

Gender Discrimination In The Drama Series At-Tabadul (The Exchange) A Semiotics Roland Barthes

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the portrayal of gender discrimination against women in the film The Exchange. The study aims to describe the forms of gender discrimination and to uncover the meanings behind these representations. The method used is qualitative descriptive analysis based on Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics, which includes an analysis of denotation, connotation, and myth. The research data consist of scenes, dialogues, and visual elements that illustrate practices of gender discrimination in the film The Exchange. Data collection was conducted through screenshots and notes on scenes relevant to the research focus. The results show that gender discrimination is represented through various forms of injustice experienced by female characters, both within the family and in the workplace. These forms of discrimination include the disregard for women's abilities, unequal treatment, negative stereotypes, restrictions on social roles, and a lack of recognition of women's rights and needs. This study also found that gender discrimination is not only perpetrated by male characters but is also reproduced by female characters who have internalized patriarchal values. Through these portrayals, the film The Exchange illustrates the consequences or impacts of discrimination that can affect gender relations and diminish women's status in social life.

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1. Introduction

Gender discrimination is a form of social injustice that remains a problem in various aspects of society to this day. Gender discrimination refers to the different, unfair, or detrimental treatment of a person based on their gender, resulting in restrictions on the rights, opportunities, and access that should be enjoyed equally (Lamapaha et al., 2022; Abbas et al., 2022; Irmayani et al., 2024). This phenomenon stems from social and cultural constructs that place men and women in unequal positions. In societies still influenced by patriarchal culture, women are often viewed as less competent, more emotional, and lacking the same authority as men in various aspects of life (Usman et al., 2021; Muslimat et al., 2025; Junaid et al., 2024). As a result, women often face various forms of discrimination, such as stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, and gender-based violence, which are gradually being normalized in social life.

The phenomenon of gender discrimination is not only found in real life, but is also portrayed in various media, including movies and drama series (Hakim, 2021). As a cultural product, film serves not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a space for representing social reality, embodying the values, norms, and ideologies that evolve within society (Indrasari et al., 2020; Abbas et al., 2023; Junaid et al., 2024). Through dialogue, visuals, character expressions, plot, and various other cinematic elements, film is capable of constructing specific interpretations of the relationship between men and women. Thus, the representation of gender discrimination in films not only depicts the characters' experiences but also reflects and shapes society's perspective on women's position in both the domestic and public spheres. Such representations are also frequently found in films and drama series that depict life in the Middle East, which still reveal the strong influence of patriarchal culture on gender relations (Al-wahaibi, 2025).

One drama series that addresses this issue is The Exchange, directed by Jasem AlMuhanna and Karim El Shenawy. Released on Netflix in 2023, the series is set against the backdrop of Kuwaiti society in the 1980s, when women began entering the financial sector, which had long been dominated by men. The story centers on the struggles of two female characters, Munira and Farida, as they strive to gain recognition in the stock market. In the process, they face various

forms of discrimination, such as skepticism about women's abilities, restricted access in the workplace, double standards in treatment between men and women, and the belief that a woman's success is determined by her marital status. These diverse representations make *The Exchange* a relevant subject of research because it contains a system of signs that represent practices of gender discrimination in social life.

To uncover the meaning behind these representations, this study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics as the basis for analysis. Barthes views film as a system of signs that produces meaning through three levels of interpretation: denotation, connotation, and myth (Mahardika, 2024). Denotation refers to the literal meaning, connotation reveals meanings influenced by social and cultural context, while myth explains ideologies that have been naturalized and are therefore understood as a normal part of society (Barthes, 1972). Through this approach, the study not only identifies forms of gender discrimination but also reveals how patriarchal ideology is constructed and reproduced through dialogue, visuals, expressions, and interactions among characters in the series *The Exchange*.

Studies on gender discrimination in *The Exchange* have been conducted using various approaches (Salsabillah et al., 2025) analyzed the series from a liberal feminist perspective and found that women still face various obstacles due to the dominance of patriarchal structures. (Wardah & Surur, 2025) using Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover representations of gender discrimination against female characters in the same series. On the other hand, Roland Barthes's semiotic approach has been applied to various audiovisual works that address gender issues, such as the film *Inthiq Rasmiyyatan* (Muhammad et al., 2025), *Wadjda* (Imanda & Khoiroh, 2024) dan *Habibie & Ainun 3* (Sazali, 2023). These studies demonstrate that Barthes's semiotics is effective in revealing the ideological meanings hidden behind visual and verbal signs in audiovisual texts. However, the objects of study and the theories employed differ from those in previous research. This study specifically focuses its analysis on the series *The Exchange*, set in Kuwaiti society during the 1980s, using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach.

