

## Investigating the Use of Conceptual Metaphors in Al-Jazirah News About Saudi Vision 2030 Policies

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### ABSTRACT

Social changes in Saudi Arabia as part of the Saudi Vision 2030 agenda have received criticism from Islamic countries, mainly from conservative Islamic groups, which view these government policies as conflicting with traditional Islamic values. Through Al-Jazirah, this media outlet uses metaphors to channel the aspirations of conservative Islamic groups in their opposition to social change in Saudi Arabia. Concerning this phenomenon, this study aims to describe the conceptualization of domains used by Al-Jazirah. Descriptive qualitative research was conducted to answer the research questions, which consist of domain conceptualization and the purpose of using these domains in news texts. Data were taken from four news texts about Saudi Vision 2030 policies, collected through observation, and followed by note-taking techniques. Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out through stages of reduction, presentation, analysis, and conclusion, referring to Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory as the analytical framework. The analysis results show that Al-Jazirah uses several metaphors effectively in its news texts. Regarding motives, Al-Jazirah utilizes the perspective of conservative Islamic ideology to criticize Saudi Arabia. Al-Jazirah employs the ideas of conservative Islam to strengthen its legitimacy, thus attracting the attention of audiences, especially conservative Islamic groups who oppose the government's agenda. One of the characteristics of the metaphors that Al-Jazirah uses to undermine its political opponents is the psychological threat that this policy could harm the morality of Saudi society.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Several Islamic countries and conservative Islamic groups have criticized certain aspects of Saudi Vision 2030 (Kosárová, 2020; Habibi, 2019; David Cowan, 2018),

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mainly related to social changes that are perceived to contradict traditional Islamic values. Some policies under Saudi Vision 2030, such as the opening of cinemas, allowing women to drive, and more open tourism, are considered by these groups to undermine conservative cultural and religious values (CNBC Indonesia, 2024; Al-Jazirah, 2024; CNN Arabic, 2024). Furthermore, conservative Islamic constructs extend to the realm of communication between the sexes on social media. They limit interaction with the opposite gender, even when discussing religious, social, or political topics (Al-Qahtani, 2022).

Conservative Islamic culture has long been intertwined with the image of Saudi Arabia, particularly since the 1980s when the country declared itself as ultra-conservative (Mandaville, 2022; Dorsey, 2017). Referring to this statement, it is understandable that narratives of resistance toward social change in Saudi Arabia emerge, especially from conservative Islamic groups. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (MBS) reform efforts have sparked public support and opposition since he launched Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016 (Eum, 2019; Saudi Vision 2030, 2024). For instance, in their research, Naeem Afzal and Abdullah Omar support Saudi Arabia's reforms within the framework of Vision 2030, particularly regarding women's empowerment (Afzal & Omar, 2021). Soekarba's research also portrays MBS's efforts through Vision 2030 as more progressive, especially regarding gender equality in Saudi Arabia. However, these changes are expected to progress slowly due to the ongoing influence of traditional groups (Soekarba, 2019).

Meanwhile, several studies have also revealed negative sentiments toward MBS's ambitious steps. For instance, Salameh's research indicates that certain Qatari media tend to take a negative stance toward these social changes, particularly regarding the issue of women being allowed to drive. Moreover, Qatari media are suspected of exploiting the issue of social change in Saudi Arabia to criticize the country, stemming from the political dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia (Salameh, 2020). Negative responses have also come from several non-Arab media outlets, which remain pessimistic about social changes in Saudi Arabia (Hasan et al., 2023). These varied reactions are fundamentally tied to the interests of certain groups. Dominant groups strive to leverage their positions to dominate others. This aligns with the findings of Elyas et al., who found that political authorities exert pressure on certain media outlets to represent news according to their group's interests (Elyas et al., 2020).

In principle, the legitimacy of dominant groups over marginalized ones can be traced in various forms of discourse, including metaphors in news texts. News producers use metaphors in their texts to showcase their creativity as content creators because metaphors can reveal how much the cognitive framing of news can represent social phenomena (Arrese & Miguel, 2016). News producers can implement metaphors in their texts to subtly deliver social or political criticism without explicitly stating it, as shown in various studies (Dilivia et al., 2023; Salem et al., 2022; Demata et al., 2021; Shakkour & Mari, 2020; Salahshour, 2016).

