

# A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Some Selected Domestic Violence Image Cartoons

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**Abstract**—Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship usually committed in a domestic setting by one partner against the other. The current study investigates this type of violence as exhibited in cartoon discourse. The study tries to approach image cartoons of the domestic violence type to examine how meaning is made within different modes and which mode is the most dominant. Moreover, it attempts to check who is the most powerful member in the family, who is exercising violence, and on whom. Martin and Rose's (2007) model has been implemented to be used as a tool to examine both the visual and verbal components in each cartoon. The researcher randomly selected six cartoons from several domestic violence types to constitute the sample of the current study. It is found that different kinds of violence, mainly of the social and physical types, have been exercised by the male figure (the patriarch, i.e., the father, or the husband) in the family. Moreover, domestic violence cartoons make their meaning and express their messages through the visual mode more than the verbal one. This, in turn, may be ascribed to the fact that visual modes can provide their own affordances through which they can be interpreted globally.

**Index Terms**— Image cartoon, Domestic violence, verbal Visual, Multimodal.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, interest in multimodal discourse analysis has expanded exponentially, many representational and communicative modes, other than language, have intervened to make and distribute meaning (Jewitt, 2009: 28). For example, in face-to-face communication, we do not use language merely as the only source of meaning; we also communicate using nonverbal signals such as posture, gesture, gaze, and facial expressions. Along similar lines, written discourse always depends on visual as well as verbal resources; its meaning is not just in the words but also, in their appearance and spatial arrangement (Cameron and Panovic, 2014: 109).

Scholars working within the multimodal approach found that multimodality marks a departure from the traditional opposition of 'verbal' and 'non-verbal' communication, which presumes that language constitutes the central means in interaction, and nonverbal means have been viewed as being subordinated to it (Bezemer and Jewitt, 2018: 283). Accordingly, there is an

emphasis on the differences between semiotic resources in terms of the possibilities they offer for making meaning. That is, the main concern of the approach is to emphasize the importance of the combination of different resources, each with its own potential (ibid).

The current paper aims at analyzing six (Arabic) image cartoons of the domestic violence type to examine the kind of violence exercised by which member of the family and on whom. That is, who is the most dominant and powerful figure within the family and who is the powerless and oppressed? Another question that concerns the study is: How is meaning made within a multimodal text (which modes intervene to construct meaning and which mode is more dominant)? Which specific kind of violence is exercised on the oppressed members (is it physical, psychological, linguistic, or emotional)?

To achieve these aims, Martin and Rose's (2007) model, with its four sets, has been used to analyze the selected data. The study hypothesizes that when both existent, visual and verbal components complement each other (other than work separately). In domestic violence image cartoons, the visual mode is more prevalent than the verbal one; that is, designers depend more on the image to convey their message than on language. Another hypothesis is that it is thought that the main character who exercises violence within a family is the man (father, husband) while the woman (mother, wife) is the weak and oppressed participant. The study is hoped to be an ambitious step forward to exhibit how meaning is made through different modes and how viewers can interpret such meanings within various multimodal texts.

## II. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IMAGE CARTOONS

Cartoons have traditionally been considered as being a direct and easy-to-process way to transmit a message. They can communicate extremely relevant messages, with or without words, which can be accessed by different people around the world. For that reason, they have become a highly effective means to vindicate significant social issues (Rivas-Carmona, 2014: 8). One of such issues is domestic violence and how it is exercised against different members of the family, mainly the woman.

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. It can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological, or linguistic threats of actions or other patterns of coercive behavior that influence another person within an intimate partner relationship. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone (<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/domestic-violence>).

Domestic violence cartoons are “heavily stylized comic displays of aggression in which the perpetrators suffer every kind of abuse without [or with] being harmed” (Chandler and Munday, 2020: 264). This type of multimodal texts become a leitmotif in many forums, places and situations.

The present paper deals with image cartoons (as opposed to animated), specifically those that display violence exercised by family members. More particularly, the intimate partner violence, which is committed by one of the people in an intimate relationship against the other person, and can take place in relationships or between spouses or partners. The aim is to describe how messages are encoded and projected by cartoonists by means of their artwork and, more specifically, to see how domestic violence cartoons satirize the domestic injustice found among members of the family in different Arabic countries.

### III. MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Multimodal discourse analysis (henceforth MDA) is an emerging paradigm in discourse studies that extends the study of language per se to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, symbolism, gaze, posture, gesture, music, and sound (Hyland and Paltridge, 2011: 120). The term ‘*multimodality*’ is used to highlight that people use multiple means of meaning-making in the sense that “different means of meaning-making are not separated but almost always appear together: image with writing, speech with gesture, math symbolism with writing and so forth” (Jewitt et al., 2016: 2). There was a paradigmatic shift away from the study of language alone to the study of the integration of language with other resources and MDA appeared as a pivotal contribution to make meaning with respect to multimodal analysis, search, and retrieval of information (Hyland and Paltridge, 2011: 121).

