Iran's Representation in news Discourse: A Corpus-driven Analysis of NOW Database

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ABSTRACT

The main thrust of the present study was to explore the ideological perspective based on which the monolithic word "Iran" was presented in NOW (News on the Web) as the largest online news corpora. Having resorted to both corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, the word "Iran" was explored in terms of collocates, their categories, context and micro- as well as macro-discursive structures inspired by Van Dijk's (2006) model. It was shown that most of the collocates have indexed "Iran" mainly in relation to "conflict" and "violence" while others were, in effect, supporting the threatening role played by Iran in the middle-east and in the world. The study also revealed that the representation of "Iran" is in line with "other-negative representation" ideology employed unanimously by the news on web (NOW) which attempts to represent, reproduce and control the way "Iran" is depicted by manipulating lexical, structural, semantic and syntactic features.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, Corpus Linguistics, Collocates, Representation*

1. Introduction

News reporting apparently entails selecting, manipulating, and representing lexical, structural, semantic and syntactic features, by which social structures are being represented, reproduced, re-conceptualized or even controlled (Van Dijk, 1998). It should not be ignored that news are authentic language manipulation sources wherein a vast variety of social, political, cultural and ideological issues are being intertwined. One of the debatable issues argued by some researchers is that reality means differently for different people and it is variously represented in the mass media (Mozaffari, Rahimi & Khodabakhshi, 2015; Moore, 2013). In other words, the same event may be represented in different or similar ways in different media to bring about different ideological standpoints as the result of particular lexical, structural, syntactic or semantic choices. Language manipulation is a critical component of news reporting by which events are being depicted in following the dominant attitudinal and ideological standpoint. Fowler (1991, p.10), in a similar vein, reminded that "news is not just a value-free reflection of facts" and continued-

Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: Language is not a clear window, but a refracting, structuring medium. If we can acknowledge this as a positive, productive principle, we can go on to show by analysis how it operates in texts.

The aforementioned issues may shed light on the familiar concepts such as manipulation, hidden ideologies and meanings, bias, power of language, discursive structures, etc. which are the main concepts of critical discourse analysis (CDA) which is the lens through which one tries to interpret and explain the data, i.e., "an approach to language analysis that considers texts as parts of specific social practices that have political implications about issues of status, solidarity, and of distribution of social goods and power" (Gee, 2004, pp. 32-33).

Language, as it is argued by Fairclough (2001), influences the understanding and interpretation of the world due to its main role in organizing the way one sees and interprets different events. The news discourse, in effect, occurs as network composed of a range of intertwined discursive events which co-construct order of discourse. The order of discourse is being recognized through the dominant discourses, genres, and even thematic, lexical, and collocational features, which in turn impacts the social order_ the way the world is being understood and interpreted (Fairclough, 2001, 2003, 1992; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Fowler, 1991; Van Dijk, 1998).

Ideology, in effect, forms the relation between power and identity where the elites have "nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships" (Williams 1985, pp. 155-156). Similarly, Gee (2015, p. 28) stated that "what people in power believe is simply an expression of their controlling and powerful positions in the social hierarchy, and their desire, whether conscious or not, to retain and enhance their power". Put it differently, what authorities do is, in effect, a strategy for controlling and holding power, status, and identity, and one manifestation of such strategies is news discourse to which many people are exposed to. Hence, the mass media is the locus of the hidden ideologies and manipulated discourse structures. Exploring the news discourse may shape the way knowledge is understood and interpreted which is also resulted into the dominant discourse in depicting an entity which may reveal the hidden ideologies which are being shaped, reinforced, and essentially governed.

Discourse apparently highlights "the practices that systematically form the object of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49), or the "flows of information which constructs the world though language and text, and subject position of individuals" (Sunderland, 2004, p. 8). It should not be ignored that there is not typical way for gathering or analyzing the data in CDA. In other words, both data gathering and analysis are intertwined and cyclic. The present study has been founded on analyzing a large collection of data stored electronically (NOW corpora) within the Van Dijk's (2006) discourse analysis framework to see which recurring themes emerge out of data for "Iran" through frequencies, collocations and structures. In

better words, the study attempted to explore the way the term "Iran" is presented through thematic orientations and collocational analyses in the NOW as the largest news database. To this end, the following research questions were raised:

1. How do ideological differences manifest themselves in the discourse of NOW for representing the term "Iran"?
2. What are the semantic categories to which "Iran" is collocated?
3. Which micro and macro discourse strategies are employed to represent "Iran" within the Van Dijk's (2000) model of discourse analysis?