The use of metaphors in news texts aims to criticize certain political groups, as seen in Al-Jazirah's coverage of Saudi Vision 2030 policies. The selection of this topic is based on the hypothesis that Al-Jazirah's use of metaphors is not merely descriptive but is also viewed as a political tool. When examined in its news texts, Al-Jazirah's use of metaphors appears to support conservative Islamic groups that oppose social

change in Saudi Arabia. However, in reality, Al-Jazirah's support for these groups is merely a pretext to undermine Saudi Arabia following Qatar's blockade. Furthermore, this study seeks to demonstrate that the selection of metaphors in Al-Jazirah's news texts regarding Saudi Vision 2030 policies is influenced by the interests of certain political groups, calling into question Al-Jazirah's credibility as an independent media outlet. In this context, the study of conceptual metaphors in Al-Jazirah's news texts about Saudi Vision 2030 policies can be summarized in the research question: What types of conceptual metaphors does Al-Jazirah use in the texts of Al-Jazirah's Saudi Vision 2030 policy news?

## 2. METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study, and the data sources are taken from [www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net), focusing on articles that contain conceptual metaphors on the Al-Jazirah news site from 2017 to 2019. The study examines four news reports about three Saudi Vision 2030 policies, including opening cinemas, allowing women to drive, and allowing tourists not to wear the abaya. The research selected this publication period (2017-2019) because Saudi Arabia launched the Vision 2030 agenda in 2016, and these policies began to be implemented in 2017. Additionally, the blockade of Qatar in 2017 coincided with the realization of Vision 2030 policies.

The process of collecting metaphor data is carried out in five stages. First, a search is conducted on [www.aljazeera.net](http://www.aljazeera.net). Second, keywords such as "Saudi Vision 2030" and other keywords related to social changes in Saudi Arabia are applied in the search menu on the Al-Jazirah news website. Third, news articles containing metaphors about the Saudi Vision 2030 policy are selected. Fourth, the data is sorted and stored in the research work system. Fifth, after the data is stored, the data is selected and classified to determine the groups of metaphors to be analyzed based on the theoretical framework.

Meanwhile, data analysis follows the conceptual metaphor theory of Lakoff and Johnson, focusing on source and target domains. In this study, conceptual metaphors refer to understanding one concept in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Conceptual metaphors involve using a "source domain" and a "target domain." The source domain is a more concrete entity that can be experienced in everyday life or through human bodily or sensory experiences, making it more familiar to people. The target domain is an entity whose reality is more abstract or distant from human experience; not everyone may be familiar with it. This conceptual metaphor introduces the idea of a "conceptual domain" aimed at understanding the entirety of human experience through the interaction of the source and target domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

## 3. RESULT

To explain the construction of conceptual metaphors in Al-Jazirah's news texts, a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic reality found in the data is conducted. Based on the applied analysis model, the analysis begins with an explanation of the literal meaning of the words used as data, followed by the purpose behind the appearance of the metaphor in the news discourse. This method allows for the identification and detailed explanation of the construction of conceptual metaphors in the news about Saudi Vision 2030 policies from a linguistic perspective. By doing so, the conceptual

metaphor construction within the news related to Saudi Vision 2030 policies can be comprehensively identified and elaborated in line with linguistic viewpoints.

To explain the conceptual metaphors in Al-Jazirah's news texts, both single-word metaphors and phrases are analyzed. These metaphors are then grouped based on relevant themes. Additionally, the underlying intentions of the news producers in conveying these metaphors are examined to detect their political objectives.

#### a. Moral Threat Metaphor

Based on the data exploration, this type of domain tends to refer to the target domain, indicating that social changes in Saudi Arabia negatively impact the morality of Saudi society.

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	تسميم المجتمع السعودي
Data 1	Poisoning Saudi society.

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Referring to the above phrase, the metaphor *tasmim* (to poison) as a noun and *yusammimuna* (they poison) as a verb are borrowed from the physical domain (poison as a harmful substance). These two words describe social changes in Saudi Arabia as elements that corrupt the morality of society. This metaphor is viewed as a phrase that conveys the idea that freedom of dress for tourists is considered a harmful substance that could undermine the morality of Saudi society.