Different views have been proposed to explain the relation between the visual and verbal components in any multimodal texts. Some believe that the meaning of images is inherently more open-ended than the meaning of words. By themselves, images are too ‘polysemous’, too open to a variety of possible meanings. Hence, when combined with images, language is believed to fix the visual part and that the existence of language juxtaposed with images allows viewers to choose the correct level of perception and leads them to the proper understanding of the text. In this sense, the meaning of images is always related to and, in a sense, dependent on the verbal text (Barthes 1977 Cited in Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006: 18). Another view sees that the visual component of a text is an independently organized and structured message, connected with the verbal text but in no way dependent on it. Thus, images convey their own messages through their visual components with no

necessary need for the verbal part. The visual mode is, then, seen as a full means of representation where it forms an alternative to writing (ibid). In opposition to Barthes’ view, Kress and van Leeuwen support the view that “language and visual communication can both be used to realize the ‘same’ fundamental systems of meaning... but that each does so by means of its own specific forms, does so differently, and independently” (2006:19). A latest view sees that visual and verbal modes complement each other and that in multimodal texts, one needs to process language in relation to image, or language in relation to action. There are two modalities co-articulating what is going on. In this view, scholars (O’Toole 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004; Caffarel et al. 2004) try to reapply grammatical categories to visual patterns. Accordingly, there is a close image-text relation in that images and texts can be used to elaborate, extend, or enhance each other (Martin and Rose, 2007: 327).

In sum, approaching any text from a multimodal perspective is an indispensable issue because “when people meet, they invariably communicate in multiple modalities: the eyes, gestures, and tones of voice merge with the perceived affordances of the surroundings into an integrated and partially shared experience” (Steen and Turner, 2013: 1).

### IV. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Different studies have been conducted to examine domestic violence mainly the one exercised against women. For example, a study by Rivas-Carmona in (2014) “*Cartooning for Gender Equality: A Multimodal Expression of Humour and Vindication*” tried to analyze eight cartoons dealing with the controversial issue of gender equality. The study applied Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986) through investigating some visual metaphors like the ‘cross’, the ‘key’, the ‘dart’, the ‘equals sign’ and the ‘scales’ to check how women are depicted throughout the selected cartoons. The analysis of the cartoons has revealed that, as multimodal texts, they purposefully combine different communicative ‘modes’, verbal and non-verbal clues, with the intention of their being captured by the readers/ viewers. Nevertheless, those cartoons rely heavily on their non-linguistic elements in order to convey cognitive effects which the addressees have to process so as to grasp the whole meaning of the communicative act. The implicated conclusion represented by the cartoonist throughout most of the selected cartoons reveal that women are nothing by themselves since they are always subordinate and inferior to men.

Another study by Belgrimet and Rabab’ah (2021) entitled “*A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of English Posters in Violence Awareness Campaigns against Women*” has been conducted on three English posters to explore how the adoption of different semiotic modes may contribute to the construction of meaning when cooperating with language. Applying Kress and Leeuwen’s (2006) visual grammar framework, the study concluded that English posters employed a variety of semiotic modes. The examined posters were found to be conceptual demonstrating that the English posters tend to be static and immovable. The study tried to examine the three metafunction proposed by Kress and Leeuwen (representational, interactive and compositional) and how they have been deployed in the

meaning making of each investigated poster. However, not much information has been concluded on the violence part. The main aim in this study was to explore how the different semiotic modes employed in each poster (both linguistic and paralinguistic) are combined to convey a given meaning to find out that English posters include verbal as well as visual elements which contribute to the deployment of meaning.

Othman, and Al-Bahrani's (2023) study "A Cognitive Linguistic Study of Visual Language as a Reflection of Culture: Violence Against Women in Iraq" has examined a violence-based panel to see how participants may internalize it. Using Sharifian's (2011) cultural schema model and submitting a four-question test on 30 participants, the study found out that the participants have not only differed among themselves regarding the way a figure is being denotatively conceptualized, but they also highlighted different exact conceptualizations for the same figure. Most of the participants have confirmed the existence of violence as a phenomenon in the Iraqi culture and that women are one of the main victims of it due to the patriarchal structure that outweighs men over women, and to the unjust societal traditions and conventions adopted in such a society.

Another study entitled "A multimodal analysis of the representation of Saudi women in selected caricature images from Cartoon Movement: A global platform for editorial cartoons" by Alasmari and Al-mohammadi in (2023) has examined ten caricature drawings published online between 2017 and 2020. The caricatures focus on the satirical visual representations of Saudi women hovering around three main issues (1) male guardianship, (2) end of driving ban, and (3) dress codes and stereotyping. Applying Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) analytical framework demonstrates that understanding the three aspects of meaning: representational, interactive, and compositional, along with the viewer's orientation and background knowledge about the subject of the images is essential to elucidate the messages communicated by the cartoonists. The strategy of visual metaphor in the selected cartoons depicts Saudi men and male guardianship system as chains, mountain, ice highland, glass jar, and stones to reflect an oppressive and extreme image of Saudi men. Stereotyping presents a typical image of Saudi women as subordinate, obedient and hidden in layers of black veils. In general, the paper concluded that Saudi women are oppressed victims of their male-dominated society and drastic religious regulations.

