the sector is not uniform. This difference affects the economic diversification strategy of each country, including in the development of the tourism sector as an alternative source of growth. Diversification is an important step to reduce the risk of a "resource curse" or resource curse that can hinder economic stability and sustainability (Abdelkawy, 2024).

Seeing these conditions, Saudi Arabia launched Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016 which targets economic transformation by strengthening the non-oil and gas sector, such as tourism, culture, entertainment, and investment (Government of Saudi Arabia, 2020; Moshashai et al., 2020). The UAE first embarked on similar steps through UAE Vision 2021 and Dubai's Strategic Plan 2015, which was followed by Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 and UAE Centennial (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, 2025; Jeong, 2020). Both countries place tourism as a key pillar of the post-oil economic transition, albeit with different socio-cultural approaches and contexts.

In its development, tourism is not only considered an alternative economic sector, but also a means of cultural diplomacy and nation branding. Saudi Arabia, for example, is beginning to open up to international tourists through the easing of social rules and major projects such as NEOM and the development of Al-Ula (Yehia et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the UAE has already established its position as a leading destination with world-class infrastructure, open policies, and the hosting of international events such as Expo 2020 and Formula 1 (Wippel, 2023).

Various previous studies have also highlighted this dynamic. Alnafisah (2025) found that the tourism sector plays a positive role in encouraging income equality in the GCC region. Meanwhile, Al Naimi (2022) emphasized that despite a strong commitment to diversification, Saudi Arabia still faces structural constraints such as oil price volatility and weak education systems (Al Naimi, 2022). Abdelkawy (2024) revealed that although natural resources still contribute to short-term growth, the urgency of diversification is getting stronger to ensure long-term economic resilience (Abdelkawy, 2024). Research on the response of the Saudi people to economic diversification efforts through a tourism approach has been conducted by Hidayat and Soekarba (2024) which shows the duality of public perception of the New Murabba project, one of the Vision 2030 initiatives (Hidayat & Soekarba, 2024). Studies outside the Gulf, such as Burbano and Meredith's (2021) study of the Galapagos Islands, also show that tourism is able to drive economic diversification by shifting people away from traditional sectors to tourism-based opportunities, despite posing social and ecological dilemmas.

From the literature, it can be seen that studies on economic diversification through

tourism have been carried out, but it is still limited in comparing specifically the strategies of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Most previous research has focused more on macroeconomic analysis or long-term impacts, so not many have reviewed the aspect of direct comparison between the two countries in the framework of tourism. Therefore, this study is here to fill this gap through a comparative analysis that highlights the approaches, socio-cultural contexts, and implications of tourism strategies in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

This study aims to analyze and compare the role of the tourism sector in the economic diversification agenda of Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The main focus of the study is to identify the flagship projects and their impact on the economic transformation of each country, using qualitative methods based on literature review. The research questions asked are: What is the role of the tourism sector in supporting the economic diversification agenda of Saudi Arabia and the UAE that the two countries are running in developing this sector?

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative comparative approach grounded in a structured literature review. The review encompasses academic journal articles, policy papers, government publications, and institutional reports related to tourism and economic diversification in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Sources from 2015–2024 are prioritized to capture the latest policy shifts in the post-oil transition era. The analysis is conducted through a thematic comparison framework that identifies patterns in strategic direction, socio-cultural contexts, and tourism implementation across both countries, allowing for a rigorous and context-sensitive comparative evaluation.

By examining these issues, this research is expected to be able to make a significant contribution to the literature on economic development in the Gulf region. This study confirms that economic diversification through tourism is not just a shift in income sectors, but also includes social, cultural, and political dimensions. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the understanding of tourism as an instrument of sustainable development as well as a means of cultural diplomacy and nation branding, both in the Gulf region and in other developing countries with similar characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of tourism in Saudi Arabia's economic diversification

Saudi Arabia's efforts to diversify the economy are by creating the Saudi Vision 2030 framework. Saudi Vision 2030 was formed by Mohammad bin Salman -Crown Prince- in 2016. This vision is designed to reduce Saudi Arabia's dependence on the oil sector, which has been the country's main foreign exchange. The sectors that are being developed focus on the non-oil and gas sector. such as the tourism, culture, investment, and technology sectors. In addition, through this vision, the Saudis aim to create more jobs and strengthen Saudi Arabia in the international arena. This strategy targets a 10% increase in Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030 (Arabia, 2020).

The main sector that is developed to diversify the economy is the tourism sector. Through tourism development, it is hoped that many tourists from outside will enter Saudi Arabia so that it plays a role in increasing the country's foreign exchange. The presence of foreign tourists not only has an impact on increasing national income, but also encourages the growth of various supporting sectors, such as hospitality, transportation, culinary, and creative industries (Johanes et al., 2024). Thus, tourism serves as a catalyst for the creation of new jobs, the improvement of infrastructure quality, and the expansion of investment opportunities. Furthermore, this strategy shows that tourism is positioned not only as an alternative source of state revenue, but also as an instrument of socio-economic transformation that can strengthen Saudi Arabia's economic resilience in the face of fluctuations in global oil prices.

Policy transformation also supports the strengthening of this sector. Since 2019, Saudi Arabia introduced a tourist visa that allows visits of up to 90 days, established a Tourism Development Fund to encourage investment, and launched a National Tourism Monitoring Platform to monitor the sector's performance (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2024). Digitalization is also driven through online licensing services and virtual tourism innovations, such as *the Virtual Reality Experience for the Two Holy Mosques* and the Al-Ula digital tour (Mir & Kulibi, 2023).

According to World Travel and Tourism Council (2024) data, the tourism sector will contribute 11.5% to Saudi Arabia's GDP in 2023 (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024a). The Saudi Tourism Authority report (2024) recorded an increase in international tourist arrivals by 73% and a surge in international tourism revenue of up to 207% in September 2024 (Saudi Tourism Authority, 2024). This achievement not only confirms the effectiveness of the Vision 2030 strategy, but also places Saudi Arabia as the country with the fastest growth of the tourism sector among G20 members. With this positive trend, tourism is increasingly recognized as the main motor of economic diversification and a means of structural transformation towards the post-oil era.

However, this economic achievement does not necessarily run without obstacles. The implementation of major Vision 2030 projects, including the tourism and urban development sectors, has also faced social resistance at home. The New Murabba Project found a duality of public perception. Young and progressive professionals support the project as an instrument of economic diversification, while conservatives highlight cultural and religious implications that are perceived as contrary to traditional values. This shows that the success of Saudi tourism strategies does not only depend on economic achievements, but also on the government's ability to bridge differences in perceptions in society (Hidayat & Soekarba, 2024).

There are several mega projects that have been made to realize this vision. Tourism development projects that are Saudi Vision 2030 projects include NEOM, Qiddiya, The Red Sea Project, and Al-Ula. The overall project reflects Saudi Arabia's efforts to diversify its economy from oil dependence to a more inclusive tourism and cultural sector.

The most iconic project is NEOM city (New Future) which is a futuristic city launched in 2017. The city is located in Tabuk Province, northwest of Saudi Arabia. The city is directly adjacent to the Red Sea which stretches for 460 km. The area of the region is about 26,500 km² (Boretti & Castelletto, 2022). The project was designed as a symbol of a major transformation within the framework of *Vision 2030*. NEOM includes a number of major projects such as The Line, a futuristic linear city with no cars and carbon emissions; Oxagon, the world's largest floating industrial area; Trojena, a mountainous tourist destination that will host the 2029 Asian Winter Games; and Sindalah, a luxury island focused on marine tourism.

The development of NEOM aims to make Saudi Arabia a global center of innovation, technology, and tourism. The total projected investment for the development of this city reaches USD 500 billion (Madakam & Bhawsar, 2021). NEOM is not only designed as an industrial and technology hub, but also as a global tourist destination based on innovation and sustainability. One of its flagship projects is Sindalah Island. Sindalah Island is a luxury island in the Red Sea with 413 ultra-premium hotel rooms and 333 high-end apartments (NEOM, 2025). With the principle of sustainable development, NEOM is expected not only to boost international tourism but also improve the welfare of local communities (Alatawy, 2024).



Figure 1. Sindalah Island as part of NEOM's luxury tourism project

Another project being built by Saudi Arabia is Qiddiya. Qiddiya is a city that was built as the entertainment center of Saudi Arabia. The purpose of the development of Qiddiya is to make this area a center of entertainment, sports, and also the arts. The city is 45 km from Riyadh which is the capital of Saudi Arabia. The distance is not too far from the country's capital, making Qiddiya have good prospects in the future because of the ease of accessing this location. In addition, with this development, it is hoped that Riyadh will also have a positive impact (Rivera, 2021).

Qiddiya is one of the important actors in Saudi Arabia's economic diversification agenda which is expected to encourage the creation of a more sustainable and resilient economy. The project is estimated to cost an investment of USD 8–10 billion. The magnitude of this investment is in line with the large potential of the domestic market which is reflected in the annual expenditure of Saudi citizens on entertainment and tourism abroad which reaches around USD 10 billion. Saudi Arabia's seriousness in building this entertainment city is reflected in the appointment of Philippe Gas as CEO of the Qiddiya project. Previously, he served as President and Managing Director of Walt Disney Attractions Japan & Disneyland International, as well as experience leading the development of Tokyo Disney Resort (Rivera, 2021). With the presence of Qiddiya, foreign exchange flows that previously left the country are expected to be held and diverted into the domestic economy, thus ultimately contributing to the increase in Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The project is not only oriented towards creating alternative sources of income, but also opening up new jobs for tens of thousands of Saudi youths. Thus, Qiddiya functions as a forum for training skilled workers in the tourism and entertainment sectors, as well as a laboratory for human resource development relevant to the needs of Saudi Arabia's new economy. Its proximity to Riyadh makes Qiddiya have a role in supporting Riyadh's development as a global economic center. This project is projected to strengthen Riyadh's attractiveness as one of the ten cities with the largest economy in the world by 2030 (Rivera, 2021).

The Red Sea Project is one of Saudi Arabia's leading tourism projects (*giga-projects*) located on the Red Sea coast, between the cities of *Umluj* and *al-Wajh*. The project is designed to develop a sustainability-based luxury tourist area. This project takes advantage of existing natural resources such as the use of more than 90 natural islands, white sandy beaches, and coral reefs that are still preserved. With a focus on eco-friendly tourism, The Red Sea Project targets the development of luxury resorts, marinas, and supporting facilities that are integrated with the principles of nature conservation (Chalastani et al., 2020).

In the context of economic diversification, The Red Sea Project plays a strategic

role in supporting *the Vision 2030* agenda through the creation of a globally competitive tourism sector. This project is projected to be able to create around 70,000 new jobs and contribute SAR 22 billion per year to Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In addition, the existence of this project is expected to attract foreign investment, increase the number of international tourists, and restrain foreign exchange flows that previously came out due to high tourism expenditure of Saudi citizens abroad. Thus, The Red Sea Project is not only a luxury tourist destination, but also an important instrument for the transformation of Saudi Arabia's non-oil and gas economy (Chalastani et al., 2020).



Figure 2. Shebara Resort at The Red Sea Project

The next tourism project is the city of Al-Ula. Al-'Ula is one of Saudi Arabia's leading tourism destinations located in the northwest of the kingdom, in the Hejaz region. The region has natural wealth in the form of fertile valleys and the archaeological remains of *Madā'in Šālīḥ* (Hegra), a Nabatean heritage city designated by UNESCO as Saudi Arabia's first world heritage site in 2008. More than 90 monumentally carved stone tombs are the main attraction of the region, in addition to its dramatic desert landscape and its historical role as a transit route for pilgrims from Damascus in the past. With unique cultural, historical, and natural values, Al-'Ula was developed as an international class tourist destination (Cassola-Cochin, 2020).

Within the framework of *Vision 2030*, the Saudi government positions Al-'Ula as a cultural and historical tourism center that supports economic diversification. The establishment of the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU) in 2017 is a strategic step to manage the development of the region in an integrated manner. Through cooperation with international partners, including France through *the Agence Française pour le Développement d'AlUla (AFALULA)*, the government designs world-class tourism infrastructure such as museums, cultural centers, tourist trails, and eco-friendly resorts (Cassola-Cochin, 2020). This approach not only emphasizes the preservation aspect of cultural heritage, but also encourages Al-'Ula as a symbol of Saudi openness to global tourism.

The Al-'Ula development project is estimated to reach 45 to 90 billion dollars (Cassola-Cochin, 2020). From an economic perspective, the development of Al-'Ula is expected to have significant economic benefits, including job creation and increased tourism revenue. It also aims to encourage sustainable development by integrating cultural preservation with economic growth (Rafae, 2024). The promotion is also based on digital technology, as well as the involvement of the local community (Mir & Kulibi, 2023). Thus, Al-'Ula is not only a global cultural tourism destination, but also a strategic instrument in the transformation of Saudi Arabia's non-oil and gas economy through the sustainable tourism sector.



Figure 3. Al-Ula Desert

Through various strategies and policies implemented within the framework of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia has succeeded in making the tourism sector one of the main drivers of economic diversification. This can be seen from the achievements in 2023, when the tourism sector contributed around SAR 444.3 billion or equivalent to 11.5 percent of the total national GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024b). This figure not only reflects the acceleration of post-pandemic recovery, but also confirms the government's success in implementing visa policies, infrastructure development, and promotion of cultural and religious destinations. With its increasing contribution from year to year, tourism now occupies a strategic position as one of the main pillars of non-oil and gas economic development in Saudi Arabia.

United Arab Emirates strategy and policy

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has long placed tourism as a strategic sector in its national economic development. One of the programs carried out by the UAE for the succession of economic diversification through tourism is "Vision 2021". Vision 2021 is a long-term plan launched by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with the aim of making the country one of the best in the world by 2021, coinciding with the celebration of the Golden Jubilee (50 years) of the formation of the UAE federation. This idea was launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE as well as Ruler of Dubai, in 2010 at a cabinet meeting (UAE Government, 2024).

As a concrete step towards achieving this vision, in 2014 Sheikh Mohammed as Prime Minister of the UAE launched a seven-year *National Agenda* that contains six key priorities. These priorities include building a first-tier education system to produce globally competitive graduates and the provision of world-class healthcare that is accessible to all citizens. In addition, this agenda seeks to build a competitive economy based on knowledge and innovation to reduce dependence on the oil sector. From the government side, the focus is emphasized on creating an agile and responsive government and the formation of a safe and resilient society. Finally, this agenda also targets sustainable environmental and infrastructure development (UAE Government, 2010).

As a continuation of *Vision 2021*, the United Arab Emirates launched the *UAE Centennial 2071* as a long-term vision geared towards making the country one of the world's leading in the century of its formation. This vision focuses on sustainable development that emphasizes the importance of investing in the younger generation as a driving force for the future (Zakarneh et al., 2024). In addition, *the UAE Centennial 2071* also targets the development of knowledge-based economies and technological innovation as the main foundation for reducing dependence on natural resources (Mataruna-Dos-

Santos et al., 2022). With this strategy, the UAE seeks to position itself as a global economic, education, and research center, while strengthening its competitiveness in the era of digital transformation and green economy.

The UAE is also developing their tourism to boost the country's economy. Dubai is a city in the UAE that is a pioneer of tourist destinations. As part of its efforts to develop tourism, the government has created a strategy contained in the Dubai Tourism Vision for 2020 (Antwi-Boateng & Al Jaber, 2022). The main goal of making the strategy is to double the number of tourists annually with a target of 20 million visitors per year (Zaidan, 2015). This figure is targeted to be realized in 2020. In addition, with this strategy the UAE can increase the value of the Gross Domestic Product.

The realization of the Dubai Tourism Vision for 2020 shows the number of achievements that are close to the value of the expectations made. In 2019, there were 16.73 million international tourists entering the UAE (DTCM, 2020). The achievement of this figure occurs because there are supporting factors such as the construction of new hotels, world-class theme parks, and other iconic destinations (Yas et al., 2020). However, in 2020, the realization of this program experienced obstacles due to the COVID-19 pandemic which caused limited global mobility (Crupi & Schilirò, 2023). Despite this, the UAE continues to develop efforts to welcome the end of the pandemic by developing various marketing methods.

To support the Dubai Tourism Vision for 2020 program, the government is also building several tourisms supporting infrastructure. One of them is the construction of public transportation in the form of Etihad Rail. The railway line was built for 900 kilometers stretching across the UAE, from Ghuwefat on the Saudi border to Fujairah, near the border with Oman. Etihad Rail is a national rail network that connects the major emirates in the UAE. Etihad Rail not only connects cities in the UAE, but this project is also promised to connect to neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman (Gargash, 2025). With the construction of this infrastructure, the community does not only focus on the city of Dubai which is the country's business center. This is in accordance with Schiliro's opinion in Crupi et al (2023) who explained that the development of transportation access is important to support tourism development (Crupi & Schilirò, 2023). This project opens up opportunities to expand the exploration of tourists in the UAE.



Figure 4. Etihad rail

The development of the tourism sector is also supported through new government policies related to visa facilitation for visitors. One of these policies is the exemption of entrance fees for passengers who are transiting during the first 48 hours. The facility can be extended for up to 96 hours for only USD 13.6. In addition, the UAE Cabinet also

adopted new agreements with a number of countries regarding the joint exemption of visa requirements. Furthermore, this facility includes visa fee exemption for dependents accompanying foreign tourists under the age of 18, which applies annually from July 15 to September 15 (Antwi-Boateng & Al Jaber, 2022).

In addition to the seven-year National Agenda, the UAE also created the "*Projects of the 50*" program. *Projects of the 50* are a series of development and economic projects that aim to accelerate the development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and make it a comprehensive hub in various sectors. The initiative is designed to strengthen the UAE's position as an ideal destination for talents and investors from around the world. The project covers a wide range of key sectors such as economics, entrepreneurship, advanced skills, digital economy, space and advanced technology.

As part of the *Projects of the 50 grand initiative*, the "*UAE Tourism Strategy 2031*" is one of the key projects that will be implemented in the coming years to support economic diversification through the tourism sector. The strategy includes 25 initiatives and policies designed to encourage the development of the national tourism sector. Some of its key targets include increasing the tourism sector's contribution to GDP by up to AED 450 billion with an annual increase of AED 27 billion, making the UAE one of the best tourist destinations in the world, attracting an additional investment of AED 100 billion in the tourism sector, and reaching 40 million hotel guests annually. This strategy is built on four main pillars: strengthening an integrated national tourism identity, developing and diversifying specialized tourism products, building the capacity of the tourism sector and encouraging the contribution of national human resources, as well as increasing investment in all lines of the tourism industry. The implementation of this strategy involves cross-agency cooperation, including the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security, the UAE Central Bank, the General Civil Aviation Authority, national airlines, the World Tourism Organization, international companies, and the Federal Centre for Competitiveness and Statistics (United Arab Emirates, 2024b).

The implementation of the UAE Tourism Strategy 2031 is also the first step towards achieving the ambitious goals contained in the UAE Centennial 2071. The UAE Centennial Plan 2071 is a long-term development plan launched to guide the direction of the UAE for five decades after 2021, with the goal of making the country the best in the world by 2071. The plan focuses on strengthening national reputation, investing in the younger generation, and transformation in four key pillars: future governance, superior education, a knowledge-based economy, and a happy and cohesive society. Through this strategy, the UAE targets economic diversification, increased productivity, and strengthening national values as the foundation of a sustainable and globally competitive future (United Arab Emirates, 2024a).

The UAE Centennial 2071 shows a new direction of development since 2016. This agenda is in line with the 2030 SDGs which encourage economic diversification to move out of dependence on oil. While improving oil and gas production efficiency, the UAE is beginning to transition to renewable energy and boosting the non-oil and gas sector, especially tourism and hospitality. The successful development of infrastructure such as modern airports, highways, and public transportation, as well as tourist icons such as the Burj Khalifa and the Palm Jumeirah, make the UAE a major international tourist destination. Dubai and Abu Dhabi are also focused as business tourism hubs through the organization of global events such as the Dubai Shopping Festival, Dubai Airshow, Formula 1 Grand Prix, and Abu Dhabi International Boat Show. The government also provides state-of-the-art convention centers and technology facilities to attract the world's business actors and investors (Russo et al., 2023).



Figure 5. Iconic view of Palm Jumeirah

This strategy not only increases state revenue from the tourism sector, but also creates new jobs and encourages the growth of creative industries and MSMEs related to the hospitality sector. The UAE government is actively developing tourist-friendly visa policies, including long-term visas for investors and creative economy actors, as well as a Golden Visa program that attracts global talent. In addition, institutions such as the Department of Economy and Tourism in Dubai play a central role in coordinating destination promotions, drafting industry regulations, and developing globally competitive tourism service standards. This diversification is not only a response to oil price fluctuations, but also part of the UAE's nation-branding narrative as a modern, tolerant, and open country to the international world (Almezaini & Rickli, 2017). Thus, the tourism sector is used as a strategic tool in economic diplomacy and soft power that strengthens the UAE's position in the global arena.

The UAE's tourism strategy is also designed synergistically with the digitalization and smart city agenda, especially in Dubai which carries the concept of Dubai Smart Tourism. This initiative integrates information technology, artificial intelligence, and big data in tourism services, such as the e-visa system, digital travel guide applications, to the use of the Internet of Things (IoT) in hotels and tourist attractions (Gugler et al., 2021). This approach not only enhances the visitor experience, but also strengthens the UAE's global competitiveness in the innovation-based tourism industry. In addition, the UAE also encourages the development of sustainable tourism through eco-friendly projects such as Masdar City and the promotion of eco-tourism in desert areas and natural beaches in the emirates of Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah (Mogielnicki, 2021).