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Source Domain	Poison is a harmful substance that can damage the physical body
Target Domain	Moral (the change in regulations regarding tourists not being required to wear the abaya is seen as a threat to the morality of Saudi society)

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In other words, the Saudi Vision 2030 policy regarding dress regulations for tourists is perceived as an entity that undermines and weakens the traditional values held by some segments of Saudi society, particularly among conservative Islamic groups. Furthermore, the use of the term *tasmim* seemingly indicates a polarization between "us" and "them." The term positions tourists or this new policy as a harmful element to "us," meaning Saudi society. This creates a division between "us" (supporters of traditional values) and "them" (tourists and the Saudi government supporting liberalization). Consequently, conservative Islamic groups label non-Arab tourists as a threat that negatively impacts local cultural identity.

This metaphor reflects conservative Islamic groups' belief that the social changes initiated by the Saudi government are akin to disease or moral contamination. The metaphor suggests that the concept of poison connotes an external influence brought by tourists, which is believed to jeopardize the existing social order. The metaphor *tasmim* (to poison) illustrates resistance to social change in the political and social realms. This attitude aligns with conservative groups that view modernization or liberal movements as negative phenomena that must be opposed.

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نقل بعض المفردين فتوى المفتي الشيخ عبد العزيز آل الشيخ قال فيما إن

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Data 2	السينما والحفلات الغنائية ضرر وفساد Several Twitter users quoted the fatwa of Mufti Syaikh 'Abdul 'Aziz, stating that cinemas and concerts are dangerous and detrimental.
Data 3	... وإن الأفلام ضارة ومؤذية "لأنها تمثل أفلاما خليعة ماجنة أو إحادية فاسدة" The film is dangerous and cruel because it represents vulgarity, madness, or is anti-God, which can be harmful

Based on the above phrase, the metaphor *al-sināmā wa al-ḥafalāt al-jinā'iyah ḥarārān wa fasādun* refers to the context of the Saudi government's policy allowing cinemas to reopen. This metaphor contains several elements that can be examined in depth. The terms *ḥarārān* (dangerous) and *fasādun* (corrupting) are used to frame the discourse of rejection against social change in Saudi Arabia from a religious perspective. This is evidenced by the argumentation of religious figures such as Mufti Sheikh 'Abdul 'Aziz appearing in news texts. This Saudi Mufti's quotation is considered a strong element for legitimizing religious perspectives in news discourse.

Words like *ḥarārān* (dangerous) and *fasādun* (corrupting) are terms taken from the physical domain and applied to the moral domain. This metaphor is viewed as one that describes social changes in Saudi Arabia as something that can injure or damage the existing societal order. Furthermore, the terms *ḥarārān* and *fasādun* are indefinite nouns (*isim nakirah*) that indicate a general meaning. Using these indefinite nouns influences the interpretation that this policy can harm all aspects of human life, including religious, social, cultural, and political realms.

Source Domain	Physical danger is something that can cause injury or physical damage
Target Domain	Moral (cultural changes such as cinemas and concerts are considered to undermine morality and religious traditions)

Thus, the words *ḥarārān* (dangerous) and *fasādun* (corrupting) are used metaphorically to describe cinemas and concerts as not merely entertainment but as threats to social stability, moral values, and the religious identity of Saudi society. This metaphor highlights the polarization in the debate between conservative and moderate groups. The conservative viewpoint is represented by Mufti Sheikh 'Abdul 'Aziz, who argues that cinemas and concerts are symbols of modernity that threaten traditional and religious norms. In contrast, the moderate perspective is represented by the Saudi government, which aims to reintroduce cinemas and concerts as part of Vision 2030, intending to develop the entertainment sector in Saudi Arabia.