It is clear from the above-mentioned studies that in multimodal texts of these kinds, the visual components surpass the verbal ones and that in most of these texts, women are depicted as being weak, useless, oppressed, subordinate and inferior to men. Something that the current study tries to reveal and scrutinize within the selected cartoons.

V. MARTIN AND ROSE (2007) MODEL:  
THE STUDY'S MODEL

Building on Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) model, Martin and Rose (2007) developed their four-folded model to analyze texts from different modes. Using Halliday's metafunction terminologies, these two scholars divided their analyses into the following levels:

1- Ideational Meanings Construed by Visual Images:

In this level of analysis, the analyst has to search for whether the image depicts an entity or an activity. Martin and Rose (2007:168) suggested four ideational categories which are *classifying* or *compositional* entities, and *simple* or *complex* activities. These categories fall within the level of **focus**. The other level within this meaning is the **visual construal** which means the manner in which the images are construed (ibid). That is, whether they are *iconic*, in which there is a direct visual relation between the image and the category it construes. Whether they are *indexical* which means that it directs attention to the object, or whether *symbolic* whose interpretation is determined on the basis of conventions (Saeed, 2003: 5). These levels with their subcategories are schematized in the following figure:

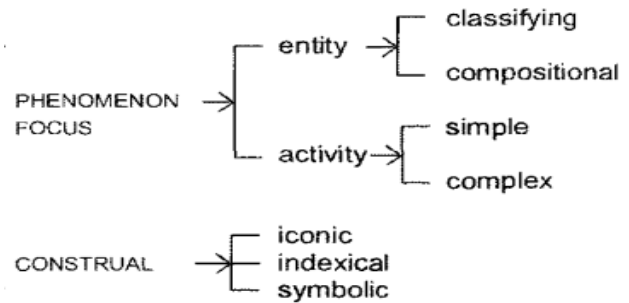


Figure (1)

Ideational Meanings in Images

Adopted from Martin & Rose (2007)

2- Interpersonal Meanings Construed by Visual Images:

This is the emotional level, that is, how images inscribe and invoke feelings and emotions through their components. At this level there are three interacting domains: attitude, engagement and graduation. As for former, it is concerned with our feelings, including emotional reactions (affect), judgments of behavior (judgment), and evaluation of things (appreciation) (Martin and White, 2005: 36). Moving to the other domain, one finds engagement which is concerned with the ways in which different resources position the speaker/writer with respect to the value position being advanced. Engagement with the viewer can also be varied in images, for example, by the gaze of depicted people looking directly at the viewer, obliquely to one side, or directly away from the viewer into the image (Martin and Rose, 2007: 326). The third domain, graduation, deals with adjusting the degree of an evaluation, in addition to how strong or weak the feeling is. In other words, feelings, appreciation and judgment can be amplified and/or diminished (ibid).

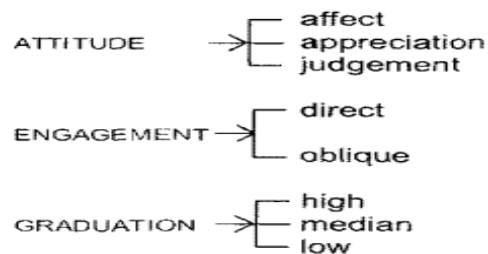


Figure (2)

Interpersonal Meanings in Images

Adopted from Martin & Rose (2007)

3- Textual organization:

concerning this level, Martin and Rose (2007: 327), organized the textual level into 'polarized' and 'centered'. As for the latter, it examines how some elements maybe put in the center while others are marginalized. The polarized organization ranges along horizontal and/or vertical axes. For images that are horizontally polarized, the left-hand side is glossed as Given and the right as New. For vertically polarized images, Ideal and Real categories are used, where Ideal is characterized as a more general or abstract category, and Real as more specific or concrete.

Examining Arabic image cartoons in the current study, one has to elaborate that center-margin organization has no problem since it is universal. Concerning the polarized organization mainly the Given-New dimesion, one shouldn't confuse that because Arabic writing system is a right-to-left system, this should also apply to images in the same literal sense since one can maintain that modern visual media often align with international standards of left-to-right presentation in images and layouts (even for the Arabic culture).