Tourism is also used as a medium to strengthen national identity and preserve culture. The construction of world-scale museums such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi and the Museum of the Future demonstrates the UAE's efforts to balance modernity with cultural heritage. This strategy also expands the tourism segmentation, from shopping and entertainment tourism to educational and cultural tourism. Thus, tourism is not just an alternative economic sector, but an instrument of structural transformation of the national economy and a tool of cultural diplomacy that expands the UAE's influence in the region and the world (Kyriakidis et al., 2024).

The tourism sector has become one of the major contributors to the economy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This is evidenced by the fact that in 2023, more than 28 million people are staying in hotels in the UAE. From this sector alone, the country managed to get around AED 220 billion or about US\$60 billion, which accounts for almost 12 percent of the country's total revenue (GDP). In addition, more than 800 thousand people work in fields related to tourism, ranging from hotels, restaurants, to transportation services (Ministry of Economy UAE, 2023). Not only does it happen in a

year, this trend continues to grow in 2024. In the first nine months (January–September), there were already 75.5 million hotel stays. This value represents an increase of 8 percent compared to the previous year. Hotel revenue also rose, reaching AED 33.5 billion. Throughout 2024, the tourism sector is expected to contribute AED 236 billion, still around 12 percent of GDP.

Especially in Dubai, the tourism achievements are striking. The city set a record with 18.72 million international tourists arriving during 2024. This figure has increased by more than 9% compared to the previous year which was only 17.15 million tourists (Tourism, 2025). The increase in the number of international tourists coming to the UAE has also made Dubai International Airport the busiest airport in the world, with a total of 92,331,506 passenger movements in 2024 (Airport Council International 2025). Overall, tourism helps create many jobs, power various business sectors, and strengthen the UAE's economy without having to rely on oil.

The tourism strategy and policies implemented by the United Arab Emirates have shown significant results in supporting the country's economic diversification agenda. In 2023, the tourism sector contributed about AED 220 billion, or equivalent to 11.7 percent of the total national GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2024c). This achievement is inseparable from various innovative policies implemented by the government, such as the development of world-class tourist destinations, the promotion of large-scale international events, and the provision of increasingly flexible visa facilities for tourists. This success affirms the UAE's position as a global tourism hub, while strengthening its role in building a highly competitive non-oil and gas economy.

For the short explanation, here is the comparison of tourism economic developments of Saudi Arabia and the UAE:

Table 1. Comparison of tourism economic developments of Saudi Arabia and the UAE

Aspects	Saudi Arabia	UAE
National Strategy	Vision 2030	Vision 2021
Focus on Featured Projects	NEOM, Al-Ula, Qiddiya	Expo 2020, Etihad Rail, flexible visa
Promotional Approach	Cultural, religious, historical; National Identity Promotion	Luxury lifestyle, entertainment, technology; Smart & Green Tourism
Contribution to GDP	11,5% (2023)	11,7% (2023)
Number of International Tourists	27.42 million (2023)	28.15 million (2023)
Tourism Revenue	SAR 444.3 billion (2023)	AED 220 billion (2023)

CONCLUSION

The tourism sector has proven to play a strategic role in supporting the economic diversification agenda of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Although both countries use tourism as a tool for economic diversification, their orientations and approaches are different. In Saudi Arabia, tourism is used as an instrument of long-term structural transformation based on cultural identity, history, and religiosity. Major projects such as NEOM, Al-Ula, Qiddiya, and The Red Sea Project are not only aimed at attracting tourists, but also to create jobs, attract investment, and strengthen the country's image through cultural diplomacy. Tourism's contribution to Saudi GDP will reach around 11.5 percent in 2023, showing that this sector is increasingly becoming the main engine of the transition to a non-oil and gas economy. Meanwhile, the UAE places tourism as a leading sector with a pragmatic and market-oriented orientation. Through Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the UAE is developing a luxurious lifestyle, global entertainment, and the integration of digital technology in the concept of smart and green tourism. Flexible visa policies, world-class infrastructure development, and the organization of international events have

succeeded in driving the achievement of tourism contribution of around 11.7 percent to GDP in 2023, while strengthening the UAE's status as a global tourism hub. Thus, the role of tourism in both countries not only serves as an alternative sector to reduce dependence on oil, but also as an instrument of nation branding, cultural diplomacy, and a driver of sustainable development. Saudi Arabia stands out in building an inclusive and local engagement-based long-term foundation, while the UAE excels in short-term realization through global appeal and mature infrastructure. Both models affirm that tourism is an important key to the post-oil economic diversification agenda in the Gulf region.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE MEANING OF THE *SHI'R ŞALAWĀT SIMṬ AL-DURAR* BY ḤABĪB 'ALĪ IBN MUḤAMMAD AL-ḤABSHĪ IN THE SEMIOTIC STUDY OF RIFFATERE

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Arabic poem;
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textual
meaning.

Şalawāt is a religious form of expression in the Islamic world that serves as a form of prayer and praising the prophet Muhammad and a tool of preaching and cultural identification. One of the most influential texts of the *şalawāt Simṭ al-Durar* of Ḥabīb 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Al-Ḥabshī, but the symbolic expressions contained are usually not fully interpreted. The paper uses qualitative textual analysis to apply the Riffaterre semiotic theory developed by Michael Riffaterre which is based on the idea of indirect expression by displacement, distortion and meaning creation. The *Simṭ al-Durar* manuscript was used as primary sources with the support of the *sharḥ* literature, scholarly research, and interviews with religious leaders. The symbols that are identified in the analysis include light (*nūr*), which means prophetic guidance, pearls and jewels, which is a symbol of spiritual purity, fragrance, which is a blessing of God, and journey, which is the spiritual development of the believer. These symbols are multilayered theological and devotional meanings not to be interpreted literally. The results indicate that *Simṭ al-Durar* is an enriched semiotic text that reinforces religious tradition and gives communal spiritual awareness.

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الدُّرِّ؛ الدلالة النَّصِيَّة.

المخلص

الصلوات هي شكل من أشكال التعبير الديني في العالم الإسلامي، وهي بمثابة الصلاة ومدح للنبي محمد وأداة للوعظ والهوية الثقافية. ومن أكثر نصوص الصلوات تأثيراً نص "سمط الدرر" لحبيب علي بن محمد الحبشي، لكن التعبيرات الرمزية الواردة فيه لا تُفسر عادةً بشكل كامل. تستخدم هذه الورقة التحليل النصي النوعي لتطبيق نظرية السيميائية التي طورها مايكل ريفاتير، والتي تستند إلى فكرة التعبير غير المباشر عن طريق الإزاحة والتشويه وخلق المعنى. تم استخدام مخطوطة "سمط الدرر" كمصدر أساسي، مع دعم من الأدب الشرعي والبحوث العلمية والمقابلات مع القادة الدينيين. تشمل الرموز التي تم تحديدها في التحليل النور، الذي يعني الإرشاد النبوي، واللالئ والمجوهرات، التي هي رمز للنقاء الروحي، والعطر، الذي هو نعمة من الله، والرحلة، التي هي التطور الروحي للمؤمن. هذه الرموز هي معاني لاهوتية وعبادية متعددة الطبقات لا يجب تفسيرها حرفياً. تشير النتائج إلى أن سِمَطُ الدُّرِّ هو نص سيميائي غني يعزز التقاليد الدينية ويمنح الوعي الروحي الجماعي

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INTRODUCTION

In the treasury of Islamic tradition, *Şalawāt* is not only regarded as a form of

supplication and praise for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but also holds an important position as a medium of *da'wah*, a means of spirituality, and a cultural expression of the Muslim community. The recitation of *ṣalawāt* has become an inherent part of the religious life of Muslims across the world, including in Yemen (Yuhmansyah et al, 2024). One of the monumental works that occupies a special place in the tradition of *ṣalawāt* recitation is *Simṭ al-Durar* or “The String of Pearls,” composed by the great scholar Ḥabīb ‘Alī Ibn Muḥammad Al-Ḥabshī (1843–1915 CE). This text is widely recited in various *mawlid* gatherings and religious celebrations, and has been passed down through generations as a meaningful religious text.

The verses in *Simṭ al-Durar* not only contain praises for the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but are also composed with symbolic language rich in spiritual, ethical, and cultural meaning. This complex content makes *Simṭ al-Durar* not merely a reading text, but also a religious literary work that requires scholarly examination. Many of its messages cannot always be grasped literally, but instead demand deep interpretation to uncover the hidden meanings behind the words used (Ella et al., 2023). Semiotic studies provide a relevant theoretical framework for exploring the depth of meaning in religious texts. One of the influential figures in literary semiotics is Michael Riffaterre, who introduced key concepts such as indirect expression, displacing, distorting, and creating meaning.

According to Riffaterre, the meaning of a literary text often does not appear directly, but is conveyed implicitly through symbols, metaphors, and certain linguistic patterns. In this context, the symbol of light *nūr* often represents divine guidance and spiritual purity that cannot be understood literally but must be interpreted as a deeper indication of the Prophet’s sacred presence. Likewise, the symbol of journey signifies not merely physical movement but a metaphorical spiritual progression, reflecting the believer’s inner path toward closeness with God. Through these symbolic layers, the text communicates meanings beyond its surface structure, aligning with Riffaterre’s concept of indirect expression. With this approach, the reading of *Simṭ al-Durar* can reveal how the text conveys profound spiritual messages while simultaneously shaping the collective consciousness of Muslims regarding their love for the Prophet.

Ḥabīb ‘Alī did not merely compose a collection of praises; he created a spiritual and literary text that guides believers toward *ma‘rifah* (divine knowledge) and sincere love for the Prophet Muhammad. Each stanza carries symbolic layers that invite deeper interpretation beyond the literal meaning. For instance, the verse:

وَمَا مِنْ شَمْسٍ تَظْهَرُ إِلَّا مِنْ نُورٍ وَجْهِهِ

No sun rises except from the light of his face

Illustrates how the Prophet’s presence is symbolically described as the ultimate source of light and existence. From a Riffaterrian semiotic perspective, this line functions as a *displacing meaning* where the term “sun” is displaced from its literal sense and transformed into a symbol of divine illumination and guidance that emanates through the Prophet. Another example can be found in the verse:

وَبَدَتْ مِنْهُ الْأَنْوَارُ وَالْفَضْلُ وَالْكَرَمُ

From him radiate light, excellence and glory

This line expresses not only admiration but constructs the Prophet as the semiotic center the origin of all light (*anwār*), virtue, and grace. Through Riffaterre’s concept of

indirect expression, this verse encodes a theological message using metaphorical language: that the Prophet embodies the manifestation of divine attributes and functions as a mirror reflecting God's mercy upon creation (Waqfin et al., 2022). Furthermore, Ḥabīb 'Alī's verses often employ poetic imagery that requires interpretative decoding. According to Riffaterre, the meaning in poetry is usually indirect, conveyed through symbols that transcend grammatical or literal expression. In the following line:

فَصَلُّوا عَلَيَّ مَنْ بِرَحْمَتِهِ غَاصَتِ الْبَرَايَا فِي النُّعْمِ

So pray to him, by whose grace all creatures are immersed in pleasure

The act of sending blessings by saying *ṣallū 'alayhi* is not only a command but also a symbol of inner transformation. It calls upon believers to emulate the Prophet's merciful character, turning linguistic praise into an ethical and spiritual act (Agha, 2025). Through Riffaterre's theory of creating meaning, such language becomes a semiotic process that generates new layers of significance uniting devotion, emotion, and moral awareness.

The repetition of symbols such as *nūr* (light), *rahmah* (mercy), and *faḍl* (virtue) throughout *Simṭ al-Durar* serves as more than mere poetic ornamentation. These words form a semiotic network that reflects Qur'anic concepts, especially the idea of the Prophet as *rahmatan lil-'ālamīn* (a mercy to all the worlds). In Riffaterre's framework, this underlying concept can be identified as the hypogram, an implicit text that governs the surface meaning of the poem, shaping its structure and guiding its interpretation (Zahro, 2022). In the Islamic religious context, the recitation of *Simṭ al-Durar* functions not only as a religious ritual but also as a cultural expression of communal identity. During *mawlid* celebrations, the rhythmic chanting and symbolic invocation of light and mercy form a collective semiotic experience that unites the community in emotional and spiritual devotion to the Prophet.

Simṭ al-Durar is also a work that is important not only due to its religious aspect but due to its cultural entrenchment. Its recitation has taken a formal status in the communal practices of Yaman especially on the birthday of the Prophet (*mawlid*). In this way, the text serves socially and culturally on top of its devotional one. In this study, the verses of *Simṭ al-Durar* are viewed through the lens of the semiotic analysis of Riffaterre to analyze how the verses create two meanings: the direct message of the praise of the Prophet and the indirect messages of the verse that support the values of faith, morality, and religious identity of Muslim communities (Al-Hamimy, 2025).

Moreover, prior research to *Simṭ al-Durar* has attributed most of its work to theology, ritual or history of the same. Yuhmansyah et al. (2024) explored its place in the devotional life of Indonesians; Ella et al. (2023) analyzed the symbolic expressions in general and Agha (2025) emphasized its poetic form. The article by Azimah and Kusumawati (2020) explored the symbolism of light and the historical meaning of light in *mawlid* texts as a manifestation of spiritual awakening of society. Waqfin et al. (2022) investigated the role of religious symbols within Islamic poetry and demonstrated that such aspects like light, mercy, and glory are metaphors highlighting that the Prophet was the religious center of the community. In other researches, like in those by Dewi and Yani (2023) and Saehudin et al. (2022), the performative aspect of *mawlid* recitation in society is highlighted, especially the role in which the rhythm and chanting of prayers create religious experiences shared by a community. Research by Istiqlaliyah et al. (2025) and Ni'mah and Masyhud (2024) revealed that the relationship between *Simṭ al-Durar* and classical *mawlid* texts in the form of *Barzanjī* and *Dībā'ī* is due to the fact that the work of Ḥabīb 'Alī is an extension of the intertextual tradition that unites narrative, praise, and expressions of love to the Prophet. Yet, all those studies did not use a systematic semiotic

approach based on the framework of Riffaterre, in particular, with regard to the symbolic expressions like *nūr*, pearls, fragrance, and spiritual voyage. This gap is an analytical gap that is filled by the current study.

The current study provides a novelty as it uses the semiotic approach of Riffaterre to decipher the multifaceted symbolic meaning in *Simṭ al-Durar* and bring a more profound insight into the theological, literary and cultural aspects of *Simṭ al-Durar*. Light, pearls and jewels, fragrance among other symbols are discussed not literally but as a multidimensional metaphor that symbolizes prophetic guidance, spiritual cleanness and divine grace.

Through Riffaterre's semiotic analysis, this study aims to uncover how the verses of *Simṭ al-Durar* communicate layered meanings literal and symbolic that reinforce faith, moral values, and the sense of religious identity among Muslims. This approach reveals *Simṭ al-Durar* as both a work of sacred literature and a living text that embodies the synthesis of art, faith, and culture in the Islamic world. Ultimately, this research seeks to demonstrate that Ḥabīb 'Alī's *Simṭ al-Durar* is not merely a compilation of poetic praise but a profound semiotic text that expresses the intertwined relationship between language, spirituality, and meaning. Through Riffaterre's framework, every metaphor and symbol in the text becomes a gateway to understanding the depth of prophetic love and divine illumination within Islamic literary tradition (Khasanah & Fauzi, 2025).

This research methodologically uses qualitative analysis of textual material rooted in the semiotic theory of Riffaterre, which includes the action of displacement, distortion and creation of meaning. Primary sources include the *Simṭ al-Durar* manuscript with the aid of *sharḥ* literature, academic literature, and interviews with religious leaders to gain more contextual insight. The comprehensive approach guarantees that textual framework and conventional meanings are taken into account.

Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the development of religious literary studies, particularly within the tradition of Islam, while also opening broader interpretative space for the spiritual meanings contained in *Simṭ al-Durar*. Within this interpretative space, symbols such as pearls and jewels, which metaphorically represent the Prophet's exalted status and spiritual perfection, and fragrance, which signifies divine blessings and the spread of prophetic virtues, become essential elements that deepen the reader's understanding of the text's spiritual dimension. This approach not only highlights the literary beauty embedded within the text but also affirms the crucial role of *Ṣalawāt* as a medium for spiritual and social empowerment for Muslims.

To systematically explore how such spiritual meanings are generated and structured within the text, this study situates its analysis within a semiotic framework that foregrounds the operation of signs and symbolic relations in literary discourse.

Semiotics, as a theoretical framework, generally examines how signs operate within a text and how meaning is produced through symbolic structures rather than through direct reference to external reality. Within literary semiotics, meaning emerges through interaction among signs, cultural codes, and intertextual relations that shape the reader's interpretive process. It is within this broader semiotic tradition that Michael Riffaterre formulates his influential theory of poetic meaning. Riffaterre views poetry as a system of signs that communicates indirectly through deviations, displacements, and reformulations of linguistic conventions. In his perspective, poetic language ceases to be merely referential; instead, it becomes self-referential and intertextual, forming an autonomous network of signs that interact internally within the poem and externally with earlier textual traditions (Jailani & Rachman, 2020).

Riffaterre emphasizes that poetic meaning arises primarily from indirection, a concept that encompasses ungrammaticality, metaphoric displacement, semantic

distortions, paradoxes, hyperboles, and associative structures that exceed literal logic. These linguistic “departures” signal to the reader that the text must not be processed in a referential manner. In the context of *Ṣalawāt* or *shiʿr*, such as *Simṭ al-Durar*, expressions like “light,” “pearls,” “ocean of mercy,” or “prophetic fragrance” are not literal descriptions of physical objects; they function as symbolic devices that activate spiritual, devotional, and cultural meaning fields related to faith, virtue, intercession, and prophetic veneration (Ashfiyah et al., 2022).

To guide readers through this indirect system of meaning, Riffaterre proposes two sequential modes of reading. The first is heuristic reading, in which the reader initially interprets the text at the grammatical and literal level to obtain a surface-level paraphrase. This stage involves mapping dictionary meanings, syntactic structures, and literal relations within the text. The second is hermeneutic (retroactive) reading, in which the reader returns to the text with awareness of its poetic, cultural, and religious dimensions. At this stage, ungrammaticality is decoded, symbolic references are interpreted, and intertextual echoes such as allusions to Qurʿanic verses, *ḥadīth*, *sīrah*, or classical praise poetry are recognized as essential to the poem’s deeper meaning (Niʿamah et al., 2024).

In elaborating this process, Riffaterre introduces several conceptual tools. The matrix is the underlying abstract force or core idea that generates the entire poem for example, “the Prophet as the source of divine mercy.” From this latent idea emerges the model, a more concrete symbolic formulation, such as images of light, pearls, fragrance, or oceans, which then expand into multiple textual variants across lines and stanzas. Complementing these is the descriptive system, a cluster of lexemes drawn from a shared semantic field such as jewelry, illumination, or scent that reinforce one another to intensify certain devotional or aesthetic nuances. All these devices operate in relation to the hypogram, namely the foundational texts and traditions (Qurʿanic passages, *ḥadīth*, *sīrah* narratives, or earlier poetry) that serve as the intertextual background and primary source of meaning resonance (Dira & Rohanda, 2024).

In this study, the application of Riffaterre’s theory is limited to several key concepts most relevant to religious poetry, particularly *Simṭ al-Durar*: (1) indirect meaning through ungrammaticality and metaphorical displacement, (2) heuristic and hermeneutic reading stages, and (3) the structural triad of matrix, model, and hypogram. These components are selected because they effectively reveal the symbolic richness and intertextual depth characteristic of prophetic praise poetry, allowing a more systematic interpretation of the spiritual meanings embodied in the text.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Semiotic study in religious texts

Semiotic studies are essentially grounded in the view that a text is a system of signs that conveys meaning beyond its literal sense. In the context of religious texts such as *shiʿr*, prayers, or sacred scriptures, the semiotic approach becomes particularly important because these texts are always embedded with symbols, metaphors, and layers of meaning that cannot be unraveled merely through the logic of everyday language. Religious texts often employ symbolic language to express transcendent realities: the greatness of God, the nobility of the Prophet, the promise of salvation, or profound spiritual feelings (Saukani & Hakim, 2020). Thus, semiotics functions as an analytical tool that enables researchers to read religious texts not only at the surface level of words but also within the network of meanings, signs, and cultural-spiritual references that surround them.

In the Islamic tradition, religious texts whether in the form of the Qurʿan, *ḥadīth*, prayers, or *shiʿr ṣalawāt* frequently employ poetic signs with broad resonance. For instance, the word “light” does not merely refer to a physical phenomenon, but symbolizes

divine guidance, prophethood, or divine mercy. Similarly, the word “pearl” is not just a precious object, but a symbol of purity and the majesty of the Prophet Muhammad. A semiotic approach allows researchers to unpack such symbols, to understand how words function as signs, and to relate them to broader intertextual traditions. Within Riffaterre’s framework, this becomes even more relevant, as he emphasizes indirect meaning, ungrammaticality, and intertextuality (hypogram), which strongly characterize religious-poetic texts (Dewi & Asrifan, 2023).

The application of semiotic studies to religious texts also reveals how religious language functions in two ways: first, as a medium of devotion and prayer that connects humans with God and the Prophet; and second, as a cultural medium that unites communities within particular traditions. When religious texts are analyzed semiotically, it becomes evident that poetry or *shi’r* is not only beautiful in its language but also holds a transcendental function that shapes collective spiritual consciousness (Nurwati, 2023). In this sense, semiotics serves to uncover multiple layers of meaning: from the literal (heuristic) meaning to the symbolic and spiritual (hermeneutic) meaning. Thus, semiotic analysis not only unpacks language as “signs” but also helps us to understand how religious texts function as phenomena of faith, culture, and spiritual experience (Fidaraini, 2022).