2. Review of Literature

The following lines present some empirical studies done on the news by using corpus linguistics analysis techniques. McDonald and Woodward-Kron (2016, p. 157), in a corpus-based study, explored "group-membership" through lexico-grammatical and discourse-semantic choices in a bipolar online support groups (OSG). To this end, they analyzed 8.4 million words in 57,000 posts transformed into a structured, grammatically annotated corpus within the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) focusing on interpersonal and experiential meanings. Analyzing the mood and transitivity, the researchers found that there were significant differences in terms of lexico-grammatical and discourse-semantic choices between the new and veteran members.

Having explored the police news framing in two opposing Egyptian newspapers of *Al-Gomhuria* and *Al-Dostour*, Mahfouz (2013, 309) tried to reveal the ideological perspectives followed by the two newspapers during the revolution disagreements. He showed that the two newspapers were selecting, manipulating and representing the language in order to follow "the beliefs held by the two newspaper's target audiences".

Having resorted to corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery (2012, p. 255) investigated the patterns based on which Muslims were depicted in "a 143 million word corpus of British newspaper articles published between 1998 and 2009". Their study showed that 'ethnic/national identity', 'characterizing/differentiating attributes', 'conflict', 'culture', 'religion', and 'group/organizations' were the categories to which collocations were referenced. They concluded that Muslims are being portrayed

as collective identities who are "easily offended, alienated, and in conflict with non-Muslims" (Baker, Gabrielatos, & McEnery, 2012, p. 255).

Donkin (2012) examined eleven major state online newspapers in order to show the way through which the National School Chaplaincy Program was presented. She showed that the articles portrayed a positive representation of the Chaplaincy Program in 2007 but gradually they portrayed it more negatively due to considerable support for the High Court Challenge" (p. iii). She concluded that "online newspaper portrayals of the Chaplaincy Program are predominantly biased based upon the assumptions made by journalists, and the people they choose to represent in their news articles" (p. iii).

Ghannam (2012, p. 23) investigated six Lebanese newspapers in order to show that the ideology behind the text limits the freedom of expression of the newspapers in question. To this end, "the transitivity of the sentences, the active and passive voice used in the articles, the modality with the help of modal auxiliary verbs, disjuncts or modal adjectives" were examined in the included corpus. The researcher found that different newspapers follow different political ideologies through language manipulation and selection. Ghannam (2012) argued that language is, in effect, a crucial medium for injecting the hidden ideology.

Teo (2012), on the other hand, examined racism in two Australian newspapers of The *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph*. She showed that two newspapers used "systematic 'othering' and stereotyping of the ethnic community by the 'white' majority" (p. 657). In addition, she revealed that the two newspapers "reflect and reinforce the marginalization of recent Vietnamese migrants into Australia" (p. 657).

Having considered language as a multidimensional entity, Gee (2015, p. 90) mentioned that "each and every language is composed of many sub-languages, (namely) social languages." Inspired by Gee (2015), Timberg and Romm (2018) developed the notion of social languages is justified on the basis that any language event demands identity representation and practice manifestation. In other words, any individual has different identity representation in different contexts and his/her uses of language are manifested in terms of different practices in different contexts. There is a dialectical interaction among three variables of group memberships (class, ethnicity, social role, cultural background, educational status, gender) social languages, and situational contexts (mediational tools, other participants, location). Such modalities seem to be intentionally utilized by news reporting in meeting their ideological perspectives and transmitting their ideas, convincing others and controlling opposing ideological perspectives.

3. Methodology

The main thrust of the study was to explore how ideological differences manifest themselves in the representing "Iran" in NOW and the semantic categories to which it is indexed. BYU online corpora as the most widely-used corpora include various corpora and sub-corpora. One of these corpora is News on the Web (NOW) which includes more than 5.7 million words and is selected for this study's inspection.