The second metaphor, *al-aflām ḥarārān wa mu'āqiyah* (films are dangerous and cruel), in data 3 is not significantly different from data 2. This phrase refers to the context in which films are instruments of the policy allowing cinemas to reopen. The statement suggests that films are seen as elements contributing to moral decay in Saudi Arabia. From the perspective of Saudi society, particularly among conservative Islamic groups, the term *al-aflām* (films) describes entertainment media that are deemed unsuitable for viewing because they represent vulgarity, madness, or anti-God sentiments that can be harmful.

Source Domain	Dangerous and cruel are qualities that are typically associated with something that poses a physical threat
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Target Domain	Film is a form of entertainment media
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The phrase *al-aflām ḥarārān wa mu'āqiyah* (films are dangerous and cruel) employs a conceptual metaphor to convey that films are not merely understood literally as entertainment media, but rather as indications of moral decay in Saudi Arabia, as expressed through the terms *ḥarārān* and *mu'āqiyah* (dangerous and cruel). The polarization pattern in this data does not significantly differ from data 2, as this metaphor incites two opposing arguments between conservative and moderate groups that evaluate films from differing perspectives.

Data 4	أفتى مفتي السعودية عبد العزيز آل الشيخ بأن قيادة السيارة قد تفتح عليها أبواب الشر . The Saudi Muft 'Abdul 'Aziz Ali Syaikh, stated that allowing women to drive could open the door to crime . . .
Data 5	أن قيادة المرأة للسيارة تجرّ مفاسد كثيرة، منها نزع الحجاب، وتكون محط أنظار للرجال. Women driving cars bragging about many crimes, such as removing the hijab and being the center of men's attention

Based on the above data, Mufti 'Abdul 'Aziz's statement opposes the Saudi government's policy allowing women to drive cars. His viewpoint aligns closely with the previous assumption that this perspective is consistent with conservative Islamic beliefs, which view allowing women to drive as contrary to traditional values.

Source Domain	Opening a door is a physical action that is easily understood because it relates to everyday experiences of granting access or allowing something to come in or go out
Target Domain	Crime is any form of negative consequence, immorality, or social damage.

The phrase *taftaḥu 'alayhā abwābul sharr* (opening the door to evil) equates to the idea that "opening a door is paving the way for something negative." This metaphor implies that allowing women to drive leads to bad outcomes, according to conservative Islamic views. Furthermore, this metaphor conveys emotions of fear or concern that women driving cars will behave in ways that contradict conservative Islamic values. Meanwhile, data 5 also presents the metaphor *anna qiyādah al-mar'ah lil sayārah tajurru mufāsadun kathīrah* (women driving cars brings about many crimes). This metaphor expresses social and moral concerns regarding women driving. Women are viewed as entities that often exacerbate issues, namely crime. Referring to this metaphor, which appears neutral (discussing the policy of allowing women to drive), it is nonetheless linked to negative consequences. The use of the metaphor *tajurru* (to drag) suggests that the act of driving by women can attract crime.

Source Domain	Dragging the burden or negative consequences that arise from women's freedom
Target Domain	Women driving cars have autonomous freedom, but it also allows for the possibility of making mistakes (crimes)

The classification of such metaphors reflects the conservative perspective that women driving cars is seen as a symbol of independence, yet this action is considered a violation of traditional values. The metaphor suggests an effort by conservative Islamic groups to restrict women in public spaces. Additionally, women are perceived as more likely to engage in wrongdoing compared to men. This metaphor directly indicates the stereotypes often imposed on women within conservative societies. Consequently, it reinforces the negative stigma against women who dare to step outside traditional norms.

### b. *Metaphor of Domination*

Based on the observation of metaphor data in Al-Jazirah news articles, the domain type tends to be positioned within the target realm, indicating that social changes in Saudi Arabia are controlled by government power.

Data 6	وأضافت أن قبضته على السلطة ليست مضمونة بأي حال من الأحوال
	And he added that his grip on power is not guaranteed in any way

Based on the metaphorical term *qabdah* (grip) in this context illustrates that some Saudi scholars view the policy allowing women to drive as a form of domination or coercion by the government. The metaphor *qabdah* conveys the idea of government power understood as a physical act of gripping something. In this metaphorical context, *qabdah* refers to a strong and forceful control or domination.