Within this framework, the *Shi’r Ṣalawāt Simṭ al-Durar* by Ḥabīb ‘Alī can be read not merely as a literary text but as a living religious text. It integrates prayer, praise, poetic symbols, and the resonance of *mawlid* traditions that shape the collective experience of the Muslim community. Semiotic analysis helps to show how words such as “*Simṭ al-Durar*” (string of pearls), “light,” “ocean,” and “fragrance” are not merely aesthetic choices, but signs that embody profound religious meanings. Therefore, semiotic study in the analysis of such religious texts is not simply a linguistic inquiry but simultaneously a spiritual-cultural study that unveils the depth of meaning and function of the text in the life of the community.

Representation of religious symbols and hidden meanings in *Simṭ al-Durar*

The *Simṭ al-Durar* by Ḥabīb ‘Alī is a masterpiece of Islamic devotional poetry, constructed with profound symbolic language that reflects both spiritual depth and aesthetic beauty. From Riffaterre’s semiotic perspective, the text is rich in indirect expressions (indirections), metaphors, and displacement of meaning that convey layers of theological and emotional significance. Every verse functions not only as a praise to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but also as a semiotic structure that guides readers toward a deeper understanding of divine love, humility, and devotion. For instance, when Ḥabīb ‘Alī writes:

وَبَلَغَ الْقَمَرُ مَنزِلَ الشَّمْسِ

And the moon reached the position of the sun

The verse appears to describe a celestial event, but in Riffaterre’s semiotic reading, it represents the Prophet Muhammad as the “sun” the ultimate source of light and guidance and his followers as the “moon,” reflecting his light upon the world. The displacement here transforms a natural image into a symbol of spiritual hierarchy and illumination (Cahyani & Akmaliyah, 2025). The meaning does not lie in the literal words but in the intertextual relationship between divine light (*nūr Muḥammad*) and human devotion. Another example can be found in the line:

طَلَعَ الْبَدْرُ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ تَنِيَّاتِ الْوَدَاعِ

The full moon has appeared upon us from the Wada' valley

Although this verse echoes the historical moment of the Prophet's arrival in Medina, its semiotic depth conveys a timeless message the coming of light that dispels darkness, symbolizing the awakening of the heart from ignorance to faith. Riffatere's concept of *retroactive reading* applies here: the reader reconstructs meaning not from isolated words, but through recognizing the cultural and spiritual codes embedded within the text (Azimah & Kusumawati, 2020). Moreover, the imagery of light (*nūr*), fragrance (*'itr*), and pearls (*durar*) frequently appears throughout *Simṭ al-Durar*, serving as recurrent semiotic motifs that signify purity, divine beauty, and eternal guidance.

يَا نُورَ الْعُيُونِ يَا سِرَّ الْوُجُودِ

O light of the eyes, O secret of existence

Here, the Prophet is not merely praised as a human being but as the embodiment of divine mercy (*rahmatan li-l-'ālamīn*). The repetition of such symbols reinforces a semiotic network of meaning transforming *Simṭ al-Durar* into a linguistic tapestry of love, reverence, and cosmic order. Through Riffatere's framework of displacing, distorting, and creating meaning, the hidden messages in *Simṭ al-Durar* emerge clearly: the text aims to awaken the reader's spiritual perception rather than simply to convey information (An-Nabiil & Sarifudin, 2024). Every metaphor is a sign, and every rhythm is a code that leads the heart toward divine remembrance (*dhikr*). Thus, the *Simṭ al-Durar* stands not only as poetry but also as a map of spiritual experience one that bridges the human and the divine through the semiotic beauty of Arabic language and Islamic devotion.

وَصَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى مَنْ بِهِ انشَرَحَتْ صُدُورُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Give prayers and greetings to him (the Prophet) through whom the chests of the believers become spacious

In this verse, Ḥabīb 'Alī expresses not only a prayer but also a shared emotional memory the remembrance (*dhikr*) that unites the hearts of believers across generations. Riffatere's theory of matrix and hypogram helps explain how the meaning here extends beyond the linguistic surface: the "matrix" (core idea) of divine love is re-expressed in countless ways through communal chanting, melodies, and repetition, forming an evolving pattern of collective spirituality (Dira & Rohanda, 2024). The *Simṭ al-Durar* also functions as a medium for transmitting spiritual values. Through its recitation, listeners are immersed in a sensory and emotional atmosphere that stimulates feelings of humility, gratitude, and longing for the Prophet.

هُوَ الْحَبِيبُ الَّذِي تُرَجَى شَفَاعَتُهُ لِكُلِّ هَوْلٍ مِنَ الْأَهْوَالِ مُفْتَحِمٍ

He is the lover whose intercession is hoped for in every fearful trouble

This verse encapsulates the essence of *maḥabbah* (love) and *tawassul* (seeking intercession), which are central to the emotional dimension of Islamic spirituality. When interpreted through Riffatere's semiotics, such verses signify not only the Prophet's

exalted status but also the believer's inner journey toward divine nearness (*taqarrub ilallah*). The indirect expression (indirection) here turns the praise of the Prophet into a metaphor for the soul's longing for God. Furthermore, the act of reciting *Simṭ al-Durar* together constructs a collective semiotic experience, where sound, rhythm, and emotion form a communal sign-system of devotion. The beauty of its rhythmic repetition accompanied by the beating of drums (*rebana*) and the reciter's melodic tone produces what Riffaterre would describe as a "textual performance," in which meaning transcends the written word and becomes embodied in ritual (Indiraphasa & Roselani, 2024).

Thus, the *Simṭ al-Durar* becomes not only a text to be read but a spiritual practice to be lived. Its meaning unfolds through time, through repetition, and through the collective consciousness of those who love the Prophet. In this sense, the *Simṭ al-Durar* functions as a living semiotic text one that continually renews the faith, emotion, and unity of the Muslim ummah through the shared memory of praise, love, and devotion.

Meaning construction through Riffaterre's semiotic framework

The indirect meaning in *Shi'r Simṭ al-Durar* emphasizes how the work of Ḥabīb 'Alī presents religious symbols that cannot be interpreted literally. In Riffaterre's semiotic framework, every literary text contains layers of meaning that go deeper than its surface interpretation. This process of meaning-making begins with a heuristic reading, which only captures the denotative meaning, and is followed by a hermeneutic reading that seeks to uncover the symbols, metaphors, and associations shaping its latent meaning. Through this approach, *Shi'r Simṭ al-Durar* is not merely a series of beautiful praises, but also carries profound spiritual messages (Asya'roni, 2023).

One of the main features of *Simṭ al-Durar* is its use of ungrammaticality, namely linguistic forms that deviate from common norms in order to produce higher meanings. For example, the use of terms such as "light," "pearls," "ocean of mercy," or "musk fragrance" are not literal physical depictions, but rather symbols referring to the greatness of the Prophet Muhammad. These words form a network of metaphors that guide readers to understand that the Prophet is portrayed as a source of guidance, nobility, and compassion for all humankind.

If understood only at the literal level, readers might perceive the text as mere poetic praise. However, through hermeneutic reading, it becomes clear that each symbol carries a spiritual dimension affirming the Prophet's position as *rahmatan li-l-'ālamīn* (a mercy for the universe). Thus, the indirect meaning in *Shi'r Simṭ al-Durar* not only enhances the aesthetic beauty of the text but also strengthens its religious function (Waqfin et al., 2022).

Ḥabīb 'Alī crafted poetic language rich with metaphors to evoke an inner experience for his readers, so that they do not merely recite praises but also feel an emotional and spiritual closeness to the Prophet. This illustrates how the work harmoniously integrates literary and religious functions. Through Riffaterre's semiotic approach, the reading of this text reveals the depth of hidden meanings behind its symbols and ultimately affirms that *Simṭ al-Durar* serves as both a medium of devotion and a means of cultivating love for the Prophet Muhammad.

In Riffaterre's semiotic theory, a literary text never stands alone but is always connected to other texts that serve as sources of meaning. This interrelation between texts is known as intertextuality, namely the dialogue among discourses that provides a richer understanding of a work. In the context of *Simṭ al-Durar*, intertextuality appears through references to Qur'anic verses, the sayings of the Prophet (*ḥadīth*), as well as the tradition of *mawlid* writing and devotional poetry that have flourished for centuries.

Ḥabīb 'Alī constructed *Simṭ al-Durar* not merely as a poetic work but as a continuation of an established Islamic literary tradition. For example, the depiction of the

Prophet as light that illuminates darkness is not a new concept, but refers to the Qur'anic narrative of the Prophet as *sirāj munīr* (a radiant lamp). Similarly, expressions about the Prophet's blessings, mercy, and intercession are closely related to various hadith that affirm his role as a mercy for all creation (Khoir & Masruroh, 2023). Thus, *Simṭ al-Durar* weaves meaning through the repetition, adaptation, and enrichment of symbols already known in earlier texts, enabling readers to feel the continuity between this work and the foundational sources of Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, intertextuality in *Simṭ al-Durar* is also evident in its relationship with earlier *mawlid* works, such as *Mawlid al-Barzanjī* or *Mawlid al-Dibā'ī*, both of which emphasize praise, supplication, and the narrative of the Prophet's birth. Ḥabīb 'Alī adopted the narrative patterns and linguistic style of these works, yet presented them with his own distinctive features, particularly by emphasizing emotional and spiritual atmosphere (Istiqlaliyah et al., 2025). This intertextuality shows that *Simṭ al-Durar* is not an isolated creation but part of a living network of religious texts within Islamic tradition. This continuity has ensured that the text is not only read but also chanted and transmitted across generations in *mawlid* celebrations throughout the world.

Thus, an intertextual reading of *Simṭ al-Durar* reveals that this text functions as a bridge between sacred texts, earlier religious-literary works, and the lived religious experiences of Muslims. The strength of this *shi'r* lies not only in the beauty of its language but also in its ability to connect readers with the broader treasury of Islamic heritage. Through Riffaterre's semiotic framework, it becomes clear that the meaning in *Simṭ al-Durar* is shaped by a network of interconnected symbols, making each verse not merely poetry but also a representation of the deeply rooted religious traditions of the Muslim community.

In Riffaterre's semiotic theory, the hypogram is understood as the foundational or underlying text that gives rise to a new one. The hypogram functions as a source of inspiration, reference, and framework of meaning, which is then developed within a literary work. In the context of *Simṭ al-Durar*, its primary hypograms are the Qur'an, the Hadith of the Prophet, and earlier *mawlid* texts, such as *Mawlid u al-Barzanji* by Ja'far al-Barzanji and *Mawlid al-Dibā'ī* by Abdurrahman ad-Diba'ī (Ni'mah & Masyhud, 2024). In other words, *Simṭ al-Durar* does not stand as an isolated text but rather absorbs, reworks, and expands upon the meanings of preexisting texts.

The *mawlid* tradition itself can be seen as a living space of intertextuality, where multiple texts converge, interact, and form multilayered networks of meaning. In practice, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday in various Muslim communities always involves the recitation of different *mawlid* texts, yet they share recurring themes, symbols, and narratives. For instance, the depiction of the Prophet as a light that brings salvation is a recurring theme across almost all *mawlid* texts, from *Barzanjī* and *Dibā'ī* to *Simṭ al-Durar* (Wasi', 2024). This similarity reveals the existence of a collective hypogram that shapes the religious consciousness of Muslims, in which praise for the Prophet is always linked to the teachings of *tawḥīd*, mercy, and love for the Messenger of God.

Ḥabīb 'Alī, in *Simṭ al-Durar*, reinterprets this hypogram in his distinctive style, placing greater emphasis on expressions of love and spiritual longing for the Prophet. This is evident in the text's structure, which flows through poetic praise, supplications, and emotionally charged narratives of the Prophet's birth. Thus, *Simṭ al-Durar* not only repeats what earlier texts contained but also enriches religious experience by offering profound emotional depth. From an intertextual perspective, this demonstrates how a new text can engage in dialogue with older ones, continuing an established tradition while also presenting fresh and unique nuances.

Furthermore, the presence of hypogram and intertextuality in *Simṭ al-Durar*

illustrates that *mawlid* texts function not only as religious literary works but also as vehicles of cultural and spiritual transmission. Each time *Simṭ al-Durar* is recited during a *mawlid* gathering, what is presented is not solely the text of Ḥabīb ‘Alī but also the resonance of the Qur’an, the Hadith, and earlier *mawlid* works that serve as its foundation (Wati et al., 2024). This is what makes *Simṭ al-Durar* an integral part of the *mawlid* tradition, where text, meaning, and ritual converge within a shared spiritual space. Through Riffaterre’s semiotic theory, we can thus understand *Simṭ al-Durar* as a text rich in layered meanings, grounded in strong hypograms, and engaging creatively with other religious texts.

In the semiotic framework of Riffaterre, literary meaning is often the result of a transformation process in which linguistic signs are rearranged to produce symbolic or indirect meanings (Tajalla & Ulfa, 2023). This concept of semiotic transformation becomes essential in analyzing *Simṭ al-Durar*, as Ḥabīb ‘Alī’s composition transcends the level of literal praise and constructs a network of spiritual symbols that point toward divine love, moral purification, and the metaphysical beauty of the Prophet Muhammad.

In *Simṭ al-Durar*, the transformation occurs when words that normally refer to worldly elements acquire new layers of meaning through context and intertextual resonance. For instance, in the line:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ بَدَأَ تَطْمُ الدَّرَرِ

In the name of Allah, a string of pearls was formed

The term *nazm al-Durar* (string of pearls) is not merely an aesthetic metaphor, but a transformed symbol representing the Prophet himself as the “jewel of creation,” whose virtues and attributes form the perfect order of divine manifestation. The transformation of this symbol from its literal to its metaphysical dimension exemplifies Riffaterre’s idea that meaning in poetry is generated through a system of displacement and indirection, where words shift from their referential to their symbolic function (Chairiyah, 2023). Furthermore, Ḥabīb ‘Alī’s use of rhythmic repetition and euphonious diction strengthens the symbolic structure of the text. Repetition of phrases such as:

صَلُّوا عَلَى خَيْرِ الْبَشَرِ

Give prayers to the best of humanity

Serves not only as devotional exhortation but as a semiotic mechanism that reinforces the spiritual focus of the text. The repetitive rhythm induces a contemplative state among readers and listeners, transforming the act of recitation into an experiential journey toward divine remembrance (*dhikr*). In Riffaterre’s semiotic perspective, this transformation of linguistic rhythm into spiritual experience demonstrates the way poetic language mediates between textual sign and transcendent meaning (Saukani & Hakim, 2020).

Moreover, the symbolic structure in *Simṭ al-Durar* operates through binary oppositions and harmonization between the material and the divine, the human and the prophetic, the visible and the unseen. Ḥabīb ‘Alī constructs an aesthetic equilibrium that mirrors the Prophet’s role as the bridge between God and creation. This structural harmony can be read as a semiotic system where each linguistic choice, image, and metaphor is interconnected to produce a totality of meaning that transcends its textual surface.

In summary, the semiotic transformation and symbolic structure in *Simṭ al-Durar* reveal Ḥabīb ‘Alī’s mastery in weaving theological, mystical, and literary elements into one coherent text. Through Riffaterre’s semiotic lens, the reader can perceive how the poem operates as both an act of devotion and a coded system of signs that continuously points toward the ineffable reality of divine beauty embodied in the Prophet Muhammad.

Simṭ al-Durar functions semiotically as a medium that shapes collective memory and religious identity through its devotional language. According to Riffaterre’s semiotic framework, literary meaning is never isolated within the text alone but interacts dynamically with the social and cultural consciousness of its readers. In this sense, the *Simṭ al-Durar* operates not only as a poetic expression of love for the Prophet Muhammad but also as a semiotic system that encodes and transmits communal values, beliefs, and emotions across generations (Hamdy & Shalihah, 2024).

Ḥabīb ‘Alī’s language in *Simṭ al-Durar* is devotional, rhythmic, and imbued with affective intensity. It invites participants not only to understand the Prophet but to emotionally and spiritually experience his presence. For instance, in the line:

وَأَشْرَقَ الْكَوْنُ بِنُورِ الْمُصْطَفَى

And the universe shone with the light of the chosen one (Muhammad)

The imagery of “light” (*nūr*) is more than a metaphor of illumination it becomes a semiotic key that unites personal piety with the cosmic manifestation of divine truth (Dewi & Yani, 2023). The recitation of such verses in communal gatherings transforms language into a performative act, where participants reaffirm their shared spiritual heritage and reinforce their emotional bond with the Prophet. Through this lens, the *Simṭ al-Durar* functions as a collective signifier a living symbol within Muslim communities, Yemen and the wider Middle East, where the tradition of *mawlid* recitation has become part of the social fabric. Every recitation becomes a semiotic reactivation of faith; the words, melody, and rhythm operate as cultural codes that transmit the same spiritual emotion from one generation to another (Saehudin et al., 2022). This aligns with Riffaterre’s concept of intertextuality and hypogram, where meaning is continuously renewed through its repetition and recontextualization within communal practice.

Moreover, the devotional language of *Simṭ al-Durar* embodies the synthesis of beauty *jamāl* and reverence *ta’zīm*. The poetic structure, full of alliteration, parallelism, and euphonious sounds, heightens the aesthetic experience of worship. Riffaterre would interpret this as a form of semiotic reinforcement where linguistic beauty itself becomes a sign that reflects divine perfection. The language thus does not merely describe holiness but enacts it, transforming the act of recitation into a semiotic ritual of remembrance (*dhikr al-maḥabbah*) (Kurniawan et al., 2024).

In the context of collective memory, *Simṭ al-Durar* acts as both text and practice. It preserves the historical image of the Prophet as *raḥmatan lil-‘ālamīn* (a mercy to all worlds) while continually renewing his presence in the hearts of believers. The repetition of verses such as:

صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ

Bless him and his family

Functions as a semiotic bridge linking the community’s spiritual past with its present consciousness. Each utterance of *ṣalawāt* becomes a symbol of continuity a

reaffirmation that the love for the Prophet transcends time, place, and linguistic boundaries. Thus, through Riffaterre's semiotic analysis, the *Simṭ al-Durar* can be seen not only as a text of devotion but as a living semiotic organism. Its language operates beyond aesthetic or doctrinal dimensions it sustains a collective spiritual identity through the interplay of symbols, emotions, and memory, making it one of the most profound examples of religious poetry that merges art, faith, and culture into a unified system of meaning (Saehudin et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that *Simṭ al-Durar* is a religious text rich in multilayered meanings, and that a semiotic approach is essential for uncovering its underlying spiritual dimensions. By employing the general framework of semiotics and focusing on key concepts from Michael Riffaterre such as indirect meaning, ungrammaticality, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, and the matrix model hypogram structure this research seeks to reveal how religious symbols such as light, pearls, oceans of mercy, and prophetic fragrance form a network of meaning within the *shi'r*. The formulated research questions emphasize identifying forms of indirection, mapping the central symbolic expressions, applying the two stages of reading, and explaining the intertextual relationship between *Simṭ al-Durar* and earlier Islamic sources and mawlid traditions. Through this framework, the study aims to demonstrate that *Simṭ al-Durar* is not merely a devotional poem, but a living system of signs that nurtures collective consciousness, spiritual identity, and deep affection for the Prophet Muhammad within Muslim communities.

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DEPICTION OF NATURALISM IN THE NOVEL *TAFṢĪL THĀNAWĪ* BY ADANIA SHIBLI

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Adania Shibli;
Emile Zola; *Minor*
Detail; naturalism.

Unlike realist novels, whose characters can resist certain authorities, characters in naturalist novels cannot do so freely. Instead, they are often portrayed as swept up in pessimism and powerlessness. This study aims to explore the aspects of naturalism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* (Minor Detail), which depicts the condition of Palestine under Israeli occupation following the Nakba tragedy, using Zola's naturalism as its theoretical lens. The research employs a descriptive-qualitative design: the novel is the primary source; secondary sources are books and journal articles on Shibli and Zola. Data were collected through close reading and note-taking, and analyzed via data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate five aspects of naturalism in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, including determinism: impaired rational judgment, and a persistent focus on minute details. Settings: the Negev Desert, the hut of the Israeli military commander, and Ramallah. Pessimism: the Bedouin girl's inability to resist and anxiety about traveling beyond her territory. Objectivity: third-person narration, the commander's directives to soldiers, and the stark depiction of the girl's burial. Plot twists: the Bedouin girl's murder and the female journalist's successful entry into Israeli territory.

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الكلمات المفتاحية:
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المخلص

تختلف الروايات الطبيعية عن الروايات الواقعية؛ ففي حين يستطيع أبطال الواقعية مقاومة بعض السلطات، لا تتمكن شخصيات الطبيعية من ذلك بحرية، بل تصور وهي مندفعة في تيار من التشاؤم والعجز. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى استكشاف مظاهر الطبيعية في رواية تفصيل ثانوي التي تصور واقع فلسطين تحت الاحتلال الاسرائيلي عقب مأساة النكبة، وذلك عبر عدسة الطبيعية عند اميل زولا اطارا نظريا. تعتمد الدراسة منهجا وصفيا نوعيا؛ اذ تعد الرواية مصدرا رئيسا، فيما تعد الكتب والمقالات العلمية حول اعمال شبلي ومذهب زولا مصادر ثانوية. تجمع البيانات عبر القراءة المتعمقة وتدوين الملاحظات، وتحلل من خلال اختزال البيانات وعرضها واستخلاص الاستنتاجات. تظهر النتائج خمسة اوجه للطبيعية في تفصيل ثانوي: تجسد الحتمية ضعف القدرة على الحكم العقلاني مع تركيز دائم على التفاصيل الدقيقة؛ يتجلى المكان في صحراء النقب وكوخ قائد الجيش الاسرائيلي ومدينة رام الله؛ يبرز التشاؤم في عجز الفتاة البدوية عن المقاومة وفي القلق من السفر خارج نطاقها؛ تتسم الموضوعية باستخدام ضمير الغائب وتوجيهات القائد لجنوده والتصوير الصارم لعملية دفن الفتاة البدوية؛ وتتتابع التحولات السردية بقتل الفتاة البدوية ونجاح الصحفية في دخول الاراضي الاسرائيلية.