Having searched the monolithic word "Iran" in NOW, the researchers found 276271 instances. Consulting the Krejcie and Morgan's table (1970) for this frequency and considering the confidence level of 95% and the margin of error (degree of accuracy) of 5%, the recommended sample size was set to be 500 cases which were selected randomly and were explored in terms of micro- and macro-discursive strategies suggested by Van Digk (2006).

In a further step, for focusing on the thematic orientations and collocates related to the term "Iran", NOW was searched in terms of the frequencies of co-occurrences of words in the five-word strings before and after the target word "Iran". 100 entries were found and categorized into five classes using the analytical tools of "Sketch Engine" as the software utilized to analyze the corpus. The data were analyzed, interpreted and explained both qualitatively and quantitatively to determine the collocates and to describe the thematic orientations.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1. Noun Collocates of 'Iran'

Using "Sketch Engine", the monolithic word "Iran" was found to be unanimously presented as noun in the corpus (100% of the instances). Furthermore, it was found to be collocated most frequently with nouns which modify 100 different noun types in 202694 tokens. Considering the mutual information given in Table 1, the meaningfulness value for all the resented collocates were higher than three _ meaningfulness threshold for collocate analysis (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2012). This sheds light on the fact that the

found collocates were good candidates for collocation.

Table 1: Most frequent noun collocates for the term "Iran" in NOW

	Context	Frequency	All	%	MI
1	Nuclear	18703	373714	5.00	7.03
2	Deal	10892	1304971	0.83	4.44
3	Sanctions	9068	136519	6.64	7.44
4	Iraq	8292	244878	3.39	6.46
5	Russia	8198	513776	1.60	5.38
6	Saudi	7631	223241	3.42	6.48
7	Arabia	6838	147025	4.65	6.92
8	Syria	6256	319142	1.96	5.68
9	Pakistan	6066	1243067	0.49	3.67
10	Turkey	4914	246159	2.00	5.70
11	Islamic	4219	390339	1.08	4.82
12	Oil	3836	1137946	0.34	3.14
13	Afghanistan	3770	247602	1.52	5.31
14	Tehran	3716	38319	9.70	7.98
15	Ties	3694	195457	1.89	5.62
16	Program	3625	964761	0.38	3.29
17	Iran	3568	277274	1.29	5.07
18	Korea	3345	408093	0.82	4.42
19	Libya	3165	94888	3.34	6.44
20	Israel	3064	289656	1.06	4.79
21	Agreement	2816	693692	0.41	3.40
22	Republic	2584	276168	0.94	4.61
23	Relations	2465	355391	0.69	4.18
24	Missile	2275	105012	2.17	5.82
25	Programme	2144	693456	0.31	3.01
26	Regional	2051	643321	0.32	3.06
27	Powers	1980	253028	0.78	4.35
28	Supreme	1885	434059	0.43	3.50
29	Revolutionary	1845	78296	2.36	5.94
30	Weapons	1768	267807	0.66	4.11
31	Rohani	1619	14157	11.44	8.22
32	Ballistic	1565	34243	4.57	6.90
33	Egypt	1489	149460	1.00	4.70
34	Hezbollah	1487	19774	7.52	7.62
35	Iranian	1462	83708	1.75	5.51
36	Diplomatic	1394	133341	1.05	4.77
37	Two-day	1352	55572	2.43	5.99
38	Regime	1269	246639	0.51	3.75
39	Revolutionary	1260	177112	0.71	4.21
40	Somalia	1216	56590	2.15	5.81
41	Sudan	1214	77898	1.56	5.35
42	Shia	1143	25500	4.48	6.87
43	Influence	1135	340079	0.33	3.12
44	Qatar	1121	87261	1.28	5.07
45	Ayatollah	1074	6830	15.72	8.68
46	Hassan	1064	68117	1.56	5.35
47	Allies	1064	123397	0.86	4.49
48	Shiite	1060	16337	6.49	7.40
49	Exports	997	194737	0.51	3.74
50	Yemen	994	63538	1.56	5.35
51	Protests	972	229282	0.42	3.47
52	Backed	969	173085	0.56	3.87
53	Ally	946	75260	1.26	5.03
54	Shah	940	180698	0.52	3.76
55	Rival	940	182349	0.52	3.75
56	Lifted	915	111979	0.82	4.41
57	Arab	909	129432	0.70	4.20
58	1979	901	31711	2.84	6.21
59	Assad	895	55457	1.61	5.40
60	Lebanon	877	48811	1.80	5.55
61	Negotiations	840	201182	0.42	3.44
62	Guard	838	259227	0.32	3.08
63	Guards	820	103607	0.79	4.37
64	Shiite	801	8184	9.79	8.00
65	MISSILES	785	51305	1.53	5.32
66	COMPLIANCE	782	154156	0.51	3.73
67	GULF	775	121406	0.64	4.06
68	AMBASSADOR	746	191186	0.39	3.35
69	TENSIONS	745	95837	0.78	4.34
70	CRUDE	705	209392	0.34	3.13
71	URANIUM	692	33895	2.04	5.73
72	IMPOSED	684	143802	0.48	3.63
73	CUBA	633	76351	0.83	4.43
74	IMPORTS	621	114185	0.54	3.83
75	ATOMIC	615	35423	1.74	5.50
76	DENIES	611	58746	1.04	4.76
77	CHABAHAR	609	5729	10.63	8.12
78	ENRICHMENT	609	12471	4.88	6.99
79	AMBITIONS	604	60262	1.00	4.71
80	ACCORD	595	55866	1.07	4.80
81	LIFTING	590	66535	0.89	4.53
82	SUNNI	579	34583	1.67	5.45
83	EMBASSY	564	120293	0.47	3.61
84	INDONESIA	553	179332	0.31	3.01
85	OPEC	544	46926	1.16	4.92
86	BOMB	543	153986	0.35	3.20
87	BORDERS	521	120345	0.43	3.50
88	VENEZUELA	506	52292	0.97	4.66
89	MOHAMMAD	503	78098	0.64	4.07
90	RIYADH	494	21259	2.32	5.92
91	OUTPUT	490	150390	0.33	3.09
92	ISRAELI	489	135638	0.36	3.23
93	Curb	469	76848	0.61	3.99
94	Khamenei	467	6744	6.92	7.50
95	IAEA	412	6265	6.58	7.42
96	Neighboring	410	94852	0.43	3.49
97	detained	398	125733	0.32	3.05
98	Proxy	381	33584	1.13	4.89
99	Ahmadinejad	378	5207	7.26	7.56
100	Hostage	377	36458	1.03	4.75
	Total	202694			