Nevertheless, research on *The Exchange* is still dominated by feminist perspectives and critical discourse analysis. To date, no study has specifically examined the representation of gender discrimination in the series using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach. Thus, there is a research gap in that it remains unclear how denotation, connotation, and myth construct representations of gender discrimination in *The Exchange*. Based on this gap, this study offers a novel approach by analyzing representations of gender discrimination through Roland Barthes's semiotic approach, thereby not only describing the forms of discrimination depicted but also explaining the process of meaning formation and the patriarchal ideology at work behind these representations.

This research is important because gender representation in the media plays a role in shaping the way society understands the relationship between men and women. An analysis of the series *The Exchange* is expected to provide insight into how audiovisual media not only reflect social reality but also construct and normalize patriarchal ideology through various visual and verbal cues. In addition to enriching semiotic studies, this research is expected to serve as a basis for reflection on the importance of gender equality in social life.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to (1) describe the forms of gender discrimination depicted in the drama series *The Exchange* and (2) analyze the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings of the representations of gender discrimination in the drama series *The Exchange* using Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics.

2. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of providing an in-depth and detailed account of the phenomenon under investigation (Rifa'i, 2023). The qualitative descriptive method produces descriptive data in the form of written words and images that provide a comprehensive picture of social phenomena. The choice of this method is based on the need to explore the issue of gender discrimination in television dramas in depth and to understand the meanings constructed through visual and verbal signs (Waruwu, 2024). This approach is combined with Roland Barthes's theory of semiotics, as it allows for the analysis of films and drama series as complex cultural texts by uncovering denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings. The research data source is the drama series *The Exchange*, released on Netflix in 2023. The research data includes scenes, dialogue, character expressions, body language, and other visual elements that indicate instances of gender discrimination. The data was selected based on its relevance to the research focus, namely gender discrimination experienced by female characters in the workplace and within the family.

Data collection was conducted using a documentation technique involving screenshots (Sari et al., 2025). The data collection process began with repeated viewings of all episodes of the series *The Exchange* to understand the plot, the

characters, and the social context underlying the occurrence of gender discrimination. Scenes, dialog, and visual elements representing gender discrimination were then identified, recorded, and documented as research data. This process was carried out systematically to obtain data relevant to the research objectives (Ayustin & Christin, 2022).

Data analysis was conducted through three stages of interpretation based on Roland Barthes's semiotics. The first stage involved a denotative analysis, describing the signs that are directly visible in the scenes, dialogue, and visual elements. The second stage is a connotative analysis to uncover meanings that emerge from the relationship between signs and their social and cultural context. The third stage is a mythical analysis aimed at identifying ideologies or social views that are normalized through representations of gender discrimination in the series. The analytical process was conducted iteratively to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between signs, meanings, and the social context represented in the series.

3. Results and Discussion

An analysis of the drama series *The Exchange* shows that gender discrimination is represented through various scenes, dialogues, and visual elements that reveal unequal relationships between men and women. These representations appear both within the family setting and in the workplace, which is dominated by a patriarchal culture. Based on an analysis of 13 research data points, four forms of gender discrimination were identified: subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, and violence. Subsequently, each form of discrimination was analyzed using Roland Barthes's semiotics through the stages of denotation, connotation, and myth to uncover the ideological meanings constructed in the drama series *The Exchange*.

3.1 Gender Discrimination

Discrimination is an attitude, action, or behavior by an individual or a group that marginalizes another person or group. There are many factors that contribute to it, one of which is differences in sex and gender (Sosial, 2023). Gender discrimination is the unfair treatment of individuals based on their sex, which affects their access to opportunities and rights. This form of inequality limits access to education, employment, and health care. It disproportionately affects women and girls (International, 2026)