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INTRODUCTION

If realist literature often portrays social reality as it is, naturalism examines social reality more sharply and in greater detail. Naturalism goes further by investigating how social reality influences the storyline, shapes the characters' behaviors and traits, and so on (Putriani, 2019). It can be likened to this: if realism is a depiction of reality using a camera that captures objects as they are, naturalism is a style of capturing with a magnified lens, so that what is not visible in an ordinary camera becomes more apparent through the magnified model of naturalist depiction (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). The difference lies in the fact that characters in realist literature are usually free to respond to and resist their environment and are also free to determine their fate and future. On the other hand, characters in naturalist literature tend to be resigned, accepting their circumstances, and a bleak or pessimistic future often overshadows the storyline. The lives and futures of characters in naturalist works are typically determined by the influence of the environment, nature, genetics, and the cruel fate they possess—profoundly decisive factors (Surur, 2023). Nevertheless, naturalist literary works aim to improve the condition of the world by highlighting critical situations that are part of the reality faced by the majority of people (Napitupulu, 2021).

Naturalism holds the belief that the environment has a profound impact on human life. The depiction of the setting can be a determining aspect of the story. This relates to the concept of determinism (Aulia, 2014). Such is the case in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* or *Minor Detail* (in its English edition), written by the Palestinian author Adania Shibli. The harrowing portrayal of the characters' suffering is conveyed through the novel's intricate narrative details. Similarly, Israel's sinister agenda to eliminate the remaining Bedouin inhabitants of the desert, in the name of territorial acquisition of the Negev, is also depicted through a structured plot and a defining setting, both supported by Shibli's captivating use of detail. Consider the opening lead of *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, a hallmark of Shibli's style, which illustrates the determinism of the Negev Desert's environment with such vivid detail that it brings the desert to life, making the reader feel as if they are witnessing it firsthand:

لم يكن هناك ما يتحرك عدا السراب. مساحات شاسعة جرداء تعاقبت حتى السماء مرتجفة تحت وقعته بسكون، فيما كاد ضوء شمس العصر الحاد أن يمحو الخطوط التي رسمت مرافعتها الرملية الباهتة الصفرة. كان كل ما يمكن تمييزه من تفاصيل هذه المرتفعات حدودا واهنة التوت على غير هدى في انحناءات وانعطافات متباينة

Nothing moves in the vastness of the desert but a mirage. The vast, dry distance stretches as far as the eye can see into the silence of the sky. The sharp rays of the afternoon sun almost erase the boundary lines, the heights of which are composed of that pale yellow sand painting. These are all things that are easily distinguishable among the details of the gradations of elevation that weakly meander between twists and turns, and between the endless dunes and hollows (Shibli, 2017).

The novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* begins by depicting the condition of Palestine after the Nakba event in 1949, using the perspective of an Israeli military soldier. During this period, the Israeli military, which had occupied Palestine, committed acts of rape and murder against several individuals, including a Bedouin girl, in the surrounding area of the Negev Desert. The Negev is a vast desert region located to the west of Palestine, bordering the Sinai Desert in Egypt. In the second part of the novel, the narrative shifts to the perspective of an anonymous Palestinian female journalist, who lives decades after the event, in a

condition where Israel continues to occupy Palestinian territories (Shibli, 2017). In some colonial countries, women suffered because of colonialism. So they started a resistance movement to protect themselves (Ilmia et al., 2024).

Although this novel depicts the occupation of Palestine by Israel, Shibli portrays the situation in Palestine as it is, without idealization and without taking sides with any of the characters. The use of two perspectives in the novel—the first being that of an Israeli military soldier, who works to monitor the occupied territories, and the second being that of a Palestinian female journalist, who attempts to uncover these events anonymously, without assigning specific names to the characters—demonstrates Shibli's objectivity in narrating the story. She aligns with humanity rather than siding with any specific group. This stands in contrast to the accusations made by those who opposed Shibli's receiving an award from the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2023.

This novel, set against the backdrop of the Nakba, has garnered wide attention not only from scholars who have examined it from various perspectives but also from the public, who perceive recent conditions in Palestine as resonant with the story it presents. *Tafṣīl Thānawī* has been published in several languages, including English, Dutch, German, Portuguese, French, Italian, Polish, Serbian, Spanish, and Indonesian. On the other hand, scholars consider the novel particularly compelling when analyzed through the lens of Zola's naturalism (1880). Naturalism is a movement that offers a straightforward yet nuanced portrayal (Simangunsong et al., 2022). Naturalism can also be defined as writing that focuses on human life, showcasing both its strengths and weaknesses (Sya'baan & Tike, 2022). A novel narrative can be categorized as a naturalism model as long as it can be identified with the five distinctive elements of Zola's style. These five elements include determinism, objectivity, pessimism, the aspect of the setting, and an often-unexpected plot ending. In his essay *Le Roman Expérimental* (1880), Zola explains that determinism is the idea that human actions or behavior are caused by external factors in their surroundings, which can be understood and changed once their causes are identified. Zola also explains that determinism is different from fatalism, which assumes that change is impossible (Zola, 1880).

Objectivity is the presence of a story written as it is, without the narrator's bias, or the author seemingly not intervening in determining the fate of the characters (Surur, 2023). Although literary works are formed from the author's personal experiences or ideas, naturalist authors often appear to lack full control over their works (Aini, 2021). Pessimism is an element of the character's inability to fight against situations and conditions such as power and others, due to factors like the environment or fate, and so on. Setting refers to the environment that can influence the fate or condition of the character (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). Because a person's fate and personality are shaped not only by genetics but also by environmental influences (Abror & Mahdalena, 2024). Meanwhile, a plot twist is an ending that cannot be predicted or easily guessed by the reader due to the presence of the previous natural elements, such as determinism, pessimism, setting, and objectivity (Surur, 2023). Based on these five elements, it is known that most naturalist literary works explore psychological and social themes (Ayu, 2021).

Research on the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* has previously been conducted and can be divided into two main tendencies. The first examines *Tafṣīl Thānawī* from a postcolonial perspective, including the study by Bushra Badareen, which aimed to explore the formation of Palestinian identity in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* through the lens of postcolonialism. This research revealed hidden truths as well as the resilience of the characters in facing oppression (Badareen & Eisheh, 2023). Furthermore, Nashef also used a postcolonial perspective to analyze the narrative of erasure and denial of Palestinian identity in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. Her study demonstrated that colonialism not only destroys physical spaces but also identity, memory, and voice (Nashef, 2022). Similarly, Aun Manal examined the

representation of historical trauma and resistance found in the novel (Manal, 2024).

The study by Maafa Ouala and Loucif Hajir aimed to analyze how Shibli, in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, reflects the dangers of the continuous erasure of history as a result of settler colonialism. Their findings show that Shibli employs archival practices and intertextuality as tools of resistance against colonialism. In this context, archiving functions to preserve the continuity of collective identity, while intertextuality expands the meaning of the archive by emphasizing the interconnectedness of history and memory (Ouala, 2024). Mustafa Mohammed's research, meanwhile, sought to explore forms of resistance to Israeli colonialism in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* through the postcolonial perspective of Frantz Fanon. This study revealed how the author employs poetic strategies, narrative techniques, and character representation to expose the reality of colonialism and demonstrate the function of literature as a tool of decolonization (Abdullah, 2025).

The second tendency focuses on analyzing the narrative techniques used by Shibli in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. This includes Ella Elbaz's research, which aimed to analyze the novel's poetic techniques of narrating Palestinian history. Her study concluded that Shibli uses small, seemingly minor details to construct historical events and employs alternative methods of documenting the past, prioritizing sensory experiences and disappearing landscapes (Elbaz, 2023). Similarly, Layla Al-Ammar's research sought to analyze the narrative distancing devices employed by Shibli across several of her novels, including *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. She highlighted the boundaries of Palestinian subjectivity and the prominence of secondary witnesses, which serve to recognize the trauma of others (Al-Ammar, 2022).

Previous studies that used a postcolonial perspective have focused on the realities of colonialism, historical trauma, identity erasure, and Palestinian resistance in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. Meanwhile, studies analyzing the novel's narrative techniques emphasized the poetic details and narrative strategies used by the author to depict trauma and document the past in the form of Palestinian history. In contrast, this study offers a new perspective in examining *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, namely through the lens of Zola's naturalism. This approach emphasizes that the behavior and fate of the characters are not only understood as symbolic representations of resistance or as narrative constructions, but also as the direct consequence of environmental or social determinism that binds their destiny. Thus, this research aims to contribute a new perspective to the study of *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, which has been previously dominated by postcolonial and narrative approaches.

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method. It is referred to as descriptive qualitative because it seeks to reveal the elements of naturalism in Zola's works within the *Tafṣīl Thānawī* by Shibli. The data sources used in this research are primary and secondary. Primary data sources are fragments of narration and dialogue in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. Secondary data sources are books, journal articles, and websites related to Zola's naturalism. The data collection techniques used are the reading technique and the note-taking technique. The reading technique was done by reading the narration and dialogue in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*. The note-taking technique is done by recording fragments of the novel's story that contain elements of Zola's naturalism. The data analysis technique used is the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, the data were identified through reading and grouped based on the identification of Zola's elements of naturalism; in the presentation stage, the data were presented and interpreted; then, in the conclusion stage, the data were concluded based on the previous presentation and interpretation, using the identification approach of the elements of naturalism in the novel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Naturalist literary works provide readers with the space to gradually, throughout the narrative, identify the interconnected influences and determine how the characters will react to their situations (Thompson, 2020). This is exemplified in the dialogue and narrative of *Tafṣīl Thānawī* (*Minor Detail*) by Shibli, which can essentially be approached through the lens of Zola's five elements of naturalism. When reading the novel in its entirety, many fragments—whether in terms of plot, narrative structure, or setting—are heavily infused with pessimism and determinism.

From the perspective of Zola's naturalism, which encompasses five key aspects — determinism, objectivity, pessimism, setting, and plot twist —all of these elements are abundantly present in the novel. Below, the elements of naturalism will be laid out, each illustrated with randomly selected excerpts from the narrative that contain these five features, followed by their respective analysis.

Determinism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*

The attitudes and actions of characters in literary works can be shaped by external factors, such as the influence of their environment on their development. The portrayal of a character living in an independent country will differ significantly from one residing in a colonized nation. An aspect of determinism, which arises from the setting, will influence the fate of fictional characters. Zola, as cited in Humaira & Surur (2025), argued that a character's behavior or destiny is shaped by their environment, heredity, or social conditions (Humaira & Surur, 2025). Thus, the character in naturalist literature is portrayed as a passive figure who accepts all the fate that befalls them as it is, as a form of response. In this light, the lives of the Palestinian people, who have lived for decades under Israeli occupation and domination, strongly shape the characters in Shibli's novel. Their behavior and responses to various situations are deeply influenced by the oppressive social and political conditions they endure. In the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, two aspects of determinism are evident: irrational behavior (Shibli, 2017: 32) and an interest in minor details (Shibli, 2017: 32).

The data above illustrates the element of determinism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* (*Minor Detail*), particularly through the female journalist character, who is often unable to respond rationally to situations. Her actions frequently appear inappropriate or disproportionate when reacting to sudden events. As depicted in the narrative, while she is on her way to the office, the bus she is riding is abruptly stopped by Israeli soldiers for a patrol. The female journalist dares to ask a soldier to move the barrel of his gun away while speaking to her. This moment reflects her inability to act in a "normal" or composed manner.

Her irrational or abnormal behavior is not without cause—it stems from an environment filled with restrictions and a tense atmosphere. At that time, the area was under Israeli control, marked by various limitations enforced by the Israeli military, such as checkpoints and patrols. These numerous territorial constraints ultimately lead the female journalist to behave anxiously, unable to act normally or rationally due to a constant fear of crossing a line or making a reckless move. Her choice to remain at home most of the time is also a response to this oppressive atmosphere. She prefers isolation over the anxiety, fear, chaos, and worry brought on by possibly violating imposed boundaries.

The female journalist's attempt to ask the Israeli military to move the barrel of the gun away while speaking to her ultimately proven futile and does not change the way the soldiers address her. This illustrates that the external factor influencing and controlling the journalist's irrational and abnormal behavior is the total control exerted by the Israeli

military over her living environment. Environmental factors or external forces beyond human will, such as fate or surrounding circumstances, can shape or control the behavior of literary characters, placing them in situations that are difficult to resist or avoid (Surur, 2023). In naturalist literature, characters are indeed portrayed as living within a natural environment in which they can react to external and internal forces; however, they are ultimately powerless in the face of these forces (Zhang, 2010).

Although from a postcolonial theory perspective, such situations are seen as the result of the colonizer's domination over the colonized population, not due to natural factors, in this case, determinism. This interpretation is valid, as supported by the earlier study by Nashef (2023), who argued that such circumstances are rooted in ongoing colonialism. However, naturalism often approaches these situations from a more naturalistic and psychological standpoint, detached from the specific context of colonial oppression.

Furthermore, the fascination with minor details is depicted in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, where the female journalist is more interested in the small details, she encounters than in the main incident itself. This is evident in her fascination with the small details of a news report about the rape and murder of a Bedouin girl by Israeli military soldiers—specifically, the coincidence of the incident's date aligning with her birthday. This seemingly trivial detail compels her to conduct an independent investigation, as she does later in the story. The primary incident—rape and murder—has become a “daily occurrence” in the journalist's environment. Yet, for some reason, she becomes deeply intrigued, almost obsessed, with the case of the Bedouin girl's murder, which had been buried in old newspaper archives for decades.

This illustrates the use of the determinism element employed by the author in the narrative. The female character's tendency to focus more on minor details rather than the actual major incident indicates that external factors are responsible for her attitude and the basis of that attitude (*Naturalism in Literature: Definition & Examples*, n.d.-b). The systematic pattern of violence repeatedly carried out by Israel in Palestine makes the character, when hearing or receiving news about rape, no longer interested in the incident itself, but rather in its small details. Thus, it becomes evident that the whole phenomenon—including human behavior—is not a matter of coincidence or mystical fate, but has been determined by the law of cause and effect, namely determinism, which dominates human life. This model of naturalism differs from the study by Badareen & Eishah (2023), which overlooks the explanation that external factors also influence the behavior and fate of characters.

Objectivity in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*

The element of naturalism in the form of objectivity reflects the author's effort to remain neutral and not take sides with any character in the literary work. Although in the writing process, the author is certainly not free from abstract elements that undeniably exist, such as feelings or personal perspectives (Angesty, 2024). In this context, the author functions merely as an observer, attentively depicting the lives of the characters. In *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, Shibli narrates the condition of Palestine after the Nakba without showing partiality toward the events described or the experiences of her characters. The forms of objectivity found in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* include the use of third-person pronouns in referring to names (Shibli, 2017: 12), the depiction of the Israeli military commander about to celebrate his success (Shibli, 2017: 17), as well as the portrayal of the Bedouin girl's funeral (Shibli, 2017: 26).

The use of third-person pronouns in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is evident in the scene where an Israeli military commander captures a Bedouin girl he finds in the desert and

takes her to their camp. The commander orders his soldiers to bring the girl to the water reservoir to be bathed. Shibli employs the third-person pronoun “he” for the Israeli military commander and refers to the Bedouin girl only as “the girl,” without assigning a specific name to either character, whether the native inhabitant or the representative of the Israeli occupiers.

This illustrates the presence of objectivity in the narrative. The use of third-person pronouns in naturalist literature typically functions as an observer that appears uninvolved. The author does not place strong emphasis on the emotions or feelings of each character, but instead focuses on conveying events as they naturally unfold (*Naturalism: Definition, Authors & Examples*, n.d.). The statement in this study—that the use of third-person pronouns in the novel represents the author’s objectivity—is notably different from the findings of Layla AlAmmar in an earlier study, which argues that by not giving names to the characters, the author intends to prevent readers from feeling too connected or overly empathetic with them.

Furthermore, an aspect of objectivity depicted in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* appears when the Israeli military leader gives instructions before commencing the celebration to mark their success in capturing the Bedouin girl in the southern region. The leader commands his soldiers to make every effort to defend and protect the southern territory, based on the belief that the land had been traversed by their ancestors for thousands of years.

The data illustrating how the Israeli military commander gives instructions to his soldiers after capturing a prisoner is presented by Shibli in an objective and convincing manner. Instead of portraying the Israeli military’s actions in occupying Palestine as overtly brutal, Shibli renders the scene through a detached narrative style, refraining from taking explicit sides—whether with the Palestinians as the oppressed or with Israel as the oppressor. The author does not hesitate to let the events unfold naturally without favoring any character (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). The author does not conceal reality, nor do they use symbolism, idealism, or excessive emotion. Everything is presented just as it is (Shahin, 2020). This statement stands in stark contrast to Mufidah’s study, which analyzes naturalism in literary works but fails to highlight the element of objectivity, instead leaning toward one particular side. Likewise, this view also opposes the findings of Elbaz (2023), who in her research claims that the author writes subjectively, siding with the oppressed. The way Shibli writes the scene where the oppressors give orders to their soldiers demonstrates that the author maintains a fairly objective stance in crafting the narrative of this novel.

Another aspect of objectivity in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is found in the scene where Israeli soldiers are digging sand in the middle of the desert, which will later be used to bury the Bedouin girl they had captured. However, the woman attempts to escape, resulting in her right temple being shot by the Israeli military commander.

The depiction of the Bedouin girl’s burial in the data above reflects the objectivity employed by Shibli as the author. She does not use dramatic language or emotional expressions to evoke sympathy either for the girl being buried or for the Israeli soldiers conducting the burial. Instead, Shibli narrates the burial process in a natural, detailed, and profound manner, without idealizing or romanticizing the scene. The author appears to present the story with vivid visualization and without embellishment. Even when addressing emotions, the focus remains on fundamental feelings or on establishing an emotionally distant tone (Wulandari & Surur, 2024). This stands in contrast to the findings of Badareen & Eishah (2023), who, in their research, claim that events in the novel are portrayed brutally and in favor of the Palestinian side, rather than being written objectively.

Pessimism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*

Pessimism is an attitude that tends to view everything from a negative perspective. Pessimists believe that things will end badly, the future is filled with difficulties or failures, and that good or happy outcomes are unlikely to happen (Antikasari & Raharjo, 2024). Meanwhile, the element of pessimism in Zola's (1880) naturalism reflects the inability of an individual or character to resist authority or power, which environmental factors or other circumstances can also influence. In *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, this is illustrated by the author through the Bedouin girl's helplessness in resisting the Israeli soldiers who attempt to rape her (Shibli, 2017:21) and the female journalist's sense of pessimism regarding her ability to surpass the travel limit imposed by Israel (Shibli, 2017:34).

The aspect of pessimism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is depicted in the scene where the Israeli military leader attempts to rape the Bedouin girl they had previously captured in the desert. The Bedouin girl is powerless and unable to resist, no matter how desperately she tries to free herself from the commander's grip. The author portrays pessimism in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* through the Bedouin girl's helplessness in resisting the Israeli military leader who attempts to rape her. The girl is powerless and lacks the strength to oppose the commander's authority. In this context, her actions reflect that she has no chance to escape or avoid the assault with all her might, nor can she change her fate. This aligns with the tendency of naturalist writers to depict their characters as individuals engulfed in unrelenting suffering, with no opportunity to alter their destiny (Surur, 2023).

The next aspect of pessimism in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is depicted in the scene where the female journalist feels pessimistic about reaching Area C, which is already close to Area D. As a resident of Area A and a member of the Palestinian community, she faces restrictions on traveling to other regions. Consequently, when she wishes to explore the minor details of these distant areas, she is filled with doubt and pessimism about whether she will be able to reach them successfully.

The author conveys this element of pessimism in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* through the uncertainty and hesitation experienced by the female journalist. She lacks the power and freedom to move beyond her place of residence due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation of Palestine at that time and is constantly haunted by fear. This reflects naturalist literature, where naturalist writers often hold a cynical and fatalistic worldview (*Naturalism: Definition, Authors & Examples*, n.d.). They portray literary characters as having little to no power or opportunity to make decisions for themselves (Surur, 2023). The harsh realities of their lives—shaped by genetics, nature, or simply misfortune—become the sole determining factors in what happens to them.

Setting in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*

The environment is a place where each lives, interacts, adapts, and develops. Indirectly, the environment plays a significant role in shaping each individual's personality and influencing their fate (Sari, 2022). The element of setting in Zola's naturalism highlights the connection between the environment and the fate of the characters (Surur, 2023). In *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, the presence of the setting that influences the characters is shown through several locations, including the shack of the Israeli military leader (Shibli, 2017:22) and the city of Ramallah (Shibli, 2017: 30).

The Israeli military leader's hut serves as one of the key settings in *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, particularly in the scene where the Bedouin girl is taken into the commander's hut and eventually raped by him. Although she tries to resist and fights with all her strength, the power of the Israeli commander proves far greater, leaving her increasingly pessimistic and resigned to whatever may happen to her. The hut setting reinforces the oppressive

atmosphere and underscores the girl's helplessness in confronting such overwhelming authority.