A further textual dimension is the relative salience of elements in an image or page layout that draws readers' attention to one element before another. Salience may be indicated by a number of factors, including size, color intensity or the strength of vectors, as well as center-margin, left-right, and top-down positions (Martin and Rose, 2007: 327). These categories are schematized in the following Figure:

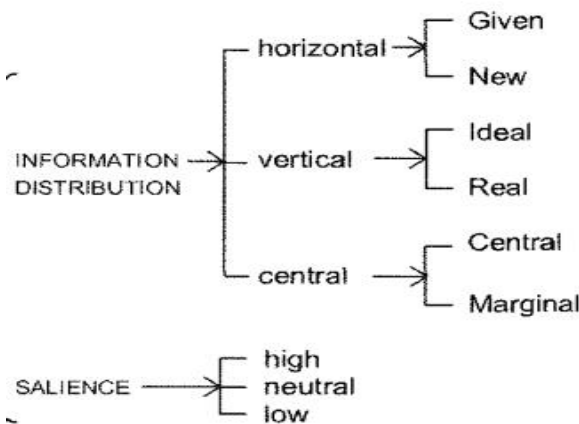


Figure (3)  
Textual Meanings in Images  
adopted from Martin & Rose (2007)

4- Image-text Relation

Image-text relations include their logical relations, the boundaries between text and image, and identification. Logical relationships can be mapped in terms of expansion, or projection. For example, images and texts can restate, specify or summarize each other (elaborating), they can be added to each other (extending), or explain or follow each other in time (enhancing). Images can also project wordings as thought or speech bubbles, and the reverse is also possible. Boundaries between image and text may be weak or strong: images may intrude into text, and text may overlap images, or there may be strong demarcation. Finally, elements of images may be

identified explicitly in accompanying texts (e.g., in captions), and elements of text or other images may be referred to in accompanying images (ibid: 329). The categories within this level can be shown in the figure below:

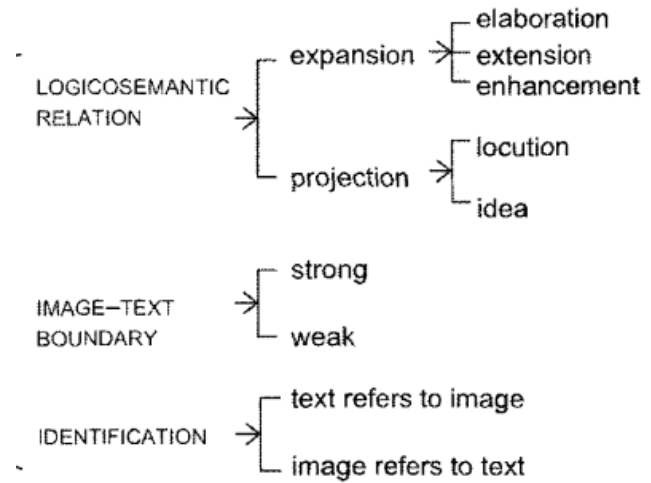


Figure (4)  
Image-Text Relation  
Adopted from Martin & Rose (2007)

VI. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

The data selected within the current study consists of (6) image cartoons collected from different sites on the internet. The procedure for collection was collecting as many cartoons about domestic violence as possible. Among 30 of the collected data, (6) image cartoons were chosen randomly to constitute the data of the present study.

B. Research Design

The current research is a descriptive qualitative one in the sense that it tries to give a detailed account of the meaning-making process through examining the different modes that contribute to the meaning of the whole text (cartoon).

C. Data Analysis

In this section, the analytical framework of Martin and Rose (2007) sketched above will be applied to six selected image cartoons from the Arabic culture. The focus is on the visual and verbal strategies implemented in the design of the cartoons to display the type of violence exercised in one's family.

## 1. Analysis of Cartoon No. (1)



Cartoon (1)

From (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-38103902>)

Examining the photo from the ideational perspective, the photo can be identified as a *classifying image*. In nuclear terms, we have an overweight man (central), pushing a trolley (nuclear) that is full of women (peripheral). The number of women in the trolley is four which alludes to the polygamy process that makes the man happy (represented in his smile) since he thinks that he is practicing a righteous action. The image can be interpreted as implicitly classifying wealthy Arabian men of the Gulf (represented in the man's dress and shape) as being patriarchal and oppressive, carrying four women simultaneously in one trolley as a kind of possession. The kind of visual construal depicted in the image seems to be *indexical* as it alludes to the polygamy process as well as to the idea that wealthy men can carry in their trolley whatever they like. The tag that each woman in the trolley carries is an index to express the meaning that women are puppets that are to be sold easily. The age of women (seen from their faces and size) may also be an indication of their incapability to decide or rebel against what is abusive or offensive. The trolley is an index of the buying-and-selling process through which the man gained the women, i.e. due to his wealthiness.

Moving to the *interpersonal meaning* of the current image, one can see, on one hand, how the man is smiling to express his happiness for gaining such a property. On the other hand, the ladies (brides) in the trolley have a desperate effect which gives an unfair judgment of what is happening which can appreciate the whole act as being destructive and detrimental to the ladies' lives and future. Engagement with the viewer has taken an oblique angle as the figure's primary concern is his possession. The figure seems greedy and ravenous. This evaluation has been amplified by the enormous size of the man as well as his shape (with the shemagh 'headscarf' and the thobe 'Arabian garment') which gives the impression of his wealth and luxury. His acts (cramping more than one lady in one trolley, moving the trolley by himself), and his facial expressions reveal the happy and contented attitude towards having a precious fortune. Having all these features and evaluating them this way, one can sense that graduation is high.