The results given in Table 2 indicates the main themes to which "Iran" is indexed among which the name of countries especially the African and Asian countries (Pakistan, Arab, Somali, Yemen, etc.), the name of people to be related to "Iran's" political institutions (Zarif, Rohani, Khamenei, etc.), international organization (OPEC, LAEE, etc.), conflict and violence (nuclear, sanction, deal, bomb, hostage, missiles, atomic, etc.) are worth mentioning.

Table 2: Categorized collocates of "Iran" in NOW

Categories and sub-categories	Examples of Noun Collocates
Conflict & violence	Nuclear, deal, sanctions, Program, programme, Missile, Ballistic, Protests, Backed, Rival, Lifted, Lifting, Guard, Guards, Missiles, Compliance, Tension, Uranium, Imposed, Atomic, Enrichment, Bomb, Curb, Detained, Hostage,
Religion	Islamic, Shia, Shiite, Sunni, Mohammad,
Ethnic/national entity (Characterizing/differentiating Attributes)	Tehran, Iran, Iranian, Hassan, Chabahar, Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, Republic, regional, powers, Supreme, Revolutionary, Hezbollah, Regime, Revolution, Shia, Influence, Ayatollah, Shiite, Shah, 1979, Gulf, Crude, Denies, Ambitions, Borders,
Group/organization	Embassy, OPEC, LAEA, Ambassador,
Relation & associations	Ties, Agreement, relations, Diplomatic, two-day, Allies, exports, import, Ally, Negotiations, Accord, Output, Proxy, Iraq, Russia, Saudi, Arabia, Syria, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Korea, Libya, Israel, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, Qatar, Yemen, Arab, Assad, Lebanon, Cuba, Indonesia, Venezuela, Riyadh, Israeli, Neighboring, Oil,