Source Domain	Physical grip (the act of grasping or holding something tightly)
Target Domain	Power (the influence or control of the government over its citizens)

Using the metaphor *qabdah* (grip) can depict power as harsh, limiting, and coercive. It suggests that the rulers have full control over the people's freedom, particularly women's freedom to drive. The metaphor *qabdah* implies that women's permission to drive is not a result of true freedom or natural change but rather pressure from the government imposing this policy. This expression has a negative connotation towards government policy, as it seems to be viewed as a product of authoritarian power rather than a reflection of the aspirations of society or women.

The metaphor *qabdah* positions the government as the dominating force over its people, especially women. This policy is not fully supported by Saudi society, particularly among conservative Islamic groups. Religious authorities reject this policy because they see the government as an instrument enforcing its will, while the society (especially women) is viewed as the controlled party. Meanwhile, this metaphor illustrates the polarization between the rulers and the society. The government is depicted as the entity with the power of *qabdah*. At the same time, society (especially women) is seen as the object being gripped rather than as active subjects in decision-making.

It is important to note that Al-Jazirah strongly criticizes the Saudi government for issuing this policy merely to improve the country's image, as Saudi Arabia is frequently condemned as one of the countries that often violate human rights. Additionally, Al-Jazirah assesses that Saudi Arabia is not yet ready to carry out significant

transformations, particularly in social aspects, since it still violates human rights, especially concerning women.

### c. *Metaphor of Religion*

Based on the metaphor data in the Al-Jazirah news text, various domains tend to be positioned within the target realm, suggesting that these metaphors can convey meanings with religious connotations.

Data 7	هل أنت جاهز لملك الموت؟ Are you ready to face the king of death
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The metaphor *hal anta jahiz li malik al-maut* (are you ready to face the king of death?) emphasizes the moral and religious consequences that will be faced if the policy of reopening cinemas is implemented. The phrase *malik al-maut* (king of death) refers to a figure or entity that governs religious traditions, including Islam. In this context, "king of death" serves as a representation of the end of life and the judgment that follows death, highlighting concerns about the spiritual impact of the proposed social changes.

Source Domain	"King" refers to someone who holds the highest authority or is a supreme ruler, often associated with divine or godly entities.
Target Domain	Death is an abstract concept that often evokes fear or is considered the second phase after life in the world

The metaphor *malik al-maut*, "king of death," is rooted in the religious belief in an afterlife. In this phase, each individual is held accountable for their wrongdoings during their earthly life. This metaphor serves as a subtle reminder to the Saudi government that this policy could lead to sin and affect one's fate in the afterlife. The connotation of *malik al-maut*, "king of death," is associated with fear and threat, implying that those who sin or support the opening of cinemas must be prepared to face severe consequences in the hereafter. This comment acts as a moral warning to those who support social change, such as the opening of cinemas. From this perspective, cinemas are seen as a form of entertainment and a moral threat that could lead to spiritual harm. The use of the metaphor *malik al-maut*, "king of death," reflects the views of conservative groups in Saudi Arabia, which define cinemas as part of Western influence that can undermine Islamic values.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings above, conceptual metaphors in reporting Saudi Vision 2030 policies have distinctions compared to metaphors in previous studies. Some previous studies showed diverse negative or positive reactions to Saudi Vision 2030. Several studies supported MBS's reforms in the Saudi Vision 2030 policy regarding social changes (Afzal & Omar 2021; Dewi et al. 2020). Conversely, other studies indicated resistance to the new policies formed by MBS through Vision 2030 (Yuhandra et al., 2024; Alshaikh, 2019). These differing representations, whether in support of or against these policies, essentially have specific political objectives. However, no research has yet explained the communication aspect of these policies to the public, especially regarding conservative Islamic groups.

Al-Jazirah presents metaphors that criticize the Saudi government based on conservative Islamic thinking. Al-Jazirah seems to attack Saudi Arabia from the ideological standpoint of conservative Islamic groups, as seen in its effort to embed a complex understanding of conservative Islamic ideology within its news texts. According to Van Dijk, such representation indicates that the media is concealing something in manipulating news (Dijk, 1988). Al-Jazirah also employs a similar tactic, using the negative sentiments of conservative Islamic groups to undermine Saudi Arabia. This occurs because Al-Jazirah has a long history of conflict with Saudi Arabia, one of which arose after the 9/11 tragedy. This tragedy constructed a radical and extremist image of Arabs due to the involvement of 15 out of 19 al-Qa'idah members who were Saudi nationals. Al-Jazirah capitalized on this moment by featuring al-Qa'idah leader Usamah bin Ladin. Al-Jazirah's actions have further exacerbated Saudi Arabia's situation (Yunal, 2022; Miladi, 2020).