The author demonstrates that setting plays a crucial role in shaping the actions and character development within the novel. Moreover, the remote location of the hut and military base in the desert makes it nearly impossible for her to escape or seek justice. In such circumstances, it seems she can only surrender and await the fate awaiting her. In such a situation, it seems that he can only surrender and wait for the fate that awaits him. The setting determines the course of a character's fate and serves as a reflection of the conflicts that will unfold. In fact, in naturalist literature, the setting frequently functions almost as a character in its own right (*Naturalism: Definition, Authors & Examples*, n.d.).

Another setting element in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is the city of Ramallah, where the author provides a depiction of the city's condition, the place where the female journalist resides, as described in the second chapter of the novel. In detail, the author portrays the daily reality of Ramallah, where the sounds of gunfire, military patrol sirens, helicopters, and fighter jets are familiar parts of everyday life.

Indirectly, the situation in Ramallah, under the strict surveillance of the Israeli military, influences the attitudes and actions of the female journalist. With such tight control and the various restrictions imposed, she is unable to act rationally and often behaves impulsively. The author attempts to depict the city of Ramallah in detail to reveal the unseen or implicit aspects that shape the character, employing a realist lens (Wulandari & Surur, 2024).

Plot twist in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī*

A plot twist is an unexpected ending or turn of events in a story that is not easily guessed by the reader, including the preceding parts that lead up to the unexpected event (Famsah et al., 2022). In naturalism, a plot twist refers to unexpected occurrences in literary works, when the narrative tends to shock or surprise the reader due to the influence of elements such as determinism and pessimism. Such twists can occur at the end of a fragment or even after the story (Surur, 2023). In *Tafṣīl Thānawī*, there are several plot twists, two of which include the incident following the Bedouin girl's rape by the Israeli military (Shibli, 2017: 21) and the moment when the female journalist is waiting in line at an Israeli military checkpoint (Shibli, 2017: 37).

One aspect of the plot twist in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is the incident following the Bedouin girl's rape by the Israeli military. The soldiers then take her into the desert, which might lead readers to assume that she would simply be abandoned there after the horrific mass rape committed by the commander and his troops. However, the narrative takes a tragic and unexpected turn—she is killed. Some readers may have anticipated that she would be released or find a way to escape, especially when she tries to resist by screaming and attempting to run away. This creates a moment of hope or suspense. Yet her attempt to escape ultimately proven futile, as she is shot by the Israeli soldiers.

The narrative in this novel takes an unforeseen course—the character, after enduring immense suffering and struggling to survive, is suddenly and unexpectedly killed. This twist deepens the sense of futility and inevitability that often permeates naturalist fiction (Surur, 2023). While Badareen & Eishah (2023), in earlier studies, interpreted this as a bitter reality of occupation within a postcolonial literary framework, the reading through the lens of naturalism focuses instead on deterministic tragedy and the unpredictability of fate, highlighting the overpowering forces that strip characters of agency and hope.

Another aspect of the plot twist in *Tafṣīl Thānawī* is the scene in which the female journalist is waiting in line to pass through a checkpoint guarded by the Israeli military. Carrying a borrowed blue identity card from a friend, she attempts to enter Israel in search

of information about the rape and murder of a Bedouin girl that occurred decades earlier. This moment creates tension, as her mission to uncover the past seems uncertain, and her journey to access crucial information is fraught with challenges and danger.

In this case, readers might assume that the journalist would fail to pass the heavily guarded checkpoint and safely enter Israeli-controlled territory. Such an assumption is based on earlier descriptions of the strict security measures enforced by the Israeli military at every checkpoint. Surprisingly, however, the journalist manages to pass through the checkpoint with ease and enter Israel without difficulty. This narrative twist aligns with the element of plot twist in naturalism, where the storyline takes an unexpected direction and the outcome is not easily predictable for readers. It underscores the unpredictable nature of life, a defining characteristic of naturalist literature, in which the fate of characters often takes unforeseen turns (Surur, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The aspects of naturalism in the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* by Adania Shibli, based on Zola's elements of naturalism (1880), consist of five aspects: determinism, the inability to assess things rationally, and an interest in small details. Setting: the Negev desert, the Israeli military leader's hut, and the city of Ramallah. Pessimism, the inability of the Bedouin girl to resist, and the pessimistic view of the character regarding traveling outside her area. Objectivity: the use of third-person pronouns, the military leader's instructions to his soldiers, and the burial process of the Bedouin girl. Plot twist: the death of the Bedouin girl and the journalist's success in entering Israeli territory. Broadly speaking, these aspects are depicted through the rape and murder of the Bedouin girl after the Nakba. The author uses two perspectives to describe the events naturally: the perspective of the Israeli military soldier who guards the southern area and is the perpetrator of the rape and murder of the Bedouin girl, and the second perspective is the point of view of the female journalist, decades after the event, who becomes intrigued by a news story and attempts to uncover the small details of the rape and murder of the Bedouin girl. Shibli objectively portrays how the rape occurred and how the Israeli occupation is still felt many years later, without idealizing it as in realist works, rather than romanticism. The analysis of Zola's naturalism in Shibli's novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* reveals the Nakba and the condition of Palestine in a direct and unembellished manner, without any attempt at romanticization. Nevertheless, the novel *Tafṣīl Thānawī* does not merely record the situation of Palestine in the past but also demonstrates its relevance to the current condition of Palestine, which remains in conflict with Israel. Therefore, future research should further explore these elements of naturalism for a more detailed and comprehensive analysis, or alternatively, examine the novel through other approaches and theoretical frameworks.

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TAWASSUL IN THE QAŞĪDAH YARTĀĦ QALBĪ BY ḤABĪB 'UMAR IBN ḤAFĪZ: A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF MICHAEL RIFFATERRE

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
Ḥabīb 'Umar Ibn Ḥafīz; Michael Riffaterre's semiotic; *qaşīdah*; *tawassul*; *Yartāḥ Qalbī*.

Ḥabīb 'Umar Ibn Ḥafīz is a renowned preacher from Tarim who has produced numerous literary works, including poetry and *qaşīdahs*. One of them, *Yartāḥ Qalbī*, conveys profound meanings of *tawassul* expressed through poetic and refined language. This study aims to explore the symbolic meanings and the forms of *tawassul* within the *qaşīdah*. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method using Michael Riffaterre's semiotic approach, which includes indirect expression, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, matrix, model, variant, hypogram, and intertextuality. The analysis reveals that *Yartāḥ Qalbī* is rich in rhetorical devices, consisting of eight metaphors, two metonymies, one personification, and one hyperbole, all of which reflect deep symbolic meanings related to *tawassul*. The main finding highlights the practice of *tawassul bi-l-maḥabbah*, namely supplicating to Allah by means of love and the honor of *ahl al-bayt*. The concept of *tawassul* in this *qaşīdah* is not merely ritual but also embodied in forms of praise and supplication. Therefore, *Yartāḥ Qalbī* not only expresses devotion to *ahl al-bayt* but also serves as a medium for preserving the tradition of *tawassul* and reinforcing the spiritual and faith values of the Muslim community.

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الكلمات المفتاحية:
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المخلص

الحبيب عمر بن حفيظ هو داع مشهور من مدينة تريم، أُلّف العديد من الأعمال الأدبية، ومنها الأشعار والقصائد. ومن أبرزها قصيدة "يرتاح قلبي" التي تحمل معاني عميقة حول مفهوم التوسل، وقد صيغت بلغة شعرية رقيقة وجميلة. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن الدلالات الرمزية وصور التوسل الواردة في هذه القصيدة. وقد استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي النوعي مع تطبيق مقارنة السيميائيات عند ميكائيل ريفاتير، التي تقوم على مبدأ التعبير غير مباشر، والقراءة الاكتشافية والارتجاعية، إضافةً إلى المصفوفة والنموذج والألوان، والهيوجرام، والتناس. أظهرت النتائج أنّ قصيدة "يرتاح قلبي" تزخر بالأساليب البلاغية، حيث تضم ثمان استعارات، ومجازين مرسلين، وتشخيصاً واحداً، ومبالغة واحدة، وكلها توحى بمعانٍ رمزية عميقة متعلقة بالتوسل. أما النتيجة الرئيسية فهي تجلّي مفهوم التوسل بالمحبة، أي التوجه بالدعاء إلى الله تعالى بجعل المحبة والمكانة المشرفة لأهل البيت وسيلةً للتقرب إليه. فالتوسل في هذه القصيدة لا يُفهم على أنه طقس شعائري فحسب، بل يتجسد كذلك في صيغ الثناء والدعاء. وبذلك تُعدّ "يرتاح قلبي" تعبيراً عن المحبة لأهل البيت، ووسيلةً للحفاظ على تقليد التوسل، وتعزيزاً للقيم الروحية والإيمانية لدى الأمة الإسلامية.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature in the Islamic tradition is not merely a medium of entertainment or an aesthetic work, but also serves as a means of *da'wah* and the reinforcement of spiritual and religious values (Sutisna et al., 2024). A literary work only becomes meaningful when it is connected to various factors beyond itself, one of which is religious teachings often manifested in the form of moral messages. According to Tafonao (2025), a moral message is the core idea that the author wishes to convey to the readers, consisting of teachings about what is considered good or bad. Through literature, the author seeks to present moral ideas that guide readers to both appreciate and understand messages regarding the values of goodness and evil prevailing in society (Syi'aruddin, 2018). Literary works that address spirituality and religiosity are commonly referred to as Sufi literature. Sufi literature emerged alongside the development of Sufism, as it often discusses the inner and spiritual experiences of the Sufi. The term "Sufi" refers to the process of drawing closer to Allah with a purified heart and sincere spiritual effort (Ahmadi, 2017). One of the themes frequently explored in Sufi literary works is *tawassul*.

Etymologically, the term *tawassul* originates from the word *wasīlah*, which means a means or a path to achieve a goal. Terminologically, *tawassul* is understood as an effort by a servant to draw closer to Allah through a specific intermediary, such as good deeds, the prayers of the righteous, or invoking the name of someone close to Him, so that one's supplications are more easily accepted (Haqqi, 2018). Furthermore, according to Nasiruddin Albani, *tawassul* is a form of approaching Allah through righteous deeds, where such deeds act as a *wasīlah* to be performed sincerely and in accordance with Sharia guidance (Haqqi, 2018). Albani also distinguishes between *wasīlah kawniyah* and *wasīlah shar'iyah*. *Wasīlah kawniyah* refers to natural intermediaries created by Allah, such as water to quench thirst or food to relieve hunger. In contrast, *wasīlah shar'iyah* refers to means of drawing closer to Allah through practices prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, such as reciting the shahadah, praying, or performing dhikr (Haqqi, 2018).

Beyond its definition, *tawassul* has also been subject to different interpretations among Muslim scholars. For instance, the Wahhabi movement rejects *tawassul* through the Prophet, other messengers, or pious individuals, considering it a form of shirk (Nur, 2011). However, scholars of Ahlus Sunnah affirm its permissibility, both during their lifetime and after death, because the essence of prayer is directed solely to Allah, while mentioning the name of the Prophet or a saint is understood metaphorically (*majāzī*) (Nur, 2011). *Tawassul* is performed not because these individuals possess power, but because their closeness to Allah is believed to bring blessings, thereby facilitating the acceptance of supplications. This view aligns with scholars such as Maulana Shaykh al-Kurdi, who asserts that approaching a righteous person can serve as a means to attain Allah's mercy (Nur, 2011). Nevertheless, *tawassul* is not obligatory; it is merely one method or approach among others for supplicating to Allah (Farid, 2016).

In addition to its theological aspects, *tawassul* is also reflected in various literary forms. One form of literary work that contains elements of *tawassul* is the *qaṣīdah*. According to Ansori (2022), a *qaṣīdah* is a type of poetry in the Arabic literary tradition that usually contains praise, social criticism, or religious messages, and is often performed in the form of song. Etymologically, the term *qaṣīdah* comes from the Arabic word *qaṣīdah*, which means "song" or "chant". Over time, the term has come to refer not just to songs in general, but more specifically to songs whose lyrics convey *da'wah* messages and Islamic values (Ansori, 2022). Furthermore, rhythm is considered an important element in a *qaṣīdah* because it is directly related to the poet's emotional state. Common themes include praise of God or rulers, lamentation, advice, spirituality, and morality (Ansori, 2022).

Qaṣīdah rich in religious values is *Yartāḥ Qalbī* by Ḥabīb ‘Umar. This *qaṣīdah* consists of thirteen verses and is included in the book *Maulid Aḍiyā’ul Lāmi’*, compiled around 1994 CE at Dār al-Mustafa (Kasyidi, 2024). Ḥabīb ‘Umar was born in the city of Tarim, Hadramaut, on Monday, May 27, 1963 CE, corresponding to 4 Muharram 1383 AH, and is recognized as one of the leading scholars and preachers of the modern era (Muazzam, 2021). In terms of structure, this *qaṣīdah* is composed of verses with regular meter, employing beautiful language and profound meanings. Implicitly, it emphasizes the teaching of honouring *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’ and the *ahl al-bayt*, and contains the concept of *tawassul* through her as a holy woman embodying exemplary character and spiritual excellence (Muazzam, 2021). This spiritual nuance can be seen in its opening line: “*Yartāḥ qalbī idhā ḥadd qad dhakara Fāṭimah*” meaning “My heart finds peace whenever someone mentions Fāṭimah.” The verse illustrates that remembrance of *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah is not merely a form of veneration, but also serves as a means of seeking closeness to Allah through love for His chosen family.

Implicitly, this *Qaṣīdah* highlights a form of *tawassul*, one of the teachings of Sufism. This *tawassul* takes the form of love (*maḥabbah*) for Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’ and her *ahl al-bayt*. According to Ibn Taymīyah, *maḥabbah* or love in Sufi teachings is understood as the heart’s attraction of a servant to Allah, not merely because of His blessings, but purely for His essence. This *maḥabbah* serves as the foundation for all acts of worship in religion, thereby being reflected in a person’s faith (Khasanah & Fauzi, 2025).

Studies on the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī* by Ḥabīb ‘Umar remain scarce. However, several previous works have examined his writings from different perspectives. Research conducted by Patmanegara et al. (2023) analyzed changes in rhythm (*wazn*), rhyme patterns (*qāfiyah*), and thematic elements in the qasida *Fayḍ al-mann min raḥmat al-Wahhāb al-Mannān*, revealing prosodic variations that nonetheless preserved the coherence of meaning and the musicality of the verse. Meanwhile, Maula et al. (2023) investigated prosaic patterns in the book *al-Diyā’ al-Lāmi’* and identified the application of various *baḥr* (metrical patterns) and their modifications, such as *khabn* (metrical contraction), *iḍmār* (metrical suppression), *waqṣ* (syllabic reduction), *ṭayy* (metrical elision), *khabl* (combined contraction and elision), *khazl* (metrical shortening), and *qaṭ’* (metrical truncation). Another study by Ahmad Irsad Asaddullah (2023) employed Umberto Eco’s semiotic theory to analyze the meanings in the third chapter of *al-Diyā’ al-Lāmi’*, focusing on aspects of signification and communication. Furthermore, Zuhurfah Nur Rohmatuazza (2023) examined the book *Khuluqunā* and found Sufi values categorized into three domains of ethics: ethics toward God, oneself, and fellow human beings, with *akhlaqī* Sufism serving as its dominant feature.

This study aims to uncover the hidden meanings contained in the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī* by Ḥabīb ‘Umar through Riffaterre’s semiotic analysis, as well as to identify and explore the forms of *tawassul* present in the *qaṣīdah*. The primary data source is the text of the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī* itself, while secondary data consist of books, journal articles, internet sources, and other supporting documents. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection conducted through close reading. Furthermore, to reveal the hidden meanings within the *qaṣīdah*, the researcher applies Michael Riffaterre’s semiotic framework, which includes the principles of discontinuity of expression, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, matrix, model, and variant, hypogram, and intertextuality.

Semiotics derives from the Greek word *semion*, which means “sign”. Semiotics is understood as a branch of knowledge that studies systems of signs, and this field of study emerged in the early 20th century (Ḥamdāwī, 2020). Through semiotic analysis, a system of signs can be optimally understood in terms of its meaning and aesthetic value. A meaning is the result of a combination of several signs. Thus, semiotics becomes a tool for

accurately conveying meanings in literary works accurately to readers and audiences (Al-Hikmah, 2018). One semiotic theory frequently used by researchers to uncover and interpret meanings in literary works, especially in poetry, is the semiotic approach proposed by Riffaterre.

Riffaterre's semiotic theory focuses on revealing the signs and symbols within a poem. According to him, a poem is a form of expression conveyed indirectly or covertly, meaning that it communicates the meaning of something through something else (Riffaterre, 1978). A poem delivers its message implicitly by embedding it within various signs or symbols. This indirectness sometimes leads to deviations in meaning or misinterpretations.

The emergence of problems in reading and understanding poetic language led Riffaterre to develop a concept for the process of interpreting literary works (Aşgharī, 2019). The first stage in meaning-making is the discontinuity of expression, which indicates that a word in a poem carries another explanation or meaning due to three conditions: substitution of meaning, deviation of meaning, and creation of meaning (Annisa et al., 2023). In revealing each meaning under these three conditions, other fields of knowledge are employed, such as stylistics and *balāghah*. Stylistics is the study of how an author expresses ideas in a work through the choice of words, phrases, and clauses, referred to in Arabic as *al-uslūb*. Meanwhile, *balāghah* is a discipline that discusses language style, paying close attention to the appropriateness of expressions according to the communicative context (Huda & Buana, 2021). The second stage is heuristic and hermeneutic reading. This process begins with heuristic reading, which examines the text superficially to recognize its basic meaning. It is then followed by hermeneutic reading, conducted more deeply to interpret symbols, hidden meanings, and the complete message intended by the poet (Ambarini & Umayā, 2018). The third stage involves matrix, model, and variant. The matrix is the core idea of the poem. This idea is expressed through the model, which represents the poem's content in poetic form. Variants are developments of the model in various forms of expression that still relate to the main theme (Riffaterre, 1978). The next stage is identifying the hypogram in the poem. A hypogram is a text, historical event, or personal experience that serves as the background for the creation of a literary work. Usually, the hypogram is not presented in full within the text, but its traces remain and connect to other works. The relationship between works is called intertextuality, whereby the meaning of a text can only be fully understood when linked to other texts that serve as inspiration, continuation, or even as a counterpoint (Maulana, 2019).

Research on the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī* by Ḥabīb 'Umar has not been conducted previously. However, several similar studies on forms of *tawassul* in *qaṣīdahs* and poetry have been carried out, albeit with different data sources and theoretical frameworks. Therefore, this study is necessary to explore the forms of *tawassul* in the *qaṣīdah* more deeply using Riffaterre's semiotic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Michael Riffaterre's semiotic analysis in the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī*

To uncover the signs, symbols, and meanings contained in each lyrics of the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī*, the researcher employs Riffaterre's semiotic framework as an analytical tool. This approach focuses on five key aspects of meaning-making: the discontinuity of expression, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, matrix, model, and variant, as well as hypogram and intertextuality.

Discontinuity of expression

Discontinuity of expression indicates that a word in a poem carries another

explanation or meaning. Each word and sentence in a poem can sometimes be difficult to understand directly and requires deeper interpretation. This occurs due to three conditions: displacement of meaning, deviation of meaning, and creation of meaning (Annisa et al., 2022). Displacement of meaning arises from the use of metaphors, metonymy, and other figurative language, such as personification, hyperbole, simile, allegory, and synecdoche. In this *qaṣīdah*, displacement of meaning appears in the form of metaphors, metonymy, personification, and hyperbole. For example, the expression *hiya dhukhrunā, hiya jalā' li-l-suḥubi al-qātimah* (she is our treasure; she is a clearing for the dark clouds) explicitly indicates that Fāṭimah is highly precious and able to avert problems and evil, while *hiya nūru qalbī wa-hiya dhukhrī lanā rāḥimah* (She is the light of my heart, and she is our enduring remembrance, full of compassion) depicts her as a source of happiness and guidance, likened to light for the heart.

Expressions such as *yartāḥ qalbī* symbolize inner peace in religiosity, *'anwārunā al-dā'imah* (our everlasting lights) represents guidance or a path to goodness, *bi-'abḥur ma'ārif* (through the oceans of knowledge or gnosis) symbolizes Fāṭimah's profound, vast, and limitless knowledge and spirituality, *bi-ḥaqq tanzīl mawlanā al-'alī qā'imah* (by virtue of the revelation of our Lord, the Exalted, the Ever-Subsisting) represents the unshakable power and truth of divine revelation, *ḥawl al-ḥimā* (around the sanctuary or within the protected domain) indicates the protection and safety provided by Fāṭimah, and *rashḥ al-jabīn* (the beads of sweat on the forehead) symbolizes the proximity of death or the approach of the soul. Metonymy is also present, where words substitute for usual meanings but may also refer to their original sense. Examples include *bint al-nabī al-muṣṭafā* (the daughter of the chosen Prophet), referring to Fāṭimah inheriting noble qualities from the Prophet Muhammad, and *wa-ahl al-kisā'* (and the People of the Cloak), referring to the Prophet's household: 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn. Personification, attributing human traits to inanimate objects, is found in verse 7, *lahā suyūfun bawātiru qāṭi'atun ṣārimah* (She possesses sharp, decisive, and unsheathed swords) and verse 9, *suyūfuhum lil-mu'ādī qad ghadat hādimah* (their swords have become destructive against the enemy), where "swords" symbolize Fāṭimah's spiritual strength and steadfastness rather than literal weapons (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). Hyperbole, which exaggerates for emphasis, is also used. In verse 3, *'ayyāmuḥā wa-al-layālī ṣā'imah qā'imah* (Her days and nights are spent in fasting and standing in prayer), Ḥabīb 'Umar emphasizes Fāṭimah's continuous and unwavering devotion to Allah, highlighting her persistence in worship and perfection in piety.