It seems that the monolithic noun "Iran" is represented as a homogenous entity (nuclear, deal, program, sanctions, ally, protest, missiles, atomic, detained, proxy, border, Shiite, Sunni, enrichment, chamber, lifting, lifted, etc.) with its particular socio-cultural characteristics as a *Shiite* country which follows conflict and violence and problematic for the world. Such collocates also implies that it is necessary to impose sanctions and some penalties to it due to its hostile role for the region, world and its people right.

It is also possible to categorize all 202694 collocates thematically. Table 2 sheds light on the thematic categorization of the achieved collocates. It should not be ignored that the categorization is not related to denotative meanings but it was presented conceptually. As an illustration, the words republic, regional and powers may not be indexed as differentiating characteristics of Iran but they were utilized in the context of Iran, they play a crucial differentiating role. It is worth mentioning that "Iran" is

represented as being involved almost in all conflicts and mostly as aggressors. Another crucial point is that "Iran" is depicted in relation to Islam and Shiism.

Conflict and Violence

All collocates in this category relate to conflict and hostility, mainly in the form of nouns in such a way Iran is represented as a threat. Moreover, the collocated items in this category mainly manifest negative extreme meanings such as hostage, bomb, enrichment, missiles. Meanwhile, there is no positive or moderate collocates with the monolithic word "Iran" in this category. In other words, collocates such as nuclear, deal, program, sanctions, compliance, etc. denotes the role played by deterrence. Put it in a simpler way, preventing "Iran" from the negative collocates presented in this category is apparently denoted as a condition for the world peace. The excerpt below exemplifies conflict and violence category:

> # Algeria has a long history of diplomatic prestige from playing a key role in the Iran hostage crisis negotiations to holding prominent positions in the African Union.

Religion

Collocates of this category, on the other hand, shows the beliefs and people related to "Iran". However, collocates of this category are limited to Islam, Muhamad, Shia, and Sunni, but they were represented in such a way that Iran is an extremist century due to its association to Islam. Hence, the discussion of Islam in relation to "Iran" is presented indirectly. Consider the following except.

> # Ibrahim Musa, a spokesman for the IMN - whose 1980s founders were inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Shi'ite Iran - said policemen opened fire on a peaceful crowd and killed "close to" 100 people including women and children.

Ethnic/National Entity

The ethnicity or national entity, on the hand, sheds light on the differentiating characteristics of "Iran" which are mainly associated with Hezbollah, Regime, Revolution, Shia, Ayatollah, Shah, 1979, Gulf, Crude, Denies. In fact, "Iran" is being depicted as a homogenous entity in terms of ethnicity and nationality as well as culture with its differentiating characteristics. As a matter of fact, regime is utilized in relation to "Iran" which denotes that its government was not elected fairly in order to disapprove the Government of "Iran". The excerpt below shows the discussed issue:

> # In my opinion, the two most important obstacles impeding the reconstruction of Iraq are financial and administrative corruption, and the Iranian regime will not be pleased to see Iraq recover or become stable and independent. These two obstacles are the most important impediments that I do not believe can be easily overcome, be it in the short or medium terms, unless the regime of mullahs in Iran falls, which is not an unlikely proposition.

Group/Organization

Group or organization is another category to which "Iran" is indexed. Collocates of this category reveals the international organizations that impose some regularities or even impositions on "Iran". Such a category, in effect, collective entity of "Iran" which is mainly indexed with both paradoxical and neutral where the context wherein the collocates utilized highlights the conflicting issues. Consider the following excerpt as an illustration:

> # While the 2015 nuclear deal did not place restrictions on the program, UN Resolution 2231 requires Tehran to grant full access to IAEA inspectors and discourages Iran from advancing its ballistic missile technology. Iranian ballistic missile development had been prohibited in UN Security Council…

Relations and Associations

However, such category may be expected to be neutral, analyzing the collocates in this category shows to be connected with the conflicting and threatening role of "Iran". In fact, the items in this category comprise the nouns relating to behavioral conventions imposed on "Iran" due to its violation of the rules and principles. The following except show such a negative utilization by which negotiations and Iran are being indexed.