3.2 Forms Of Gender Discrimination In The Drama Series *The Exchange*

Based on the analysis of all the research data, four forms of gender discrimination were identified in the drama series *The Exchange*, subordination, stereotyping, marginalization, and violence. These forms of discrimination are depicted through dialogue, characters' actions, expressions, and visual elements that reflect gender inequality in family life and the workplace. Women experience various forms of gender discrimination, and most of the female characters in this film face gender discrimination perpetrated by men, even other women are not exempt from being perpetrators of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not always perpetrated by the opposite gender; treatment that leads to gender inequality is also often carried out by members of the same gender, particularly women. The most prevalent form of gender discrimination is stereotyping, as evidenced by five data points. These stereotypes manifest in the labeling of women as emotional, unfit for work in the public sphere, and judged based on their appearance and status as wives or mothers. Furthermore, four cases of subordination were identified, indicating that women are placed in positions inferior to those of men. Three cases of marginalization were identified, showing a denial of access, opportunities, and facilities for women in the workplace. As for violence, one instance was identified in the form of symbolic insults that demeaned women's dignity.

a. Stereotip

Stereotypes are a form of discrimination that arises from applying certain labels, assumptions, or judgments to men and women based on social constructs, rather than on individual abilities or character. According to (Fakih, 2008), stereotypes are negative labels attached to one gender, leading to unfair treatment. In patriarchal societies, women are often stigmatized as emotional, weak, irrational, unfit to be leaders, and better suited to domestic roles as wives and mothers. These stereotypes then influence how society views and treats women in various aspects of life (Tsaniya & Prihandini, 2023). Here are five scenes that illustrate the presence of stereotypes:

Table 1. Stereotypes

No.	Picture	Meaning
1.	<p>Minute 25:00 Eps 1 (Season 1)</p> 	<p>Denotation: Shows a woman walking while carrying documents in a male-dominated stock exchange office. A man is seen staring at her in an unusual way.</p> <p>Connotation: The man's gaze suggests that the woman's presence is viewed as something strange.</p> <p>Myth: This reflects the belief that the presence of women in the workplace especially in the economic sector is considered abnormal, because women are seen as suited only for housework.</p>
2.	<p>Minute 25:15 Eps 1 (Season 1)</p>  <p>نبيل: إذا كانوا سيوظفون نساء ككاتبات هنا، فلماذا لا يخبرونهن بارتداء ملابس محتشمة؟</p> <p>Nabil: If they hire women here, why aren't they told to dress modestly?</p>	<p>Denotation: A woman is being looked at by three men. One of them says, "If they hire women here, why aren't they told to dress modestly?"</p> <p>Connotation: The man's remark is a comment on her attire. The woman is wearing modest clothing; she is simply not wearing a head covering.</p> <p>Myth: Women who do not wear a headscarf are considered immodest and less religious. This is because the headscarf is believed to be a symbol of a woman's respect for prevailing norms.</p>
3.	<p>Minute 05:09 Eps 2 (Season 1)</p>  <p>نبيل: رائع! زاد عدد النساء لدينا!</p> <p>Nabil: "Wow! They've added more female workers."</p>	<p>Denotation: Shows Munira and Farida walking past Nabil and his two children. Nabil says, "Wow! They've added more female workers."</p> <p>Connotation: The remark is sarcastic and expresses displeasure at the addition of new female workers.</p> <p>Myth: It perpetuates the notion that the increasing number of women entering the public sphere is seen as a threat to their world.</p>
4.	<p>Minute 14:32 Eps 2 (Season 1)</p>  <p>نبيل: أتعرفين لماذا لا أحب العمل مع النساء؟ إذا لا يمكنهن التحكم في تصرفاتهن وسلوكهن.</p> <p>Nabil: "Do you know why I don't like working with women?" "Because they can't control their emotions and behavior."</p>	<p>Denotation: Munira protested to Nabil about the unfair sale of shares. Then Nabil said, "Do you know why I don't like working with women?" "Because they can't control their emotions and behavior."</p> <p>Connotation: Nabil's statement reflects a negative generalization about women, as Munira's protest is used as a basis for judging women as a group.</p> <p>Myth: Women are portrayed as prioritizing emotions over logic, so their abilities and credibility in the workplace and in leadership roles are often questioned.</p>

5.	<p>Minute 29:24 Eps 1 (Season 2)</p> 	<p>Denotation: Her former mother in law said that Farida was setting a bad example for Jude because she works with men and dreams of becoming an entrepreneur.</p> <p>Connotation: There is a rejection of women who are active in the workforce. Moreover, working with men and having the ambition to become an entrepreneur are considered behaviors that do not conform to social norms.</p> <p>Myth: That a good woman is one who prioritizes her domestic role as a mother and caretaker of the family, while women who pursue careers are considered to be neglecting their natural role as women.</p>
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b. Subordination