Distortion of meaning in a poem or *qaṣīdah* can be caused by several factors, such as ambiguity, contradiction, or nonsense (Pradopo, 2005). Ambiguity occurs when a word has two meanings: a close meaning, which is the intended sense, and a distant meaning, which is vague or unclear (Al-Jārim & Amīn, 2007). Contradiction arises when a word carries two opposing meanings within a sentence, while nonsense refers to a text that is illogical or cannot be interpreted reasonably (al-Khūlī, 2000). Words or phrases indicating contradiction or nonsense were not found in the verses of this *qaṣīdah*. Ambiguity in this *qaṣīdah* appears in several verses. In the first verse, the word *'anwārunā* can be interpreted as a guide or one who provides direction. In the second verse, *dhukhranā* may mean someone precious, while *al-suḥub al-qātimah* (the dark clouds) can refer to sorrow or misfortune. In the third verse, *buḥūrun* (seas, oceans) can be interpreted as the depth of Fāṭimah's spirituality and knowledge. In verses seven and eight, *suyūfun* (swords) symbolizes steadfastness and spiritual strength in facing oppression. In the tenth verse, *rashḥ al-jabīn* is understood as the approach of death or the nearness of one's end.

Creating meaning is a convention and poetic device used to capture the reader's attention. Linguistically, it may not carry an inherent meaning, yet it generates significance within a poem. This is achieved through structural manipulations such as rhyme,

typography, repetition, rhetorical questions, parallelism, and so forth (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). In this *qaṣīdah*, the creation of meaning is evident in the rhyme, where the endings of words maintain a uniform pattern from the first to the thirteenth verse. Another form is repetition, involving the recurrence of words, phrases, or identical structures. Words repeated for emphasis include *Fāṭimah* three times to highlight her persona, *‘ālimah* twice, *dā’imah* three times, *qā’imah* twice, *dhukhrun* twice, and *suyūfun* twice. Such repetition functions to convey emotion, reinforce meaning, and illustrate Fāṭimah’s religiosity as well as the love for her and her family. Parallelism is also present, representing repetition focused on grammatical structures that are similar across clauses, sentences, or connected lines (Nurgiyantoro, 2018). This stylistic device appears in the sixth and seventh verses, which are interrelated as Ḥabīb ‘Umar seeks to portray Fāṭimah’s noble qualities and her role as a protector and guide against misguidance. Additional parallelism is found in the tenth and eleventh verses, which contain continuous prayers and supplications to Allah.

Heuristic and hermeneutic reading

Heuristic reading, or first-level reading, is conducted by adding or supplying missing words with phrases, words, or sentences that clarify the connections between verses. This reading process requires a subsequent step called hermeneutic reading, which seeks to obtain a clearer and deeper understanding of meaning through interpretation (Riffaterre, 1978). The following represents the heuristic reading conducted on this *qaṣīdah*.

Tabel 1. Heuristic reading of the *qaṣīdah*

No.	Heuristic Reading	Verses of a <i>Qaṣīdah</i>
1	It portrays <i>Fāṭimah</i> as an eternal light, the daughter of the Prophet who serves as a source of inner peace and a symbol of <i>wasīlah</i> (spiritual mediation).	<p>يَزْتَاخُ قَلْبِي إِذَا حَدَّ قَدْ ذَكَرْتُ فَاطِمَةَ # بِنْتُ النَّبِيِّ الْمُصْطَفَى (وهي) أَنْوَارُنَا الدَّائِمَةُ (في حياتنا) <i>My heart finds peace whenever someone mentions the name of Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet al-Muṣṭafā; she is our eternal light in this life.</i></p>
2	She is portrayed as an ocean of divine knowledge, a symbol of wisdom, and a light that dispels darkness.	<p>أَمَسَّتْ بِأَبْحُرِ مَعَارِفِ (من) رَبِّهَا عَالِمَةٌ # هِيَ ذُخْرُنَا (و) هِيَ (كالنور) جَلَالًا لِلْسُّحُبِ الْقَائِمَةِ <i>She has become an ocean of knowledge from her Lord, a woman of wisdom. She is our treasure, and she is (like a Light) that pierces through the dark clouds.</i></p>
3	It represents worship and complete obedience, a symbol of a pure life.	<p>(إن فضائل) بِحُورِهَا فِي الْمَعَالِي دُوبٌ مُتَلَاطِمَةٌ # أَيَّامَهَا وَاللَّيَالِي (كلها مليئة) صَائِمَةٌ قَائِمَةٌ <i>(Indeed, her virtues are) like a sea of excellence whose waves continuously surge with nobility. Her days and nights (are always filled with) fasting and night prayers.</i></p>
4	Fāṭimah’s character was directly shaped by the Prophet, symbolizing the purity of faith and steadfastness.	<p>بِحَقِّ تَنْزِيلِ مَوْلَانَا الْعَلِيِّ قَائِمَةٌ (في قلبها) # تَحْتِ الرَّعَايَاتِ مِنْ طَهْ نَشْتِ (عابدة) حَازِمَةٌ <i>By the truth of the revelation from the Most High Lord, which remains preserved (in her heart). Under the guidance of the Prophet, she grew as (a servant) firm and steadfast.</i></p>
5	Fāṭimah is depicted as a wise figure, full of knowledge, and a	<p>لَهَا التَّبْتُّلُ إِلَى الْمَوْلَى عَدَتْ هَائِمَةٌ (ومُشْتَاقَةٌ) # لِلَّهِ (و) بِاللَّهِ يَالِكَ (من) عَارِفُهُ عَالِمَةٌ</p>

	symbol of sincere devotion.	<i>To the Owner of everything, she was always in a state of seclusion (and immersed in longing). For the sake of Allah (and) with Allah. Truly, how great she is as a wise and knowledgeable woman.</i>
6	It portrays eternal compassion, a symbol of <i>rahmah</i> for the ummah.	# هِيَ نُورٌ قَلْبِي وَهِيَ ذُخْرِي لَنَا رَاحِمَةٌ (دَائِمَةٌ) (وهي) نِعْمَ الشَّفِيقَةُ وَلَا هِيَ عَنَّا نَائِمَةٌ <i>She is the light in my heart, my protector, and (always) cares for us. Truly, (she is) the most merciful and never neglects us.</i>
7	Fāṭimah as the protector of the ummah, a symbol of spiritual strength against the enemy.	# لَهَا سُيُوفٌ بَوَاتِرٌ قَاطِعَةٌ (و) صَارِمَةٌ بِهَا احْتَمَيْنَا (مِنْ شَرِّ الْعَدُوِّ) وَنُنْذِرُ أَنْفُسًا حَائِمَةً <i>She possesses sharp swords that decisively cut (and are firm). With her swords, we seek protection (from the evil of enemies) and warn the souls who are on the path of misguidance.</i>
8	Presenting Fāṭimah and 'Alī as the shield of the ummah, a symbol of divine protection.	# حَوْلَ الْحِمَى (نَسْتَطِيعُ الْاِحْتِمَاءِ) إِنَّ عَارَتِ الْقَوِي قَادِمَتِي (علينا) # فِي صَفْنَا فَاطِمَةَ مَعَنَا أَبُو فَاطِمَةَ <i>Around the sacred land (we can seek refuge) if the attacks of the strong come. In our ranks is Fāṭimah, and with us is also Abū Fāṭimah (Ali).</i>
9	A symbol of destruction for the oppressors and a victory for the truth.	# سُيُوفُهُمْ لِلْمُعَادِي قَدْ غَدَّتْ هَادِمَةٌ (لِلظَّالِمِينَ) # يَاوَيْلِ أَهْلِ الْهَيْلِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ الظَّالِمَةِ <i>Their swords have become destroyers of the enemies (and the oppressors). Woe to the arrogant and to the tyrannical souls.</i>
10	A prayer for Allah's mercy in the form of health, protection, and safety.	# يَا رَبِّ فَرِّجْ عَلَيْنَا وَاكْفِنَا (شَرَّ) الْغَاشِمَةِ # (وَأَمْنَحْنَا) هَيْبَنَا عَوَافِي كَوَامِلِ تَامَّةٌ دَائِمَةٌ (بِرَحْمَتِكَ) <i>O Lord, ease our affairs and protect us from (the evil of) oppressive rulers. (Grant us) the blessing of peace, perfect and continuous health (through Your mercy).</i>
11	Tawassul through the Prophet Muhammad for a blessed end (<i>ḥusn al-khātimah</i>).	# وَعِنْدَ رَشْحِ الْجَبِينِ أَحْسِنُ لَنَا الْخَاتِمَةَ (وَأَجْعَلْنَا فِي جَنَّتِكَ) # بِحَاهِ خَيْرِ الْوَرَى ذِي الْهَمَّةِ الْعَازِمَةِ (وَالظَّهَارَةِ) <i>And when sweat dampens the forehead (at the moment of death), make good our final end (and admit us into Your Paradise). By the honor of the master of all mankind, who is steadfast (and pure at heart).</i>
12	Sending blessings upon <i>ahl al-kisā'</i> and the descendants of Fāṭimah.	# وَاهْلِ الْكِسَاءِ (الْمُكْرَمِينَ) مَعَ دَرَارِي أُمَّنَا فَاطِمَةَ # عَلَيْهِمْ (يَا) رَبَّنَا صَلَاتِكَ الدَّائِمَةَ <i>Together with the dwellers of the (noble) Kisā' and the descendants of Sayyidah Fāṭimah, our mother. Upon them, O our Lord, bestow everlasting blessings (salawat).</i>
13	A call to follow the Prophet's family and companions with sincerity so as to be counted among those who are saved.	# وَآلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ أَهْلِيلِ الثِّيَةِ الْجَارِمَةِ (وَالْعَزِيمَةِ) # وَمَنْ تَبِعَهُمْ (بِإِخْلَاصٍ) دَخَلَ فِي الْفِرْقَةِ الْعَائِمَةِ <i>And upon his family and his sincere (and strong-willed) companions, and whoever follows them (with sincerity) will be among the fortunate ones.</i>

Fāṭimah al-Zahrā was a woman of gentleness and compassion, intelligent, humble, yet resolute. From an early age, she was born and raised in a family environment imbued with religious education and strong faith. It is therefore not surprising that she was among those safeguarded from sin. She held a distinguished and honorable position in the heart of the Prophet Muhammad bringing peace and tranquillity. Her religiosity, steadfastness, and extraordinary determination exemplify inner strength, serving as a model and source of inspiration for other women (Al-Ka'bī, 2019).

From the results of the hermeneutic reading, this *qaṣīdah* contains expressions of respect and veneration for Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā, known as a compassionate figure and a guide toward a peaceful life imbued with religious and spiritual values. Fāṭimah is depicted as an intelligent woman with profound knowledge of religion, particularly in spirituality, thus serving as a source of tranquillity for troubled hearts and a guide for those seeking direction. Her exemplary character is evident in her relentless devotion to worship, performed both day and night with sincerity and longing for Allah. She is also recognized for her firmness in upholding goodness and truth, symbolized in the phrase (*lahā suyūfun*), representing steadfastness. The *qaṣīdah* further implies the supplication of a servant seeking mercy, protection from oppression, a good end to life, and intercession from the Prophet Muhammad and his family, with the hope of becoming a servant blessed in both this world and the Hereafter.

Matrix, model, and variant

The matrix represents the implicit core meaning of the entire text, the main message that is hidden yet forms the connecting thread of the *qaṣīdah*. Before identifying the matrix, it is necessary to find the model within the *qaṣīdah* or poem. The model is indicated by the symbolic meanings present in frequently recurring expressions. From the model and matrix, variants are then developed in the form of expressions that reinforce the model, such as metaphors or depictions that refer to the same meaning (Mahliatussikah, 2015).

The matrix in *Yartāḥ Qalbī* is the nobility of Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' as a model of spirituality, a source of tranquility in life, a protector for the community, and a means of blessing. Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' is not only the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad but also a light for the ummah, a source of protection and mercy, a deliverer from darkness, a bastion of safety, and a path toward salvation. This is evidenced by key expressions such as *'anwārunā ad-dā'imah, hiya dhukhranā, hiya nūru qalbī, and bihā iḥtamaynā*.

The model in this *qaṣīdah* is the praise of Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' for her virtues, nobility, and praiseworthy qualities. These praises are reflected in the symbolic representations of Fāṭimah as light, a shield (weapon), mercy, and protector. The weapon symbol illustrates that Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' embodies spiritual strength and firmness in confronting oppression. Additionally, she is symbolized through seclusion and devotion, demonstrated by her continuous worship of Allah at all times, evidencing her spiritual insight. Through her nobility and virtues, Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' is regarded as an exalted figure of spirituality in terms of faith and piety. The model in this *qaṣīdah* is revealed in the following verses:

هِيَ نُورٌ قَلْبِي وَهِيَ ذُخْرِي لَنَا رَاحِمَةٌ (دَائِمَةٌ) # (وَهِيَ) نِعْمَ الشَّفِيقَةُ وَلَا هِيَ عَنَّا نَائِمَةٌ
لَهَا سُيُوفٌ بَوَائِرُ قَاطِعَةٌ (و) صَارِمَةٌ # بِهَا احْتَمَيْنَا (مِنْ شَرِّ الْعَدُوِّ) وَنُنذِرُ أَنْفُسًا حَائِمَةً

*She is the light in my heart, my protector, and (always) cares for us #
Truly, (she is) the most merciful and never neglects us
She possesses sharp swords that decisively cut (and are first) # With her
swords, we seek protection (from the evil of enemies) and warn the souls
who are on the path of misguidance*

The previously mentioned matrix serves as a potential hypogram, which will be clearly elaborated into variants in the form of detailed expressions. The variants in this *qaṣīdah* consist of the poet's diverse expressions of praise for Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' through depictions and meaningful metaphors. Here, Fāṭimah is portrayed as an eternal light and a protector for the entire community. Expressions such as *'anwārunā ad-dā'imah* and *hiya nūru qalbī* are not merely descriptions of ordinary light, but symbolize spiritual light that illuminates the hearts, souls, and lives of Muslims. This also demonstrates that Fāṭimah serves as a guiding role model who continually provides guidance and direction amid the darkness of the times.

Furthermore, there are depictions of Fāṭimah as a woman of piety and profound knowledge. This is evident in expressions such as *lahā at-tabattul ilā al-mawlā ghadat hā'imah* and *amsat bi-'abhur ma'ārif rabbihā 'ālimah*, which indicate that Fāṭimah is not only a symbol of purity but also a righteous woman who remains close to Allah through continuous worship and a thirst for religious knowledge. Fāṭimah is also portrayed as a protector and defender of the community. This is reflected in the verses *lahā suyūf bawātir qāṭi'ah ṣārimah* and *bihā iḥtamaynā*, which show that she is not only gentle and compassionate but also firm and courageous in upholding truth and justice. At the end of the *qaṣīdah*, the poet incorporates prayers and hopes directed to Allah for protection, blessings, and ease in life in this world and the Hereafter, using the means of loving Sayyidah Fāṭimah and her family. This is expressed in the phrases *yā rabb farraj 'alaynā wa-ikfinā al-ghāshimah* and *'alayhimu rabbunā ṣalātuka al-dā'imah*.

Hypogram

A hypogram is a latent text or idea that serves as the primary inspiration and underlying foundation for the creation of a literary work. This text does not appear in its entirety but is indicated through signs within the *qaṣīdah* (Annisa et al., 2022). The main hypogram in this *qaṣīdah* is the stories of the nobility of Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' and her *ahl al-bayt*. It also refers to the narrative of the *ahl al-kisā'*, which is recorded in a hadith describing the event when the Prophet Muhammad SAW, along with Sayyidah Fāṭimah, Ali, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn the five holy figures were covered by a cloak. Through this event, the Prophet emphasized the virtue, honour, and purity of his family. This story has become an important source in Islamic religious tradition and in literary works that uphold the nobility of the *ahl al-bayt*. This is further supported in the twelfth verse of the *qaṣīdah*:

وَاهْلُ الْكِسَاءِ (الْمُكْرَمِينَ) مَعَ ذُرَارِي أُمَّنَا فَاطِمَةَ #

Together with the dwellers of the (noble) Kisā' and the descendants of Sayyidah Fāṭimah, our mother.

The story of the *ahl al-kisā'* (*ahl al-bayt*) is also closely related to the tradition of *tawassul*, including *tawassul* through the nobility of the station of Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā'. This serves as the spiritual foundation for the practice of *tawassul* to the *ahl al-bayt* within Islamic tradition, expressed through praise and supplication via the Prophet's family, often conveyed in the form of poetry or hymns imbued with profound spiritual meaning.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality refers to the relationship of a work with other texts, similar social phenomena, previous narratives, or classical poems that existed before the creation of the work. Thus, intertextuality examines not only the origin of a text from social texts but also

its role and continuity within society and history (Kuswarini, 2016). In this *qaṣīdah*, intertextuality is reflected in the widely known and authentic hadith about the *ahl al-kisā'*, which has been narrated by both Shia and Sunni sources. The hadith describes a moment when the Prophet Muhammad covered himself and four members of his family—Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', 'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn—with a single cloth. At that time, he supplicated to Allah to cleanse them of all sins and purify them with perfect sanctity. This event corresponds to the content of Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, verse 33, which speaks of the nobility and purity of the *ahl al-bayt* (Ridhofi, 2023).

The hadith regarding *ahl al-kisā'* is found in the narration of *Umm al-Mu'minin* (Mother of the Believers) 'Ā'ishah, which was reported by Imam Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, as well as by al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Suyūṭī in their Qur'anic exegesis. The following is the wording from Imam Muslim's narration ('Askarī, 1414 H): 'Ā'ishah said: "The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) went out one morning wearing a cloak made of black hair. Then al-Ḥasan Ibn 'Alī came, and he placed him under it. Then al-Ḥusayn came, and he entered with him. Then Fāṭimah came, and he placed her under it. Then 'Alī came, and he also placed him under it. Then he said: Indeed, Allah only intends to remove defilement from you, O People of the Household, and to purify you thoroughly." (Muslim).

In this hadith, there is a reference to Surah al-Aḥzāb verse 33, which was revealed to the Messenger of Allah while he was in the house of Umm Salamah. According to the majority of scholars, this verse serves as evidence that the *ahl al-bayt* referred to are the *aṣḥāb al-kisā'*, who are endowed with honor and purity, including Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', who holds a special status in the sight of Allah (Putra, 2015). This verse also constitutes a fundamental proof for venerating the *ahl al-bayt* and for seeking intercession (*tawassul*) through their nobility. Hence, the hadiths and narratives concerning *ahl al-kisā'* became one of, if not the main inspiration for Ḥabīb 'Umar in composing the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī*, which explicitly contains praise for the honor of Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā'.

Forms of *tawassul* in the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī*

After applying Riffaterre's semiotic analysis, it was found that the *Qaṣīdah Yartāḥ Qalbī* implicitly conveys forms of respect and praise for the nobility of Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', accompanied by prayers and *tawassul*, making her an intermediary through whom one seeks salvation from Allah. The *qaṣīdah* also emphasizes respect for the family of Prophet Muhammad (*ahl al-kisā'*) and revitalizes the tradition of *tawassul* based on authentic hadiths narrated by Imam Muslim, in line with Sunni-Sufi practices of using righteous people as intermediaries in supplication. These findings complement earlier studies showing that Ḥabīb 'Umar's works consistently embed spiritual meanings through symbolic and rhythmic structures, as seen in the prosodic and thematic analyses of Patmanegara et al. (2023) and Maula et al. (2023).

The form of *tawassul* present in this *qaṣīdah* is *tawassul bi-l-maḥabbah*, which refers to supplication through those beloved due to Allah's love for them. Given the special status of Sayyidah Fāṭimah, it is hoped that prayers offered through her intercession are more readily accepted. Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad SAW, as her father and the best of the pious, also serves as a primary intermediary. Mentioning the *ahl al-kisā'* and Sayyidah Fāṭimah's descendants further strengthens the element of *tawassul*, as they are believed to possess spiritual light and bring blessings. Thus, this *qaṣīdah* illustrates a tradition of *tawassul* rooted in love, respect, and conviction in the exceptional status of Allah's beloved. The practice of *tawassul* in this *qaṣīdah* is depicted through several verses that invoke Allah while mentioning the nobility of Prophet Muhammad SAW, Sayyidah Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', and the *ahl al-kisā'* family. Here, *tawassul* is not performed by directly

asking them for help; rather, their exalted status serves as an intermediary so that prayers are more readily accepted by Allah.

Moreover, this *qaṣīdah* also praises *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah, the *ahl al-kisā'* family, and her descendants, who, in the tradition of *tawassul*, are believed to be a source of blessings. Prayers seeking protection from oppression or worldly harm are composed by invoking their nobility as a *wasīlah* (intermediary). The symbol of protection, represented by a "sword" in the *qaṣīdah*, also signifies the belief that a spiritual connection with *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah and her family can serve as a means to seek Allah's help and protection. Essentially, *tawassul* to the *ahl al-bayt* is performed to obtain blessings and intercession, as it is through them that prayers and hopes are expected to be granted by Allah's permission (Nur, 2011). Such ethical and devotional nuances parallel Zuhrufah's (2023) findings on the Sufi moral dimensions in Ḥabīb 'Umar's works, further showing that spirituality and morality are intertwined in his writings. Thus, this *qaṣīdah* is not merely an expression of love for the *Ahl al-bayt*, but also a spiritual medium that teaches the tradition of *tawassul* as a path to draw closer to Allah through those who hold a distinguished position in His sight.