> #   For years, Black   led a team responsible for negotiations   sanctions against   Iran, North   Korea, Libya, Yemen, and Sudan,   as well as terrorist groups including al Qaeda and the Islamic State. More recently, Black served as the director for multilateral affairs in the National Security Council

The aforementioned issues clarified the quantitative analysis of different collocated categories to which "Iran" was being indexed. In complementing the results, the quantitative analysis was being done to represent the relative frequency of the discussed categories. Figure 1 shows the contribution of each category in the represented categories related to the collocates of the monolithic word "Iran".
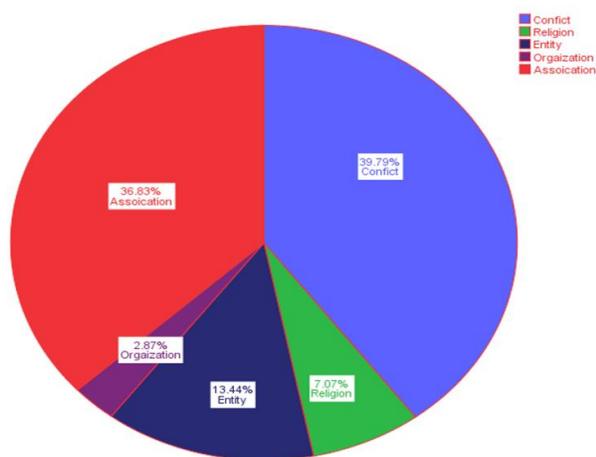
Figure 1: Frequency distribution of collocate categories in terms of tokens

Figure 1 shows the relative collective frequency of noun collocates in each category, which denotes to the relative frequency of themes in NOW. Sketch collocates indexing reference to conflict and violence as well to relations and associations seem to be the majority (39.79% & 36.83%). The two less frequent categories are those presenting the noun "Iran" as group/organization (2.87%) and religion (7.07%). Hence, the two categories of conflict/violence as well as relations/associations present "Iran" as a homogeneous group which denotes the threatening role of "Iran" which is directly stated and argued.

4.2. Discursive Strategies in Depicting Iran

In a further step, 500 samples were extracted randomly out of 277274 cases whose frequencies and percentages were calculated and summarized in Table 3. As the table shows the most dominant utilized micro-discursive strategies is related to *Authoritative* which were mainly represented by political elites followed by *Situation Description*, *Explanation* and *Hyperbole* micro-discursive strategies.

Table 3: Frequency and Type of Discursive Strategies

	Discursive Strategies	News on Web (NOW)	
		Frequencies	%
1	Hyperbole	59	11.8
2	Explanation	63	12.6
4	History as Lesson	20	4
5	Authoritative	108	21.6
6	Lexicalization	16	3.2
7	Repetition	20	4
8	Presupposition	23	4.6
9	Irony	20	4
10	Disclaimer	18	3.6
11	Context and Interaction	29	5.8
12	Counterfactual	22	4.4
13	Situation description	70	14
14	Evidentiality	32	6.4
15	Total	500	100

Likewise, the micro-discursive strategies of *History as Lesson*, *Lexicalization*, *Repetition*, and *Disclaimer* are the least frequent ones, respectively. It is worth mentioning that most of the aforementioned discursive strategies are presented in order to present the threatening role played by "Iran". As an illustration consider the following excerpt:

#Iran's president warned Tuesday that it could ramp up its nuclear program and quickly achieve a more advanced level if the U.S. continues "threats and sanctions" against his country, which signed a landmark nuclear accord with world powers in 2015.

However, this excerpt is presented through several discursive strategies of *Hyperbole*, *Explanation*, *Situation Description* and *Authoritative*, it is portraying "Iran" in relation to conflict and violence in which Iran is presenting in the active position and it is "Iran" that conflicts over the region. The negative indexing of "Iran" is emphasized almost by all 500 samples in which it is "Iran" that is responsible for the threat, conflict and tension in the Middle East as the following except also shows:

 # U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday that European allies and Congress have to work with him to fix "the disastrous flaws" in the nuclear pact or face a U.S. exit. Trump wants it strengthened with a separate agreement within 120 days......Trump also views Iran as a rising threat in the Middle East and the United States has accused Tehran of violating U.N. resolutions by supplying weapons to Houthi rebels in Yemen. Iran has denied supplying the Houthis.