Subordination is a form of gender-based discrimination that places women in a position inferior to men due to existing social constructs within society (Sulfiana et al., 2023). According to (Fakih, 2008) subordination stems from the view that women are not deserving of opportunities, rights, or positions equal to those of men. This results in women often being overlooked, facing restrictions in decision-making, and receiving unequal treatment in both family and work settings. The following are four scenarios that illustrate gender subordination:

Table 2. Subordination

No.	Picture	Meaning
1.	<p>Minute 44:39 Eps 1 (Season 1)</p>  <p>امير: اتعامل مع الرجال في هذا المكان امرصعبان خصوصاً الأم</p> <p>Amir: It's hard to deal with men here, especially as a mother</p>	<p>Denotation: A woman approaches her boss to ask for a job, and the man says, "It's hard to compete with men here, especially as a mother."</p> <p>Connotation: The emphasis on the phrase "especially as a mother" implies doubt about women's abilities, particularly those of mothers.</p> <p>Myth: The belief that women especially mothers are better suited to the domestic sphere to care for their families and children.</p>
2.	<p>Minute 01:04 Eps 2 (Season 1)</p>  <p>منيرا: يا أبي, يقولون في البورصة أن "فيصل" يعمل على بعض مشاريع البناء في لندن. اب: اعرف ذلك عزيزتي, شكراً</p> <p>Munira: Dad, on the stock market news, they said Faisal is working on some construction projects in London.</p> <p>Dad: I know that, sweetheart. Thank you.</p>	<p>Denotation: During breakfast at the dining table, Munira tried to talk to her father about building construction. However, her father simply replied that he knew and thanked her.</p> <p>Connotation: His dismissal of the conversation suggests that the topic Munira brought up was not important enough to continue discussing.</p> <p>Myth: The fields of construction, engineering, and development are widely regarded as male-dominated areas of expertise, and as a result, women are often considered to lack the competence or authority to discuss these fields or offer their perspectives on them.</p>

3. Minute 40:43 Eps 2 (Season 1)



نبييل: اسمعي. إنني أنتظر اعتذارك أولاً
منيرا: لم أن رجلاً قد أتى واعتذر لك.
نبييل: هل تقارنين نفسك بالرجال؟
سمعي يا بنت، لا تنسي أنك فتاة، أي أنثى!
ولا يصح أن أتعامل معك مثلما أتعامل مع الرجال.

Nabil: Listen. I'm waiting for your apology first.

Munira: No man has ever come and apologized to you.

Nabil: Are you comparing yourself to men?

Listen, girl, don't forget that you're a woman!

And I can't treat you the same way I treat men.

Denotation: Munira, along with her coworkers and Saud, met with Nabil to discuss a stock transaction. Nabil said that he would do business with Saud's new staff member, but would "punish" Munira for her behavior during a previous incident. When Munira compared how she was being treated to how other men were treated, Nabil said, "You're comparing yourself to a man? Listen, dear, don't forget you're a woman. I can't treat you the way I treat men."

Connotation: Nabil's remarks reveal a double standard in how men and women are treated. He indirectly acknowledges that the same behavior is acceptable when done by a man but considered inappropriate when done by a woman.

Connotation: Ucapan Nabil menunjukkan adanya standar perlakuan yang berbeda antara laki-laki dan perempuan. Ia secara tak langsung mengakui bahwa tindakan yang sama dapat diterima jika dilakukan oleh laki-laki, namun dianggap tak pantas ketika dilakukan oleh perempuan

Myth: Women are expected to be more submissive, gentler, and not allowed to show resistance the way men do.

4. Minute 17:37 Eps 1 (Season 2)



اب: وارتفعت قيمتها لا بد لها أن تتزوج

Ayah: Even if you're successful and accomplished, that doesn't mean anything without a husband

Denotation: Munira's mother always failed to find a suitor for her because Munira always refused; eventually, her father stepped in to find a suitor for her and said that her achievements meant nothing if she did not have a husband.




Connotation: This shows that a woman's success is not measured by her education, career, or achievements, but rather by her marital status.