The *textual organization* of the image under investigation shows a *polarized horizontal* depiction of the man who takes a left-hand side of the image. This indicates that he is Given and what is New is found in the right-hand which is depicted with women. The salience category has been indicated by the big

size of the man, the red color of his garment and the demonic smile on his face.

**Text-image relation**, this level is not shown in the photo under investigation as there is no language in the image. Hence, the message is expressed only through the visual components.

## 2. Analysis of Cartoon No. (2)



Cartoon No. (2)

From (<https://www.memri.org/reports/cartoons-arab-press-status-women-arab-world>)

From an *ideational meaning*, one can identify this second image as a *simple activity image* demonstrating the process of marital issue. In the image, there are four figures, with three of them playing a central role because of a specific feature sketched in the figure: (1) the *groom* has been depicted as a bear given a bigger size than the others. (2) The *father* has been represented as the controller who leads the family to wherever he likes, the crutch in his hand is a representation of one's leadership and power. (3) The *mother* has been distinguished from the others by her black-color garment. (4) The only figure who is having a peripheral role is *the girl*. She looked with a shocked face, expressing her refusal and rejection for all what is happening. Investigating the manner through which the image has been construed, one can feel that the crutch in the hand of the father is an *index* of aggression and violence that may be exercised on the girl if she refuses or disobeys her father's rules. The depiction of the groom as a bear maybe interpreted from two sides: one being a symbol of calmness, playfulness, and cuddliness. As if the cartoonist wants to maintain that this man is dumb, naïve and primitive, caring about nothing but home, woman, and food. The other side as being a symbol of power, strength and brutality. In both meanings, it seems that the man is powerful and superior, while the girl is powerless and inferior. This same meaning has been depicted in the big size of the man and the small size of the girl. The whole image has been composed out of four figures, three of them decide the future and life of the oppressed girl.

Concerning the *interpersonal meaning*, the feelings that the current image inscribes is that of a shock effect, from the side of the daughter, and this gives an angry judgment against the act (obliging the girl to marry) and hence, a sense of patriarchy will dominate the whole scene found in the image. Engagement with the girl and feeling empathy for her situation seems direct, and straightforward. As for the graduation, it seems amplified

(high) through the use of the text (that's it /خلص; elaboration of what the girl should do 'you will marry him' هانتجوزيه هانتجوزيه) as well as the organized activity that puts the girl hopeless and downhearted.

As for the **textual organization** of the modes in the current picture, the layout of the photo combines both *horizontal and vertical structuring*. Concerning the former, the men (the father and the groom) have been placed on the right side of the image, indicating the new information and the two women (the mother and the girl) on the left side showing the given information. As if the cartoonist suggests that the father and the groom represent the new life that the girl will have. Regarding the vertical organization, one can see that the textual component, representing the ideal category, has been put above the two women indicating the act of obligation that would be exercised on the girl. Real category in the lower section has been portrayed by the two women (mainly the girl) leaning down to watch, listen and reluctantly obey. On the other side of the photo, one can see the window as ideal with the general view that it will always remain close, at the bottom there are the two male figures (father and bride) who represent the real category. To put such idea on a concrete footing, it seems plausible to suppose that the window is always under the control of the men since they have been positioned at the bottom to display the idea that what is real is the fact that the girl's future is in the hands of the male figures.

Looking at what is distinctive in the photo, in terms of the *salience dimension*, one can see that the big size that the groom has indicated dominance and control. Another salient feature is the black dress that the mother wears to distinguish her in a way that she is a follower of the father, and a controller of the daughter.

Moving to the last component within Martin and Rose's model (2007), one has to look at **the image-text organization** and what logical relations both invoke. In the current photo the text that the mother said to her daughter has been emphasized by the elaborating phrase (you will marry him means you will marry him/ هانتجوزيه هانتجوزيه). As has been explained in the textual dimension above that the men have been put in the right side of the photo to represent new information, the text has been put in the left side to represent the old information. Thus, the image-text relation expresses an elaborating role in which the text is merely restating what is happening in the visual mode (the father with the groom's plans). This Given-New positions enhance the whole scenario in that the text elaborates as well as enhances the visual modes and the whole process of marriage plans. The mother's expression (that's it/ خلاص) again indicates a preplanned decision in which the girl has no hands in it since (your father gave him his words/ ابوكي عطاء كلمته), the father gave his words and accordingly no other decision can be given. This text with its tenacity tone seems to have a strong relation with the visual components. Thus, there is a weak image-text boundary since they (visual and verbal) enhance each other. The identification of the relation between the verbal and visual components shows that the text refers to the image. One can understand the text without referring to the image or vice versa, as each element is used to merely elaborate and enhance the other.