The above excerpt is mainly using *Hyperbole* and *Authoritative* discursive straggles in condemning "Iran's" role as the source of threat, conflict and hostage. It is evident that news reporting presented by NOW is socially, culturally and politically situated the monolithic word "Iran" in following *Other-Negative* ideology. Hence, the results of the study revealed that representation of "Iran" was approached in following the dominant ideological perspectives rooted in the hegemonic role played by the U.S. analyzing both collocates to which "Iran" was indexed and using micro-discursive strategies in depicting "Iran" showed that it was portrayed as a collective and homogenous entity mainly associated with conflict, terror, hostage and violence in following Other-

Negative ideology in which the way events are represented are highly controlled through language manipulation.

It appears that the news on web is injected with traces of favoritism in order to "legitimate domination, articulate resistance in relationships of power" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 115). The findings of the study lend supports to van Dijk's (2000) belief that "discourses express, confirm, instantiate or constitute ideologies" (p. 86) which are being injected to discourse through discursive strategies.

5. Conclusions

The present study was an attempt to answer, "how is the monolithic word "Iran" represented in the discourse of NOW in terms of both its collocates and discursive strategies suggested by Van Dijk? To this end, the word "Iran" was explored in a mixed-method design in terms of its collocates which resulted into 100 different tokens to which "Iran" was indexed with a relatively high mutual information strength. The 100 collocates were categorized semantically based on the *Sketch Engine* analysis tool into five semantic categories of *Conflict / Violence*, *Religion,* Ethnic/ *Differentiating Attributes*, *Group / organization*, and finally *Relation / Associations.* The category of *Conflict / Violence* was found to be predominant and *Organization / Group* the least frequent one. It was repeatedly stated that all five categories represent "Iran" as a collective noun responsible for almost all observed regional and worldwide conflicts. As a matter of fact, the way "Iran" was represented is in line with the social, political and regional contexts especially emphasized by the American and European or even Arabic elites who follow their own interests.

Considering the Middle East region shows that there are multiple conflicts among different parties among which "Iran" and Saudi Arabia with their allies are worth mentioning. However, there is a struggle regarding the role played by "Iran" in the region conflicts, the results of the study indicate that the news on web are intentionally depicting Iran as the constant source of controversy. In fact, it is a strategy to convince different readers around the world that "Iran" is responsible for any conflict and violence observed around the world.

Having followed the words and collocates which seem to be neutral but negative in the presented context, the news on web is dictating and following its ideology. In depicting the monolithic term "Iran", a number of discursive strategies was utilized with some traces of favoritism. Hence, the News on Web "function to legitimate domination, articulate resistance in relationships of power" (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 115) wherein Iran is depicted as an aggressor. Likewise, different categories are depicting "Iran" as a homogenous collective noun by following the same ideological perspective dominant even in the real political, social and global world. Here, this may represent Van Dijk's (1998) ideological concepts of "negative-other" representation was utilized in depicting "Iran".

The results of the study seem to support the previous studies such as the ones conducted by Koosha and Shams (2005), Ghiasian (2006), Khosravinik (2008), Atai and Adriani (2009), and Yaghoobi (2009), who emphasized that newspapers are biased in representing events and social groups. It is worth mentioning that findings of the study lend itself to Van Dijk's (2000) augment where "discourses express, confirm, instantiate or constitute ideologies" (p. 86) and in this case "Iran" is a native entity which destabilizes the region and the world. Furthermore, it is through discursive strategies that different ideologies may be injected in different discourse. As an illustration, Mahfouz (2013) argued that different newspapers manipulate the language in order to inject the ideological perspective followed. Ghannam (2011), in a similar vein, argued that political ideologies are playing crucial role in the way different events are depicted in newspapers and as it is discussed by Fowler (1991, p. 10) "anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position: Language is not a clear window, but a refracting, structuring medium".

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