Myth: The belief that the primary goal and measure of success for a woman is marriage and becoming a wife.

c. Marginalization

Marginalization is a form of gender discrimination that occurs when women are excluded from access to resources, opportunities, rights, and facilities as a result of social constructs that distinguish between the roles of men and women (Gultom, 2021). According to (Fakih, 2008), marginalization is a process of impoverishment or exclusion of one gender that causes women to experience injustice in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, the economy, and decision-making. This form of discrimination does not always take the form of direct prohibitions, but can manifest through the neglect of women's needs or restrictions on their opportunities to participate equally in the public sphere. The following are three examples that illustrate marginalization:

Table 3. Marginalization


No.	Picture	Meaning
1.	<p>Minute 12:22 Eps 2 (Season 1)</p>  <p>فريدا: متور اين الحمام؟ منيرا: لا يوجد حمام للسيدات بالبورصة. Farida: Mannur, where's the restroom? Munira: There's no women's restroom at this market.</p>	<p>Denotation: Farida wanted to use the restroom, so she asked where it was, and Munira replied that there was no women's restroom at their workplace.</p> <p>Connotation: This suggests that the workplace was designed for men from the outset.</p> <p>Myth: This suggests that the workplace and public spaces are essentially male-dominated domains, so women's needs are not a priority.</p>
2.	<p>Minute 13:43 Eps 2 (Season 1)</p> 	<p>Denotation: Munira and Farida are in the middle of a crowd of men conducting stock transactions. Both have been standing in the front row and are trying to buy stocks, but are not being served.</p> <p>Connotation: They are being treated differently because, even though they are standing right in front of Nabil, the stockbroker, they are still being ignored, while men who arrived after them are being served and allowed to buy stocks.</p> <p>Myth: Women are considered unworthy of the same rights as men because they are deemed unsuitable for involvement in business activities.</p>
3.	<p>Minute 48:05 Eps 2 (Season 1)</p>  <p>فريدا: أردت أن أتساءل إن كانت ثمة إمكانية لتخصيص حمام للسيدات هنا. (نظر سعود إلى أمير، ثم ضحكان) امير: بصراحة، لم أعرف إلا أنك الآن أنه لا يوجد حمام للسيدات. Farida: I'd like to ask if it's possible to provide a women-only restroom here. (Saud looks at Amir, and then they both laugh)</p>	<p>Denotation: Farida met with Amir and Saud and suggested that a women's restroom be installed in the office. However, Saud immediately looked at Amir, and then they both burst out laughing.</p> <p>Connotation: Amir and Saud's laughter suggests that women's needs in the workplace are not considered important or serious—in fact, they are seen as something funny.</p> <p>Myth: Women's needs are believed to be less important than men's, and this myth normalizes men as the primary standard for the provision of facilities.</p>

d. Violence

Violence is a form of gender discrimination that arises from the power imbalance between men and women. According to (Fakih, 2008), gender based violence encompasses all types of behavior that cause suffering whether physical, mental, sexual, or symbolic experienced by individuals because of their gender identity. Violence does not always manifest as physical acts; it can also take the form of ridicule, verbal abuse, threats, bullying, or symbolic acts intended to

undermine a person's self worth. These various forms of violence stem from a patriarchal culture that views women as the weaker sex, making them more vulnerable to degrading treatment (Kadek et al., 2026). The following scene depicts an act of violence:

Table 4. Kekerasan

No.	Picture	Meaning
1.	<p>Minute 35:20 Eps 4 (Season 1)</p> 	<p>Denotation: When Farida and Munira returned to the office after lunch, they found a group of men near their desks laughing loudly. It turned out they were laughing at a newspaper clipping featuring a photo of them that had been defaced to resemble a devil and a pirate.</p> <p>Connotation: This demonstrates symbolic violence. The doodles were not merely intended as a joke, but also as a form of humiliation that degrades women's image and identity.</p> <p>Myth: Women who successfully enter male-dominated spaces are considered worthy of ridicule, humiliation, and social ostracism.</p>

3.3 Discussion

Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis is used in this study to interpret how gender discrimination is represented through a series of visual and verbal signs that form a system of meaning. For Barthes, signs not only convey meaning as it appears on the surface, but also contain meaning shaped by social and cultural contexts and have the potential to give rise to myths that are accepted as truths within society. Therefore, the analysis in this study is not limited to the content of dialogues between characters but also encompasses facial expressions, gestures, camera angles, interactions between characters, and spatial arrangements all of which collectively construct a representation of women's position in social life. Based on the thirteen data points analyzed, it was found that the representation of gender discrimination in *The Exchange* is constructed through a process of interpretation that moves from literal meaning toward the formation of a patriarchal ideology that is naturalized through everyday life.