### 3 Analysis of Cartoon No. (3)



Cartoon No.(3)

From (<https://cartoonmovement.com/cartoon/child-marriage>)

In **ideational terms**, the image is seen as an *activity-focused image* that construes a single activity of a wedding. The groom, who is an old white-bearded man, displays a central role while the bride, who is a very small girl, is given a peripheral role and this is shown by the way the man is catching her hand. The man's dress (as with image No.1) alludes to wealthy Arabian men who are given the right to marry underage girls. As for the construal meaning of the modes used in the image, one can see the crutch as an *index* of old age and senility. The shoes below the feet of the girl are an index of inadequate and unfit size for the girl. As for the doll in the hands of the girl, it represents a symbol of purity, childhood, and innocence. Hence, the design shows the brutality of destroying such an innocence by committing the crime of obliging such an underage to marry reluctantly.

In **interpersonal terms**, the feeling that the current image invokes in the viewers' thinking is that of sympathetic affect, which gives a negative judgment about what is happening. This, in turn, can be evaluated to be a damaging underages' lives. There appears a need to stop such a process of child marriage and to stand against its supporters. Engagement with the scene in the image seems direct as each viewer tries to put oneself (or their children) in the girl's position. Graduation is, as with the second image, amplified as feelings have been evoked and no categories have been put into consideration.

Examining **the textual organization** of the third photo, one sees that it takes a *polarized horizontal layout* in which the man occupies the right side of the photo, resembling the new information, and the girl is put on the left side of the photo, indicating the given information. As with the previous image (image 2), the placement of these figures in this way may be interpreted as if the man and his manners are the new future that awaits the small girl. Concerning the salience dimension, one may be attracted by the big shoes placed under the small feet of the girl, indicating inappropriateness as if the shoes and their size tell the viewers that these shoes are so big for the girl as it is the case with the man whose age and shape is not suitable for the girl too. Another distinctive feature is the lollipop in the mouth of the girl in relation to the rouge put on her lips. Such a relation is depicted by ascribing the red color to the red lollipop rather than to the make-up she is obliged to wear. A symbol that she is still a child who wants to enjoy and taste the beauty of childhood.

Examining **the image-text relation** within this photo, one can see that the only verbal part that is used here is the letter (Zzzz used in English to indicate 'sleep' (خ خ). Accordingly, the text can be seen as having an elaborating role in that it specifies the type of man that is considered as a groom. The boundary between the text and image is weak since the letter (خ خ) is only put as a specification of the man's type. So even if the letter is removed, it will not affect the interpretation of the image. The photo is identified as an image-based explaining its contents through its visual elements rather than through its verbal elements since the removal of the latter will cause no harm to the comprehension of the whole scenario.

#### 4. Analysis of Cartoon No. (4)



Cartoon No. (4)

From (<https://www.memri.org/reports/cartoons-arab-press-status-women-arab-world>)

Examining this fourth image from **an ideational perspective** shows that one can identify the image as a *classifying entity-focused image* which sorts boys as being the focus of any family. We have a happy boy (central) who is enjoying his ice cream and is being put under the light (nuclear) to be the primary focus in the image. The boy turns his back as an indication that he does not see anything other than his own needs. The girl has been given a peripheral role in that she has been put in complete darkness with nothing apparent but her sad needy eyes. The signs for the current image may be construed in the eyes, which is an *index* of sadness and need. The modes that represent symbols may be seen in the light, and the ice cream. The former is a symbol of appearance and existence, while the ice cream is a symbol of happiness and joy. As if the designer wants to maintain that in this world, the only existing human who is shown in the light is a happy boy.

As for the **interpersonal meaning** of the current image, it seems clear that the image has a prejudiced effect, which has an adverse judgment and is appreciated as being discriminating. Focusing on the presence and happiness of the boy and neglecting and marginalizing the existence of the girl as normal human being is a kind of discrimination and gender inequality. Engagement with the viewer is felt when the latter feels a direct concern that this division is unfair and unacceptable. As for the graduation concern, it is high as there are two main figures, out of which only one (the boy) is the center of humanity.

Examining **the textual organization** of the current photo shows that the photo has been organized around a *Center and Margin* principle. The boy has been put as the center maintaining the nucleus of information on which marginal elements (the eyes in the dark) are looking and depending. This design emphasizes the idea that the real and the most important figure in any family is the 'boy'. The most salient component within the image is the black background that the photo takes

which exposes nothing but what appears in the lights, i.e., the boy. The light in its triangular shape is another salient component that shows what deserves to be delivered, that is, the boy and his joy and delight.

In terms of **the text-image relation**, it seems clear that identifying each figure with his sex is a crucial component for the understanding of the whole image. Writing (boy/ ولد) over the male figure, and (girl/ بنت) over the eyes (as a representation of a female figure) indicates what is going on. That is, the text has an extending role in that it adds an identification for each vector. The demarcation between the visual and verbal elements seems weak in that they are complementing each other and hence both are needed. The identification of this kind of image seems mutual in that the text refers to the image and image refers to the text. A category that has not been mentioned by Martin and Rose's (2007) model but should be added here as the relation seems reciprocal.