This study found that the *qaṣīdah* *Yartāh Qalbī* implicitly conveys respect and praise for *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', the family of Prophet Muhammad (*ahl al-kisā'*), and applies the concept of *tawassul bil maḥabbah* as a form of intermediary in prayer. The form of *tawassul* here is not merely direct supplication to the saints, but also through a *wasīlah* expressed in deep love and respect. The researcher's findings on the use of *tawassul bil maḥabbah* in *Yartāh Qalbī* add a new dimension to the study by showing how *tawassul* is not only a ritual practice but is enriched with literary and symbolic elements embedded in the praise of *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah, the *Ahl al-kisā'*, and Prophet Muhammad as spiritual intermediaries. This aligns with Asaddullah's (2023) observation that Ḥabīb 'Umar's texts often encode layered meanings accessible only through semiotic interpretation. Therefore, the study of *tawassul* is not only found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah but is also present in literary works such as *qaṣīdahs* and religious songs, which often carry exhortations to engage in *tawassul*.

Using Riffaterre's semiotic approach, this study complements and deepens previous research by offering an analysis of the sign structure within the *qaṣīdah*, demonstrating how literature constructs spiritual meaning through symbols and stylistic devices. This approach broadens the understanding of how the concept of *tawassul* is not only practiced ritually but is also brought to life in literary works as a means of preserving tradition and expressing the faith of the Muslim community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on *Qaṣīdah Yartāh Qalbī*, it can be concluded that Michael Riffaterre's semiotic analysis demonstrates that this *qaṣīdah* functions not only as a religious literary work but also as a spiritual medium expressing reverence for *Sayyidah* Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and the *ahl al-kisā'*. Through discontinuity of expression, heuristic and hermeneutic reading, matrix, model-variant, hypogram, and intertextuality, the *qaṣīdah* contains symbols and metaphors that affirm the noble status of the *ahl al-bayt* as a source of light, protection, and spiritual blessing.

The main finding of this study is the presence of the practice of *tawassul bil maḥabbah*, that is, supplication to Allah by using love and reverence for the *ahl al-bayt* as a spiritual intermediary. This *qaṣīdah* shows that the concept of *tawassul* is not only performed ritually but is also brought to life through praise, prayer, and literary symbolism. Thus, *Yartāh Qalbī* is not merely an expression of love for the *Ahl al-bayt* but also serves as a medium for preserving the tradition of *tawassul* and reinforcing the

spiritual values and faith of the Muslim community.

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ACTANTIAL SCHEMA AND FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE IN SHORT STORY *ṬABLĪYAH MIN AL-SAMĀ'* BY YŪSUF IDRĪS

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
actantial model;
functional
structure;
narrative
structure;
Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'.

This research analyzes the narrative structure of Yūsuf Idrīs' short story *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* using A. J. Greimas' structural narratology, with emphasis on the actantial model and functional structure. The story depicts social and spiritual tensions in rural Egypt through the character of *Shaykh 'Alī*, who experiences marginalization and existential conflict. Employing a descriptive qualitative design, the research applies close reading and systematic note-taking for data collection. Through Greimas' actantial scheme comprising six roles: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent and a tripartite functional structure (initial situation, transformation, final situation), the analysis identifies five interrelated actantial patterns reflecting the protagonist's shifting symbolic and social positions. These results highlight the effectiveness of structural narratology in revealing role dynamics, value transformations, and embedded social critique in modern Arabic literature. Furthermore, the study underscores the significance of Greimas' model for interpreting both narrative and ideological dimensions of texts with strong socio-religious concerns. It concludes by recommending the broader application of structural narratology to modern Arabic works, ideally in combination with ideological or sociological perspectives to deepen textual analysis.

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الكلمات المفتاحية:
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البنية السردية.

المخلص

تقوم هذه الدراسة البنية السردية في قصة يوسف إدريس القصيرة طبليية من السماء من خلال تطبيق السرديات البنيوية عند أ. ج. غريماس، مع التركيز على نموذج العوامل والبنية الوظيفية. تمثل القصة توترات اجتماعية وروحية في بيئة ريفية مصرية عبر شخصية الشيخ علي الذي يعاني التهميش والأزمة الوجودية. استخدم البحث المنهج الوصفي النوعي بالاعتماد على القراءة الدقيقة وتدوين الملاحظات لجمع البيانات. ويرتكز التحليل على نموذج غريماس للعوامل المكوّن من ستة أدوار مترابطة (الذات، والموضوع، والمرسل، والمستقبل، والمساعد، والمعارض) وبنية وظيفية ثلاثية (الوضعية الابتدائية، والتحول، والوضعية النهائية). تكشف النتائج عن خمس صيغ سردية مترابطة تُبرز التحولات الرمزية والاجتماعية للشخصية الرئيسة ضمن سياق الصراع، مما يؤكد فاعلية السرديات البنيوية في تحليل الأدوار وتحول القيم والنقد الاجتماعي في الأدب العربي الحديث. وتوصي الدراسة بتوسيع توظيف نموذج غريماس في تحليل النصوص السردية ذات الأبعاد الاجتماعية والدينية.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature works represent a description of human life that can be viewed as an outward manifestation of his inner experience and imaginative thoughts about the events that attract attention of the author (Salam & Fadhillah, 2017). They can also serve as a form of social criticism, bring up topics of education, poverty, and crime (Yulianto, 2021). Literature writers write work with the help of cultural, religious, and social dynamics in the surrounding environment (Setiadi & Yuwita, 2019), and literature is a place where experiences, psychological, religious, socio-cultural, and moral values are reflected (Sukiman, 2021) Among the literary development of the rapid type (Tarigan et al., 2021), short stories can be distinguished by their laconic, but detailed description of the conflict, characterization, and life values (Hazzlah & Rohanda, 2010).

The short story “Tray from Heaven” or *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā’* is one of the short stories by Idrīs, an Egyptian writer who is widely known for his social realism style. This short story is included in the anthology *ḥādīthat sharaf* and has been translated into various languages, including Indonesian. This short story presents a portrait of the life of village society in Egypt through a strong realist perspective. Idrīs uses expressive language and a deep narrative flow to highlight social inequality and religious dynamics that occur in society. This story shows how beliefs and hopes often clash with the realities of life, especially in situations of poverty and social injustice.

According to Ahkam (in Khasanah & Fauzi, 2025) states that Algirdas Julien Greimas built on the ideas of his predecessors by emphasizing the importance of the relationship between language and signs as key elements in the process of meaning formation. Unlike Vladimir Propp, who focused on a specific genre, Greimas developed a universal narrative grammar and applied it to the structural analysis of various narrative forms, including cinematic studies and sentence structure (Amelia & Sukmono, 2025). In his theory, he adopted the idea that highlights the relationship between language elements as the basis for meaning, which later became known as the concept of actants (Nurhamidah et. al., 2025). Thus, Greimas successfully formulated a distinctive narrative study model that not only integrated Saussure's linguistic theory, Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, and Propp's fairy tale analysis, but also expanded the scope of narrative analysis to various cultural and media domains (Haq et al., 2025).

Narratological structuralism proposed by Greimas is a combination of theories proposed by Vladimir Propp and Claude Lévi-Strauss. In contrast to Propp's theory which focuses only on fairy tales, Greimas' research extends to include myths. Greimas emphasizes more on action (function) than on the actor. In the category of the subject, the narrative cannot simply be reversed, because its progression is shaped by the actions that structure it. The subject, therefore, is not an independent entity but one that is constituted by these actions, this relational position is what Greimas designates as the actant (Wulandari et al., 2020). Greimas summarizes the functions identified by Propp (which number 31) into twenty functions, which are then grouped into three structures based on three pairs of binary oppositions. Greimas' theory is a refinement of Propp's theory. Todorov in (Taum, 2011) stated that Propp himself had introduced the smallest narrative element that is constant in a literary work, known as function.

Greimas' narrative theory is built on the assumption that narrative texts are composed through dyadic analogies which are structural concepts in linguistics, which are rooted in the thoughts of Saussure, while integrating the approach of Vladimir Propp's fairy tale narrative theory (Karnanta, 2015). Combining the two theories produced three approaches highlighting actant relationships between subject-object, sender-recipient, and helper-opponent. In Greimas' framework, an actant represents a narrative scheme focusing on the processes involved in performing or achieving actions. Actant can be

interpreted as a creature or entity that has a role in carrying out a process or action (Santoso & Soelistyowati, 2020). The use of actant scheme is based on Greimas' narrative concept, namely a pattern of thinking that emphasizes the relationship between elements in a unit, rather than only seeing the actors (characters) and elements separately. In other words, Greimas proposed a concept that aims to describe the relationships between the actors in a story (Siswanto & Sukatman, 2022).

Previous studies have used Greimas' narratological approach in analyzing literary works, both novels and folk tales. Muttaqin et al. (2024) in their research shows that all actant elements in the novel, namely sender, subject, object, helper, opponent, and recipient interact with each other to form a complete narrative structure. This study also describes the stages of the story from the initial situation, transformation, to the final situation that marks the achievement of the main character's goals. Meanwhile, research by Misriyani et al. (2022), which examines the novel *The Maze Runner*, highlights the complexity of the narrative based on actantial relations in three main chapters, with the main character facing various conflicts both from within and from outside. Another study was conducted by Wulandari et al. (2020) analyzed two Jambi folktales and found that actant elements and functional structures were used to represent collective values and local culture. Though the theoretical methods used in previous studies are similar, they all act in another narrative setting, genre, and theme orientations. This research provides novelty in the sense of transferring an actant scheme and functional structure theory by Greimas to the short story *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* by Idrīs which reveals social conflict and existential crisis of the protagonist in the context of the contemporary Arab culture. Despite varying contexts, themes, and genres, which might result in different structural patterns, the model proposed by Greimas allows making comparisons with the stories that specify general relationships among actants. Therefore, it is helpful to study this short story in Greimas perspective since it can help to reveal the logic of character struggle performed in the story and how Idrīs systematizes social, religious, and existential tension in the structure of the narrative.

Idrīs' short story *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* explores social and religious tensions through *Shaykh 'Alī*, who challenges societal norms and even God. The story symbolically and tragically depicts social conflict, making it suitable for analysis via Greimas' actant theory. This study examines the actant roles and narrative functions, revealing power dynamics, social resistance, and collective irony, while contributing to Indonesian narratology and advancing structural analysis of modern Arabic literature.

This study is a descriptive qualitative research that centers on narrative research studies to describe, interpret, and analyze the narrative structure of the short story in details (Yusanto, 2020). The case under the present study will be Idrīs' with his *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* due to its sophisticated social, religious and psychological contradictions. Primary data are based on the short story, whereas the secondary ones are journals and books on narratology concerning the actant theory by Greimas. The study is based on the close reading and writing of notes to recognize actant roles and narrative roles, which is the foundation of the study conclusions (Mujarod, 2022). The results of the recording were then considered as data used to draw conclusions based on the findings of the analysis.

Data processing is carried out using a structural study approach, which focuses on the analysis of intrinsic elements. Structuralism is a theory in literary research that seeks to identify, analyze, and describe the relationships between elements contained in a literary work (Fatihah et al., 2022). The elements of literary works are divided into two categories, namely intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements are elements that form literary works from within, including the structure and use of language (Ate & Ndapa Lawa, 2022). Intrinsic elements consist of several components, including theme, plot, characters, characterization, setting, point of view, and style of language (Haniva & Hayati,

2020). Meanwhile, extrinsic elements include factors outside the text that influence the formation of literary works, such as the author's subjective attitudes, beliefs, and outlook on life. (Sum, 2018).

The data were analyzed through the actant scheme in short story *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* written by Idrīs by citing the narratology theory of Greimas. The concept of Greimas is based on the philosophical theory that the meaning of narrative is created by the structural relations of the narrative, not by the characters of the narrative themselves; thus, every role serves as a component of a whole system that creates narrative logic and coherence. This theory has six actants: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper, and opponent (Wulandari et al., 2020). The central axis of desire is defined by the subject and the object, and the hero always takes the subject position and the object is the object of the narrative struggle (Heryanti & Harini, 2018). The table format of presenting the actantial schema is used to explain these relational structures in the story (Majid et al., 2025)

The sender function is usually paired with the receiver function. The sender, or *sender*, acts as the party that drives the story or becomes a source of motivation for the main character (Tazkiyah et al., 2021). The role of the sender can be filled by someone or something that provides encouragement or ideas to the subject to act in the story. Meanwhile, the receiver function refers to the party either a person or an object that will later receive the object as a result of the efforts or searches carried out by the subject (Fadhilla, 2019). The supporting and opposing functions also play an important role in shaping the storyline. The supporting actant is a figure or element that helps the subject in their efforts to achieve the desired object in the story, in contrast to the opposing actant that hinders the subject's pursuit (Ratna & Intan, 2021). The opposite of the helper, the opposing function plays a role in inhibiting or thwarting the subject's efforts to achieve the desired object (Thera & Utami, 2022).

The data analysis process in this study was carried out systematically starting from a thorough reading of the short story text to identify the actant structure and functional model in the story. The analysis began by observing the actions of the characters to determine their respective roles in the Greimas actant scheme, which includes the elements of subject, object, sender, recipient, helper, and opponent. After that, a functional model was compiled by tracing the development of the storyline which was divided into three main stages, which include initial situation, change stage, and final situation (Megawati, 2018). The narrative structure consists of several elements, including the initial situation, which describes the daily conditions of the characters and the initial desires that drive the story (Aulia, 2020); transformation stage, which consists of three sub-stages, namely the skill stage, the main stage, and the brilliance stage, which marks the increase in conflict and efforts to resolve it (Roki et al., 2018); and the final situation as a form of resolution or new stability after the climax (Megawati, 2018). This analysis process is carried out through identifying important quotations in the text that contain narrative functions, determining the role of the actants in each segment, reconstructing the relations between the actants and the dynamics of the conflicts that arise, and compiling the actant scheme and functional structure in the form of tables and narrative descriptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The actant scheme of the short story of *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'*

Idrīs' *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* portrays *Shaykh 'Alī*, elderly, impoverished man in *Munyat al-Naṣr* known for his volatility and odd habits. One Friday, he stuns villagers by vowing to blaspheme unless granted a "heavenly table" of food. What begins as humorous soon triggers fear of divine wrath. The community tries to calm him with food, cigarettes, and even marijuana, eventually feeding him regularly. The story critiques poverty, social

hypocrisy, and the exploitation of a man labeled “mad.”

Scheme I: Unexpected commotion on Friday

At the beginning of the story, the short story describes the village of *Munyat al-Naşr* as a quiet and slow place, especially on Fridays which are considered "unlucky days." Nothing extraordinary ever happened that day. But suddenly, a person is seen running down the street, a highly unusual occurrence in the village's customs. This phenomenon spontaneously triggers a chain reaction; people who witness it also run even though they don't know what is really happening. This phenomenon forms an odd situation that becomes the trigger for the narrative and introduces the initial tension of the story. In first scheme, the person who acts as the sender is the first man who runs. It is said that there was an anonymous figure who first ran to trigger a mass reaction. He didn't say much, didn't give any explanation, just passed by with a brief greeting.

ويمرُّ الجاري بجماعة جالسة أمام بيت

*When the runner crossed the crowd of people in front of
the housing complex*

The recipients in scheme I are Village Communities. As recipients, the village community receives the “mission” or encouragement transmitted by the runner. They receive psychological, emotional and social influences, which make them involved in mass actions. The object of this scheme is to find out the cause of the crowd or mass running. The main purpose of the villagers' actions is to find out what is really going on. They have no initial information, but curiosity spontaneously becomes their main drive. The object in this scheme is not something concrete, but rather knowledge or information regarding the source of the strangeness that occurs.

ويجدون أنفسهم آجر الأمر يجرون

حينئذٍ يقفون ويحاولون معرفة السبب، وطبعًا لا يستطيعون

*Eventually they found themselves running (recipient)
They wanted to know the reason, but of course they didn't get it (object)*

The subjects of this scheme are the village people, reacting collectively to the unusual event of someone running on a calm Friday. Driven by spontaneous curiosity, they become active participants, moving impulsively despite confusion, shame, or hesitation. This mutual curiosity serves as the catalyst, transforming previously passive villagers into agents of action within the community.

أن ترى واحدًا يجري في منية النصر، فذلك حادث

وحينئذٍ يدفعهم حبُّ الاستطلاع إلى المشي

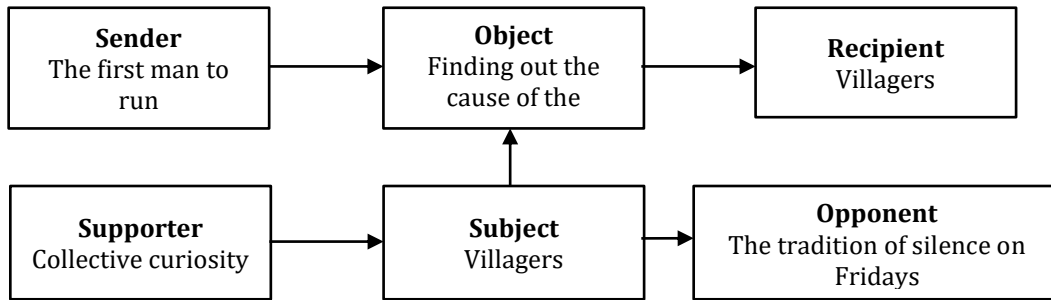
*If you see someone running along Munyat al-Naşr Street, it is a strange thing (subject)
Their desire to find out compels them to start walking (helper)*

The Opponent to this scheme is the customs and social norms of the village itself, especially regarding Fridays which are considered holy, quiet, and full of superstition. Running and making noise is directly contrary to the ethos of Friday in the village. This tradition is a psychological and cultural inhibiting factor against spontaneous behavior.

وينتابها ذلك الركود الذي يستتب في العادة بعد صلاة الجمعة حيث تُرثس أرضها

Usually after Friday prayers the situation in the village is calm and quiet

This scheme depicts the initial dynamics of the story: a quiet village is shaken by a seemingly minor event a person running which then becomes a social explosion due to curiosity. Although contrary to tradition, the collective psychological drive overcomes the prevailing norms. This scheme paves the way for the main conflict that later appears in the form of the character of *Shaykh 'Alī* and his tensions with society and with God.



Scheme II: Shaykh 'Alī against God

At this point, the story reaches its peak moment of tension. *Shaykh 'Alī* stands in Munate al-Naşr's square, enraged and distressed, threatening to blaspheme God unless given a "heavenly dining table". His outburst sparks both divine and social conflict, shaking the villagers' collective values and disrupting the community's peace and order. The sender in this scheme is the hunger, poverty, and resentment of life. What drove *Shaykh 'Alī* to act was not an external order, but the accumulation of bitter life experiences: constant hunger, extreme poverty, and resentment against certain figures (such as Abu Ahmad) whom he considered the cause of his misfortune. This frustration exploded into destructive verbal action.

المرّة دي بقالي ماكلتش من أول امبارح العصر

But this time, I haven't eaten anything since yesterday

In this scheme, *Shaykh 'Alī* serves as the subject and the focal point of the story's tension and conflict. His prominence arises not only from poverty but from his boldness in challenging God's authority. His actions are driven solely by personal survival, expressed through extreme, angry resistance. His "helpers" are his confidence and rage, which become his main source of power. Feeling he has nothing left to lose, *Shaykh 'Alī* gains a fierce courage that disregards social or spiritual consequences.

كانوا يجدون الشيخ عليًا واقفًا في وسط الجرن

إنما انا مش خايف على حاجة، إن كان زعلان مني ياخذني

Shaykh 'Alī stood in the middle of the field. He was angry and took off his turban(subject)

If he bothers me, let him take me! I have nothing to fear." (helper)

In this scheme, *Shaykh 'Alī* is also the recipient, as he acts solely for himself and

accepts whatever outcome follows, whether his demand is fulfilled or punished. He is prepared to face divine anger or social rejection. The object he pursues is his plea to God, embodied in the "heavenly dining table," a symbol of long-denied justice. Beyond food, it represents recognition of his suffering and his hope for a dignified, humane life that fate has continually withheld.

ماني ساكت إلاّ اما تنزل لي المائدة لغاية هنا هه
ماني ساكت إلاّ أما يبعث لي حالاً مائدة!

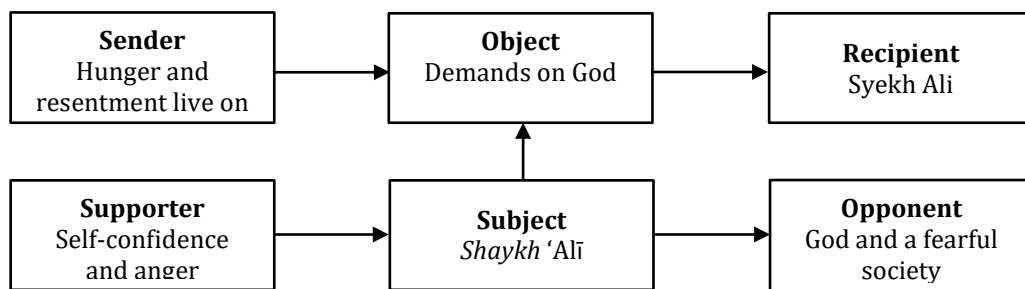
I will just keep quiet when the dining table arrives (recipient)
I won't stop until he sends the dining table now!" (object)

The opponents in this scheme are God (who is challenged) and the villagers (who are afraid). The main conflict is not only directed at God who is considered negligent, but also at the village community who witnessed and felt threatened. The villagers could not let him continue his blasphemy because they were afraid that God's wrath would befall the entire village. Thus, the community also became a silent "opposant" who wanted to stop *Shaykh 'Alī*.