At the denotative level, this series depicts various situations that directly illustrate the unequal treatment of female characters. Women are portrayed as facing various obstacles when entering public spaces, particularly male-dominated work environments (Hadi et al., 2026). These forms of discrimination are manifested through cynical stares directed at female workers, judgmental comments about their appearance, disregard for women's opinions, the lack of facilities that accommodate the needs of female workers, unequal treatment in stock trading activities, and even insults conveyed through visual symbols such as the defacement of photographs of female figures in newspapers. Furthermore, the dialogue between characters reveals doubts about women's competence, the assumption that women are more emotional than men, and the belief that a woman's achievements are not considered complete unless she is married. At this stage, these signs are still understood as a series of events illustrating the experiences of discrimination faced by Munira and Farida in both their family lives and the workplace.

This meaning develops at the level of connotation, where each scene is no longer understood as a standalone event but as a representation of how society views women (ISFANDIYARY, 2017). The way women are looked at in the workplace is not merely a sign of curiosity but suggests that the presence of women is still viewed as something unusual in the economic sector. Similarly, comments and judgments regarding clothing, the assumption that women are emotional and unable to control themselves, and judgments about marital status are not merely forms of communication between characters but also represent social labeling that limits women's identities. The lack of facilities for female workers such as restrooms and unequal treatment in stock transactions further demonstrate that the workplace is structured from the perspective of men as the dominant group, while women are positioned as the party that must adapt to the existing system. Thus, gender discrimination in this series manifests not only through explicit actions but also through social practices that appear ordinary yet continuously reproduce gender inequality (Nahda et al., 2024).

On a mythical level, the overall symbols depicted in the series *The Exchange* point to one overarching ideology: patriarchy as a system that governs the division of roles between men and women. Patriarchy is a social system that reproduces male dominance over women through various cultural practices and values. This system operates not only within the family institution but also across various aspects of social life, leading to the perception that the division of gender roles is natural, when in fact it is a social construct (Rokhimah, 2015). Various portrayals in this series show how society views the business world, leadership, and decision-making as domains naturally belonging to men, while women are confined to domestic roles as wives and mothers. This perspective also gives rise to the belief that women are less rational, more emotional, and unworthy of equal treatment with men in the public sphere. Interestingly, the myth of patriarchy in this series is reproduced not only by male characters but also by female characters who have internalized these values. Farida's former mother-in-law's rebuke of her choice to work and build a career demonstrates that women, too, can act as agents who uphold patriarchal norms in society. This finding reinforces the concept (Barthes, 1972) that myths operate by transforming social constructs into something that appears natural, and thus is rarely questioned.

Furthermore, this drama series not only portrays gender discrimination but also challenges patriarchal ideology. This is reflected in the characters of Munira and Farida, who continue to demonstrate competence, professionalism, and the courage to defend their rights despite facing various forms of discrimination. By portraying these two characters as women capable of persevering and proving their capabilities in the midst of male dominance, the series indirectly challenges the myth that women do not belong in the public sphere. Therefore, the portrayal of gender discrimination in *The Exchange* goes beyond merely depicting the injustices experienced by women; it also serves as a critique of the social system that legitimizes patriarchal dominance and limits women's opportunities to gain equal recognition.

4. Conclusion

The results of the study show that the drama series *The Exchange* portrays gender discrimination through four main forms: stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, and symbolic violence. These four forms are depicted through various scenes that show doubt regarding women's competence, disregard for women's aspirations and needs in the workplace, unequal treatment based on gender, and symbolic acts that demean women's dignity. These representations indicate that women are still placed in unequal positions, causing them to face various obstacles in gaining recognition and opportunities in the public sphere.

Through Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis, this study found that representations of gender discrimination are constructed through three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth. At the denotative level, discrimination is explicitly depicted through dialogue, actions, and visual elements between characters. At the level of connotation, these signs reflect social constructs that position women as less deserving of participation in public spaces and the workplace. Meanwhile, at the level of myth, the overall representation reinforces a patriarchal ideology that views male dominance as natural and confines women to domestic roles. Thus, *The Exchange* not only reflects the reality of gender inequality in Kuwaiti society during the 1980s but also offers a critique of patriarchal values that continue to perpetuate gender discrimination in social life.

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