#### 5. Analysis of Cartoon No. (5)



Cartoon No. (5)

From (<https://www.memri.org/reports/cartoons-arab-press-status-women-arab-world>)

The **ideational meaning** of the fifth image cartoon exhibits an *activity-focused image* portraying the unjust action of the man who is exercising physical violence on his woman by beating her brutally due to her late action in responding to the man's order (bringing him the coffee). The man is displayed as an oppressive, patriarchal and violent person. The beating is not only affecting the woman who is a peripheral participant in the image but also the son who is standing behind the woman, filled with tears. The son is protecting himself by the back of the woman but if the protector is oppressed then the protected will be lost and disoriented. As for the construal of the signs within the image, one sign is shown in the hands which is drawn four times to show its movement throughout the cheek of the woman. This sign (the hand) is an *index* of aggressiveness, strength, and ferocity. Tears (in the son's eyes and below his feet) are a symbol of fear, unsafety and dread. Furthermore, the man's wrist is a symbol of readiness to beat and hit more and more. As if, there is nothing to stop him. The man's facial expressions are also a symbol of brutality, anger and cruelty.

**The interpersonal meaning** of this image invokes an unhappy attitude about what is going on in the image. This is to justify the unsatisfactory effect from the part of the participant who used 'beating' as a tool to express his dissatisfaction. This act provokes a negative judgment about the action as it works against the normal rules of humanity. And it gets a negative appreciation about what he is doing to the woman (and child).

The viewer finds himself/ herself engaged in the scene and feels empathy with the woman. The act has been amplified and got a high graduation by the depiction of hand movement as well as the tears surrounding the boy.

In terms of **the textual organization** of the fifth photo, one sees that it can be examined as a *polarized horizontal and vertical structure*. Regarding the former, the man occupies the right side of the photo resembling the new information and the woman and her boy occupy the left side indicating the given information. As if the photo says there is nothing new in the wife's (and son's) life but what the man dictates and prescribes. Examining the photo from the vertical dimension, one can see that the verbal component has taken the top part of the photo indicating the ideal category which shows the general view that men are the powerful controller of women. The real category portrayed in the bottom part of the photo alludes to the humiliation, submission and surrender that the wife and son will get because of the man. Moving to the *salience components*, one may find the man's hand with its moving depiction as the most salient sign that expresses physical violence and aggressiveness. The facial expressions of the three figures in the photo are also salient: the man's gesture points to his anger and rage; the woman to her helplessness and powerlessness, and the son to his fear and fright.

**The image-text relation** of the current image shows an extending role played by the verbal components in that it expresses a causal relation with the visual elements. That is, the reason behind beating the woman is her delay in bringing the coffee (You need a whole hour to bring the coffee/ ساعة تجيبي القهوة). In plain words, the delay (in bringing the coffee) is the reason behind this physical violence. As for the boundary between the two elements, it seems weak as there is no boundary between the verbal and visual components since they complete each other and the viewer can understand the reason behind the beating by reading the written text. The image may be identified again (as with image No. 4) as having a reciprocal relation in which the verbal elements complete the visual ones. They can not be taken separately. That is, reading the text will not lead to the visual mode and looking at the image will not make us understand the reason behind the violent reaction.

## 6 Analysis of Cartoon No. (6)



Cartoon No. (6)

From (<https://www.memri.org/reports/cartoons-arab-press-status-women-arab-world>)

Examining this last image from **an ideational perspective**, one can easily detect it as an *activity-focused image* in which the man is beating his woman mercilessly. The man is central controlling the woman by his place, size and action. The woman is peripheral doing nothing but surrender to the man's action. The son is also peripheral in the sense that he will be raised according to what the powerful participant will set up for him. The son is thinking of his father as an ox who cares about nothing but its prey. Concerning the construal of the signs within the image, it is clear that the man's mustache is an *icon* of the ox's horns, a relation that is drawn in the boy's mind. As a result of this classifying iconic image, Arab men (with big mustache of the photo's type) will be looked at as being a representation of oxen's reactions to different acts, i.e., performing violence against their counterpart parties.

As with the images mentioned earlier, **the interpersonal meaning** of this image invokes a refusal attitude with a negative judgment against the man's actions towards the woman. Engagement is direct with the act and graduation is high amplified by the comparison made between the man's mustache and the ox's horns representing men as raging oxen.

**The textual organization** of this last photo shows that the photo may be interpreted from a *polarized horizontal and vertical layout*. The man placed over the woman while beating her occupies the left side of the image to indicate the old information, that is, the man with his aggressive attitude towards the woman is the normal life that the woman gets. The boy with his thinking is placed on the right hand of the image to indicate the new information that he will live under the control of an ox's barbarian and savage power. Looking at the current image cartoon from a vertical direction, one can see that the top part has been occupied by the son's imagination of the father as an ox. Hence, the ideal information is represented by the general view that men with big mustache and huge body are a symbol of oxen. The bottom part of the photo shows the two figures, the son crying and fearing the ox, and the woman below the man being beaten and hit. Accordingly, what is real is the fact that such weak figures have nothing in hand but to surrender and submit to men's power and superiority. The *salient components* are represented in the man's mustache which is compared to the ox's horns. Again, as with image No. 5, the facial expressions of the three figures have been given salience and prominence: drawing the man with anger, the woman with lack of power, and the boy with shock and fright.