The tension between Al-Jazirah and Saudi Arabia escalated further when Al-Jazirah massively promoted the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn) through the figure of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a well-known pro-Brotherhood scholar (Sindi, 2016). This negative sentiment from Al-Jazirah is closely tied to Qatar's control, as Al-Jazirah acts as a state propaganda tool (Cherkaoui, 2014). Evidence of Al-Jazirah's role as Qatar's propaganda apparatus can be seen in the metaphors within this text. Al-Jazirah employs negative diction concerning the Saudi Vision 2030 policies, coinciding with the Qatari blockade in 2017. In the same year, Saudi Arabia severed bilateral relations with Qatar, accusing it of embracing terrorist and sectarian groups (Wardoyo, 2018). Thus, this negative construction of metaphors reflects the political rift between Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Political practitioners use metaphors as a means to indirectly undermine their opponents. This construction has been validated by Lakoff and Johnson, who argue that metaphors are not merely ornaments of literary works but rather ways of thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When connected to data beyond the text, hidden assumptions reinforce the role of metaphors as reflections of an individual's thought processes. However, previous research has often focused on the function of metaphors as expressions of meaning and value. This study seeks to rationalize further that the content of the text not only validates the truth or falsehood of a piece of news but can synthesize meanings beyond the text into a new meaning (Dijk, 1998).

The negative representation of metaphors is a consequence of the political dispute between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which has led to a diminished credibility of Al-Jazirah's journalists as an independent media outlet (Salameh, 2020). Referring to the metaphors in this news, Al-Jazirah effectively communicates its political objectives, providing a psychological threat to its political opponents. Al-Jazirah claims that the Saudi Vision policies serve as a cover for various human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, using metaphors as an effective form of propaganda to pressure opposing groups is reasonable.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Metaphors are applied in all human communication activities, including in Al-Jazirah, which also uses metaphors in its news texts. In this context, Al-Jazirah employs three metaphors: moral threat, dominance, and religious. First, the moral threat metaphor portrays the Saudi Vision policy as a threat to the moral values of

Saudi Arabian society. Second, the dominance metaphor reflects the conservative Islamic groups' concerns about the government's dominance, which seems to impose its will without considering the presence of conservative Islamic groups in Saudi Arabia. Third, the religious metaphor is used to highlight the inconsistency of this policy with the principles of conservative Islam held by certain segments of Saudi society.

Overall, the use of these metaphors reveals Al-Jazirah's critical stance toward the Saudi Vision 2030 policy, aiming to emphasize that the policy conflicts with the ideas of conservative Islam. Regarding motives, Al-Jazirah leverages the conservative Islamic ideological perspective to criticize Saudi Arabia. It utilizes the ideas of conservative Islam to strengthen its legitimacy, thus attracting the attention of readers, especially conservative Islamic groups opposed to the government's agenda. Through the use of metaphors in Al-Jazirah's news texts, it becomes evident that the Saudi government has not effectively communicated this policy to the public, particularly conservative Islamic groups, as demonstrated by sharp criticisms from these groups through Al-Jazirah's media coverage.

This study has certain limitations, including the small amount of data analyzed due to the scarcity of metaphorical data in the discourse of news texts. Literature on Saudi Vision 2030, particularly regarding social change, remains limited. It is hoped that future research will focus on material objects related to the news on Vision 2030 policies, especially within linguistic studies. Given the crucial findings of this study, it is expected that Al-Jazirah, as a mass media outlet, positions itself as an independent media entity, free from the influence of specific group interests.

## 6. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the conception and design of the research. The First Author is responsible for data collection and data analysis, while the Second Author plays a role in correcting, providing input, and feedback, ensuring that this scientific article can be refined

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