كانوا خائفين أن يسوق الشيخ علي فيها ويكفر

They are afraid that Shaykh 'Alī will continue his blasphemy

This scheme represents a turning point in the story, a very intense conflict between the suffering individual and the divine power and social order. *Shaykh 'Alī* becomes a figure who opposes all forms of conformity: he refuses to submit to norms, challenges God directly, and stands alone in the face of a fearful and helpless community. In this scheme, Idrīs presents a sharp satire on how suffering can transform ordinary people into rebels who shake up the social and religious order.



Scheme III: Citizens panic, Shaykh 'Alī unshaken

After *Shaykh 'Alī* threatened to blaspheme God due to hunger and poverty, villagers' amusement turned to fear, worried about divine wrath. They urgently tried to appease him with food, cigarettes, and gifts, yet he rejected them, asserting his dignity. This scenario illustrates the tension between a fearful society and an obstinate individual defending his self-respect. The collective fear of the consequences of *Shaykh 'Alī*'s blasphemy played a role as a sender in this scheme. The primary driver of people's actions is a pervasive fear of spiritual and social consequences. This fear becomes an internal force that triggers awareness and action. They are not motivated by compassion, but by the need to survive and avoid the risk of disaster.

وأهل منية النصر واقفون وقلوبهم تكاد تسقط من الرعب

The people of Munyat al-Naşr stood motionless, their hearts almost frozen with fear

In this scheme, village communities become the narrative subjects, they are agents who take the initiative to act. Their goal was not to empathetically fulfill *Shaykh 'Alī's* needs, but rather to save themselves from possible divine punishment due to *Shaykh 'Alī's* blasphemy. They became active parties responsible for calming the escalating crisis. In an effort to calm *Shaykh 'Alī*, the tools used were food, cigarettes, and anything that could be used as an antidote to his anger. In this scheme, food became a symbol of peace efforts. Residents were willing to collect anything to avoid greater damage.

بدأ العُقلاء يُطَلِّقون من بعيد كلمات طيِّبات يرجون فيها من الشيخ علي
فأحضره على طبلية

*Some of the elders of the community began to try to calm Shaykh 'Alī's anger (subject)
They brought it to Shaykh 'Alī on a tray (helper)*

The recipients of this action were the people themselves. They hoped that their action, feeding *Shaykh 'Alī* would secure them from God's wrath. The salvation they fought for was for themselves, not merely to please *Shaykh 'Alī*. And the object in this scheme is social peace to avoid God's wrath. The object or goal of community action is to maintain collective stability and safety. They not only wanted to appease *Shaykh 'Alī*, but also calm any cosmic tensions that might arise from anger directed at God. They want to avoid disaster together.

وقد تحلُّ بلدهم من جزاء ذلك نقمة تأتي على الأخضر
كان كلام الشيخ علي يهدد البلدة الآمنة كلّها

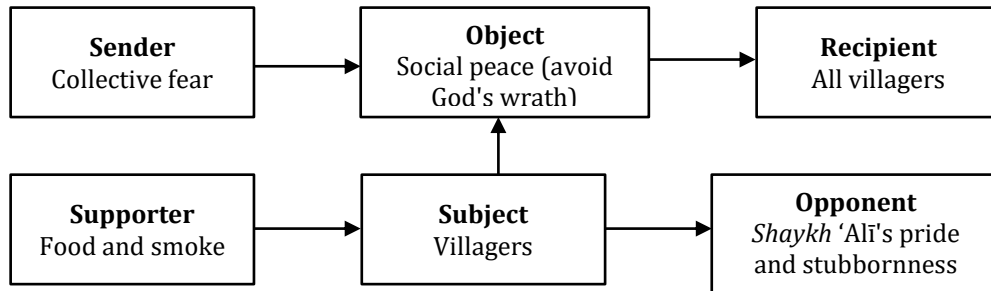
*Their village became the price to pay (recipient)
Shaykh 'Alī's words threaten the safety of the entire village (object)*

The opposition in this scheme was *Shaykh 'Alī's* stubbornness and pride. Even though the residents had given him food and tried to negotiate, *Shaykh 'Alī* still refused because he felt that the gift did not match his demands. He did not want to be considered a beggar. His pride was getting in the way of the success of the community's mission. Rather than showing the community receiving peace, the quotes emphasize the threat to the object itself. *Shaykh 'Alī's* words and the looming consequences highlight that social peace is fragile and at risk. This fear of losing peace clarifies why the community's actions are shaped by anxiety and the urgent need to protect their stability.

بقي أني عايز مائدة يا بلد غجر، تجبولي طبلية!؟

All I want is a table full of food, you useless thing?!

This scheme depicts society shifting from passive observers to active participants, driven by fear, sacrificing respect to appease *Shaykh 'Alī*, who steadfastly preserves his dignity. The conflict highlights tensions between collective logic and individual principle, revealing *Idrīs'* sharp social satire.



Scheme IV: Marijuana as a path to peace, but failed

This scheme portrays the climax of tension between *Shaykh 'Alī* and *Munyat al-Naṣr* villagers. After food, cigarettes, and words failed to appease him, *Shaykh 'Alī's* anger escalated. In desperation, *Manḍūr* offered marijuana, but *'Alī* felt mocked, intensifying his rage. What drives this action is collective psychological pressure: fear, emotional exhaustion, and the urgent need to stop the crisis. Citizens have tried various rational and empathetic approaches, but all have failed. Fear of God's wrath and social unrest are the senders that drive this compromise action.

وبدأ الشيخ علي يعد...حتى إن بعضهم تهاَمَس أن النعمة لا بد قد بدأت تحل

When Shaykh 'Alī started counting... some people whispered that the wrath of God was showing itself

In this scheme, the subjects are *Manḍūr* and other villagers. They took the final step by offering him marijuana, something that might have previously been considered taboo or inappropriate. But in a social emergency, they tried everything to get *Shaykh 'Alī* to stop threatening. Their role as subjects shows the shift in society from being a mediator to actively seeking resolution through extreme compromise. The helper in this scheme is the marijuana provided by *Manḍūr*. Marijuana here is not just an object, but a symbol of total concession. People who previously avoided unconventional methods now see them as the only way out. In the actant structure, marijuana acts as a helper: a concrete tool that is expected to break the cycle of threat and crisis.

وقال له: «خدا! خد يا شيخ، مش خسارة فيك!

ولم يسكت إلا بعد أن أحضروا مندور تاجر المر

Manḍūr sa'īd: 'Take it, take it, Shaykh, you deserve it!' (subject)

... Manḍūr the Ganja Seller gave him a lump of marijuana." (helper)

In this scheme, the recipients are two parties at once: *Shaykh 'Alī* as the direct recipient of the marijuana given, and the community as the indirect recipient of the results of the action, namely the potential for the return of peace. Whether this action will be successful or not, both will receive its impact. The object or purpose of the actions of *Manḍūr* and the residents is to restore peace to the village. The people wanted to stop *Shaykh 'Alī's* threats to prevent God's wrath, which they believed could come at any time if the blasphemy continued. So, marijuana is not the object itself, but rather the helper that a symbol of a last-ditch effort to preserve peace and avoid destruction.

والجمع يغمره السكون
 وإمّا إسكات الشيخ علي بأي طريقة... وأصبح الوضع لا يُحتمل

They stood silent (receiver)

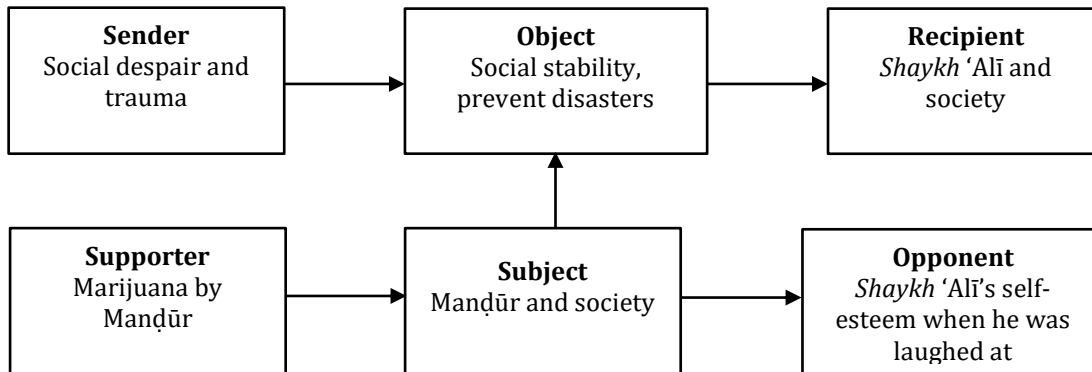
The situation was becoming increasingly unbearable... or to silence Shaykh 'Alī by any means (object)

The opponent in this scheme was *Shaykh 'Alī's* self-esteem, who felt he was being laughed at. Even though he was given marijuana, *Shaykh 'Alī* did not feel respected, but instead felt like he was the object of ridicule. He refused not because he didn't want the marijuana, but because the offer felt like a veiled insult. His pride was hurt, and his emotional reaction became a major obstacle to the success of the citizen's mission.

أنا أضحكوا؟! هو أني مضحكة يا مندور يا ابن البلغة؟!

Are you laughing at me?! What's so funny about me, Mandūr?!

This scheme represents the story's peak social crisis, where villagers' final attempt giving *Shaykh 'Alī* marijuana backfires, igniting his pride and anger. It demonstrates that technical solutions fail without addressing individual dignity. *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'* highlights tragic irony: society creates its own adversary and can only manage conflict through absurd compromises.



Scheme V: Fake stability through regular bribes to Shaykh 'Alī

The story begins by depicting *Munyat al-Naṣr* as a quiet, uneventful village, particularly on Fridays, considered “unlucky days.” This calm is disrupted when someone suddenly runs through the street, triggering a chain reaction as others follow without understanding why, creating confusion and initial tension. Later, after *Shaykh 'Alī* threatened God and unsettled the village, residents developed a pragmatic “peace strategy,” routinely providing him with food and necessities. Treated as a “social time bomb,” this practice maintained only an illusion of stability, as *Alī's* volatile temperament and the underlying threat remained ever-present.

The sender in this scheme is the collective trauma and experience of *Shaykh 'Alī's* explosion. What drives the citizens' actions is the collective memory of how chaotic and dangerous the situation was when *Shaykh 'Alī* went on a rampage. This trauma creates a kind of social alertness: people learn from the experience and anticipate so that something similar does not happen again.

حتى يدركوا أنهم نسوا أمره وتركوا

They understand that they forgot about the problem

In this scheme, the residents of Munate al-Naṣr village act as the main subjects. They had learned from previous experience that tensions with *Shaykh 'Alī* could not be dealt with with violence or logic, but rather by fulfilling his basic needs. So they took the initiative to act before the crisis occurred. This action was preventive, born of fear and a unique social responsibility: maintaining stability through compensation. The solution that emerged was the provision of food on a regular basis not as charity, but as a form of unwritten social contract. This allowance became a “helper” in maintaining stability, taming the potential for *Shaykh 'Alī*'s emotional outbursts.

غير أنهم من يومها عرفوا له

وأحياناً يرضى بما قسم الله

*However, since that day, they have been providing him with an allowance
(subject)*

Sometimes he will receive his share (helper)

The beneficiaries in this scheme are two parties: the community (who gets peace and social stability) and *Shaykh 'Alī* (who receives regular food and attention). In a deeper sense, *Shaykh 'Alī* also gets social validation as an “important figure” who must be cared for so that the village remains safe. This creates a unique interdependent relationship. The goal of citizen action is to create and maintain sustainable social order. This object is not just a condition free from conflict, but a stable system, albeit built on absurd compromises. Residents wanted to prevent *Shaykh 'Alī*'s anger from exploding, which had been proven to disrupt collective harmony.

ولا يزال سريع الغضب، ولا يزال الناس يضحكون من غضبه

وقبل أن تتسرَّب من فمه كلمة كفر واحدة، تكون الطبلية قد جاءتُه

He still gets angry easily, and people still laugh at his anger (recipient)

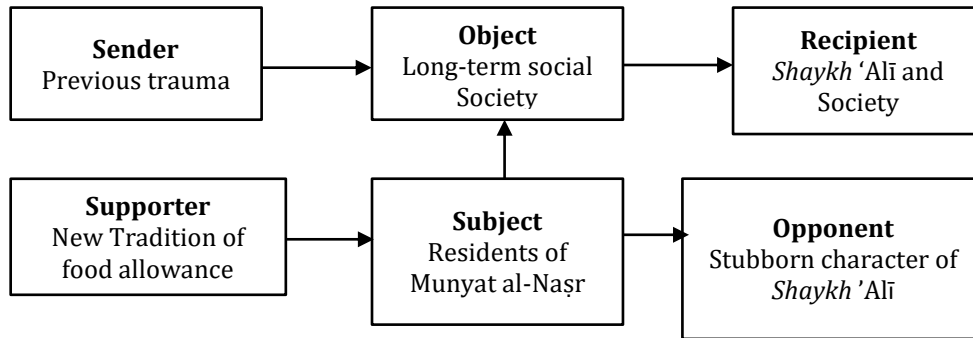
Before a curse word could come out of his mouth, a tray would be brought to him (object)

The opponent in this scheme was, *Shaykh 'Alī*'s stubborn which unchanging character remains the true threat. Despite the system, his anger, pride, and readiness to erupt persist, making him a constant opposition to the village's efforts to maintain peace and stability.

ولا يزال سريع الغضب، ولا يزال الناس يضحكون من غضبه

He still gets angry easily, and people still laugh at him

This scheme reflects the pseudo-resolution phase in the narrative structure of the short story. The villagers of Munate al-Naṣr devised a system to contain *Shaykh 'Alī*, treating him as a guarded danger. Yet, this produced not true peace but fragile order built on fear and compromise. The story satirizes society's choice of pragmatic, absurd solutions over meaningful resolutions to conflicts they perpetuate.



Functional structure

Initial situation

The story begins by portraying Munyat al-Naşr as a quiet, orderly village, especially on Fridays, a day seen as unlucky. Life flows slowly, with little urgency, as residents spend the day resting after prayers. This calm routine is suddenly broken when someone runs down the street, an unusual, startling act in such a passive culture. The sight sparks a chain reaction: others also run, driven by panic rather than reason. With no explanation, confusion spreads, and chaos erupts. *wa-yamurru al-jārī bi-jamā'ah jālisah amām bayt* (and a passerby walks past a group sitting in front of the house). This moment marks the shift from tranquility to disorder, transforming the village's ordinary life into a scene of collective anxiety and tension. As stated in the quote:

أن ترى إنساناً يجري في شارع من شوارع منية النصر، فذلك حادث
 الواقع أنه كانت هناك حركة جري واسعة النطاق... وفي يوم الجمعة ذاك، لم يكن واحد فقط هو الذي يجري
If you see someone running along Munyat al-Naşr Street, it is a strange thing
One Friday, it wasn't just one person running... but many people

This is the beginning of a conflict that will change the social dynamics in the story.

Transformation stage

The transformation stage in this short story is the center of the narrative conflict and tension. This stage consists of three sub-sections: competence, main, and brilliance (Roki et al., 2018)

Proficiency stage

The term "Proficiency" is used to denote the stage in which the character's ability to face conflict is tested to the fullest. In this section, the main conflict appears in the form of the figure of *Shaykh 'Alī*, an unemployed old man who is angry, poor, and full of social resentment. He stood on the field in a fit of rage, took off his turban, brandished his stick, and most shockingly, threatening to blaspheme God if he is not immediately given a "dining table from heaven." This is where the skill of conflict is introduced: not just about hunger or poverty, but about resistance to destiny and divine authority. *Shaykh 'Alī* feels that his life has been played by God, and now he demands answers. The sentence *mā nī sākit illā 'ammā tunazzil lī al-mā'ida li-ghāyat hunā hāh* (in the name of religion and everything I believe in, I will not be quiet until he sends a dining table now!) become a symbol of the climax of frustration and spiritual challenge to the value structure believed in by society. He turns into the center of the storm, and all eyes are now on him as a source of chaos and potential disaster.

Main stage

As tensions rose, villagers tried calming *Shaykh 'Alī* with food, fish, cigarettes, and

promises, but he rejected them harshly, deeming their offerings unworthy. His demands went beyond hunger he sought dignity and recognition. The community was trapped, fearing both his uncontrollable rage and potential divine punishment for blasphemy. Quotes such as *ḥadānā samak ṣābiḥ yā Shaykh ‘Alī...* (We have some fresh fish) and *Shaykh ‘Alī’s response wa-dah akl?! Wa-dīnī, mā nī sākit illā ‘ammā tunazzil lī al-mā’ida li-ghāyat hunā hāh...* (in the name of my religion and everything i believe in, i will not keep quiet until he sends a dining table now!) confirm that their peaceful efforts are not enough to defuse this existential crisis.

The glory stage

After many failed efforts, Mandūr, a marijuana seller, offered *Shaykh ‘Alī* hashish as a last resort. Though insulting and inadequate, it temporarily calmed him. Peace returned, not through resolution but by silencing him with drugs and food, forcing villagers to keep appeasing his anger to prevent future chaos. Mandūr’s statement, *wa-iḥnā lāzim nashūf rāḥtak yā Shaykh* (We must take care of your comfort, Shaykh) and the description *wa-qabla an tatasarraba min famihi kalimat kufr wāḥida, takūnu al-ṭabliyya qad jā’at-hu* (Before a curse word could come out of his mouth, a tray would be brought to him complete with whatever he asked for) show how pragmatic compromise replaced a true resolution. This stage marks a turning point: society begins to submit to abnormality as part of the new order.

Final situation

In the final situation, the story closes not with true peace but with the birth of an absurd social tradition. After that fateful Friday, villagers realized stability depended on regularly feeding *Shaykh ‘Alī* before he erupted. This practice, driven by fear not compassion, became automatic: whenever he raised his stick, people rushed with food, cigarettes, or hashish. It symbolized a hollow compromise, where genuine values and dignity gave way to pragmatic survival, reflecting a distorted balance between fear, submission, and social order. Quotes such as *ghayra annahum min yawmiḥā ‘arafū lahu* (However, from that day on, they gave him allowances...) and *wa-aḥyānan yardā bimā qasama Allāh, amruhu ilā Allāh* (Sometimes he will accept his lot, submitting to God) shows that society chooses stability over principle, and tensions remain but are controlled. The function of this final situation is not to show a peaceful resolution, but how collective compromise can establish a kind of “false order” to avoid greater chaos.

Analytical insights based on Greimas’ model

This study reveals that applying Greimas’ actantial scheme and functional structure to Idrīs’ *Ṭabliyyah min al-Samā’* uncovers layered social tensions, religious symbolism, and the protagonist’s existential struggle shaping the narrative. With such structural-semiotic prism, one can see more clearly the relations between the sender, receiver, helper, opponent, subject and object how Idrīs intertwines his criticisms of class hierarchy, moral ambiguity, and spiritual anxiety which drives his main character to make choices and feel his internal struggle. These insights correspond to Muttaqin et al. (2024), who found coherent interactions among actants, and they also parallel the narrative complexity noted by Misriyani et al. (2022) in *The Maze Runner*.

In contrast, the findings differ from Wulandari et al. (2020), whose research highlights collective cultural values rather than individual crises. Given the scarcity of Greimassian studies on Middle Eastern realist-religious fiction, this research fills a scholarly gap and broadens analysis of social critique, cultural dynamics, and spiritual conflict in modern Arab literature. Both works show that the model developed by Greimas can be successfully used to reveal the intertwining of narrative functions with thematic depth, both in the Arabic realist fiction and in modern dystopian literature. Although their

work underlines the communal identity, shared practices and social inheritance of norms as the core of the narrative meaning, the text by Idrīs promises the foregrounding of personal crisis, demonstrating how the crisis of the individual can be used to mirror the fractures in the society. This point highlights the fact that Greimassian analysis can be used to highlight various emphases of the narrative based on the socio-cultural orientation that the text follows.

Given the scarcity of Greimassian studies on Middle Eastern realist-religious fiction, this study can be used to apply the concepts of narrative theory by showing how actantial and functional structures can be used to better interpret religious symbolism and socio-political commentary, in addition to providing a basis upon which subsequent comparative studies could be conducted across geographic, genre, and subject matter areas.

CONCLUSION

Idrīs' short story *Ṭablīyah min al-Samā'*, analyzed through Greimas' structural narratology, presents a symbolically rich narrative in which *Shaykh* 'Alī transforms from a marginalized individual into the center of a social crisis through five interconnected actantial schemes. The narrative unfolds in three stages: an initially calm society, a conflict-driven transformation, and a final pseudo-stable situation maintained through routine gift-giving, while Greimas' framework effectively maps character roles and uncovers ideological meanings, including critiques of structural poverty, social pretense, and the limitations of formal religiosity in addressing human suffering. These findings confirm that the actantial approach is effective for exploring social and spiritual layers in modern Arabic literature and demonstrate that Greimas' theory can be applied to Arabic short stories to address narratological questions. However, this study is limited to a single story and one approach; therefore, further research is recommended using other works or different methods, such as reception studies, semiotics, or literary psychology, as well as comparative studies with Indonesian short stories, to make narratological studies of modern Arabic literature richer, more contextual, and more relevant.

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AUTHOR GUIDELINES

The editor of Journal CMES (Center of Middle Eastern Studies) welcomes articles related to Middle Eastern studies in social, political, cultural, literary, and linguistic fields and the submissions should be in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Articles have not been published or accepted for publication, or are being considered for publication elsewhere.
2. Types of articles suitable for publication include research reports, conceptual ideas, studies, and theory applications.
3. Articles are written in Indonesian, English and Arabic using academic language along with the standard academic writing structure and composition. Manuscripts are typed 1 spaced in a quarto paper size (A4), between 6000-8000 words in length (including references, pictures, and tables).
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 - d. Keywords (5-7 words)
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 - f. Results and Discussion (consists of results and analysis of the study, written in the form of subchapter(s))
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