No **text-image relation** has been detected in the last image since the only elements that are found are those of the visual type. The message is conveyed through the visual mode only.

### D. Results and Discussion of the Analysis

In terms of the **ideational meaning**, the six examined cartoons exhibit that four of them (images 2,3,5,6) focus on activity mainly that of forced marriage, (in image 2 and 3), or the physical violence exercised by the husband against the wife (images 5 and 6). The other two images are of the classifying entity-focused type mainly of the superiority of men (image 1 and 4). This shows that the main focus of cartoons is to show either the forceful actions of men or to describe them as being ferocious. Hence, the most dominant figure in the six photos is *the man* and he is treating his woman (wife or daughter) in an unfair, oppressive and inferior way (This verifies hypothesis 3).



The signs in five of the cartoons include both index and symbols. The only icon found among the six cartoons was in cartoon No.5 in which a direct relation is made between the man's mustache and the ox's horns. An indication that ridicules the similarity between men's actions and oxen's reactions

Moving to **the interpersonal meaning** in the six investigated cartoons, it seems clear that all of them instigate a negative judgment about the male character in the cartoon. The attitude of the figure in the cartoon incites a bad reaction from the side of the viewer as he is exercising violence, injustice, and oppression on the other partner (mainly the woman). Again, in the six of them feelings of disgust, refusal, and rejection have been amplified and made high. The six photos invoke feelings against the violence exercised against women which is classified as social in the first four cartoons (exercising unbalanced roles) and physical in the last two (exercising beating).

**The textual organization** of three of the cartoons took a polarized horizontal and vertical layout (image 2 ,5 and 6). The Given-New positions in these four images exhibit the detrimental future that awaits the women. Men in these images occupy the right side indicating the view that the only future, that these women should have, is these men with their aggressive attitude. The semantic meanings between the top and bottom elements in these texts show verbal elements at the top and figures surrendering at the bottom (images 2 and 5) as if the cartoonist wants to say that language is dictated by the superior member (the father and husband) in the family and those at the bottom (the women and children) are the concrete elements that must follow blindly. Images (1 and 3) took a horizontal layout with the man occupying the right side (image 3) to express the new future that is drawn for the female figure. Although the man in image (1) has occupied the left side to express the old information, still he is given prominence and attraction by his salient figures. So, the right/ new information for this man is to get a property of four women altogether in one trolley. The only image that got a center-margin layout is image (4) in which the boy is the center, and the hidden girl has been marginalized by being dark and only her looking eyes are apparent. Throughout the six investigated images, specific elements within each photo have been given prominence and salience to support the idea in the whole modality.

As for **the image-text relation**, it is evident that the designer in most of the images depended on the visual modes more than on the verbal ones (this verifies hypothesis 2). This result may be ascribed to fact that visual modes can provide their own affordances through which they can be interpreted globally. That is, they can convey the message without a need for the existence of the verbal mode and the message can be understood by all people. Cartoons No. 1 and 6 got no language at all; the other ones are having very concise written text which mainly elaborate the visual mode. Cartoons 4 and 5 have a verbal mode that supports the whole scenario. That is, language is used as a complementary mode to the visual one and cannot be dealt with separately (This verifies hypothesis 1). The only cartoon that can be interpreted without reference to the image is the text in cartoon No. 2 which gives the whole image through language. However, it still plays an elaborating role by restating what is already mentioned through the visual mode.

All in all, one can understand that the meaning-making of the cartoons can be gained from both the visual and verbal modes which (when both existent) can play a complementary role to each other. However, more emphasis is given to the visual side as it conveys the message appropriately.

## CONCLUSION

Domestic violence cartoons are a special kind of text. Approaching them from a multimodal perspective can unveil the main components that participate in the meaning-making of each piece as one whole. Arabic domestic violence image cartoons exhibit the range of oppression women get from their patriarchs (mainly the father and the husband). A multimodal analysis of such types of texts shows that visual and verbal components work hand in hand to give the whole meaning. However, in such kinds of texts, the visual mode surpasses the verbal one as the message is mainly conveyed visually, and the verbal mode is only used to fulfill the elaborating function. In all the examined cartoons, domestic violence has been found and been exercised through different kinds such as social violence by showing gender discrimination and giving an inferior role for women, physical by beating and hitting them, as well as psychological and emotional violence by insulting and treating them unfairly. All these types lead to women's abuse and impairment in the sense that she will be a disabled person who will be unable to protect her surroundings (mainly her children).

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