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The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

CYBER-FEMINISM AND FACEBOOK: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ARAB
WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION ACTIVITY IN TUNISIA, LEBANON, AND EGYPT

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

By: Amira Mohamed-hesham Hosny Abdlgalil

Under the Supervision of Dr. Naila Hamdy

DEDICATION

This thesis work is a tribute for my lost grandmother Saadeya who brought joy to so many throughout her life. I also dedicate this work to my life-time partner and my rock, Eslam, who has been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of graduate school and life. I am thankful for having you in my life. This work is also dedicated to my future daughter, Princess Dalida, your existence in my womb was the true hidden and magical force that made my life begin and helped me finish my thesis. I hope some day you can pick-up this book, dust it off to read it and be inspired to work hard for the things you aspire to achieve. I never thought I'd love someone that much. I also dedicate this work to my beloved parents, Hesham and Eman, and my treasured siblings; Yasmin, Hussain and Mariam and my brother in-law, Ahmed, and my cherished niece, Layla. Thank-you daddy for loving me like no other and helping me grow to more than I can be. I owe you my life. Thank-you mother for teaching me how to be a strong woman with a strong will, you are a true inspiration. Last but not least, this goes out for those who spoke out against oppression but died before they saw justice prevail.

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ABSTRACT

“[The Internet] encourages each of us to communicate and connect—not only with women who seem like us, but with those who are unfamiliar. And, in the process of opening our eyes, minds, and hearts to new horizons, we can help shape a future of understanding, acceptance, and peace” (Queen Rania of Jordan, 2007) (Wheeler, 2008).

Displaying women’s current access to social media platforms such as Facebook, the study employs a comparative study on a number of Women’s Rights organizations in diverse Arab countries from the Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia) by identifying, monitoring and focusing on the differentials in: interactivity and issues tackled on the SNSs (Social Networking Websites) such as Facebook.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, noticeable development in the computing power and offered storage space allowed internet-based communication to focus more on interactivity. It, also, allowed diverse groups to disseminate their opinions, share experiences and become more active. The emanated Statistics have showed that such internet based tools and applications have promptly transformed how information is consumed and produced (McClure, 2010). The Internet's embedded ability to cause actual social change has been recognized by many for years since it contains diverse types of content (visual images, text, videos and audio), all on one platform (Hamdy, & Conlin, 2013). This may cause radical social changes that may be more intense than radio or television (DiMaggio et al., 2001).

Not only has the internet provided an interactive platform that facilitated dissemination and consumption of information, but also, according to Wheeler, the cyberspace is now considered the main venue for women's empowerment process since women's independence, confidence and value are facilitated through internet. Everett has, also, suggested that now women finally have an alternative platform instead of the male-dominated main-stream media to publicize and disseminate their ideas through social networking sites (SNS). This is compatible with the idea of social media and internet development (Hamdy, & Conlin, 2013).

Noticeable scholar attention has been given to SNS use and utilization in the US; however, relatively scarce research has been conducted on SNS utilization in the Arab countries (Harden & Beayeyz 2013). Hence, this study intends to focus on SNS employment in Women's Rights Organizations in the Arab Countries. The study will take into consideration the cultural dimension of SNS utilization in the Arab countries. This is because the difference in cultural backgrounds influences the design and exploitation of SNS and any form of information technology system (Harden & Beayeyz 2013). A study suggests that a person's willingness to be innovative with IT is significantly affected by culture (Thatcher, et al., 2003) (Harden & Beayeyz 2013).

I.1 Statement of the Problem

Given the vast capability of SNSs, specifically Facebook, to support communication and connection, questions have been raised about the role of SNSs in supporting struggles towards claiming human-rights in the Middle East and North African region, especially in the Arab countries. The research aims at focusing on Women's Rights organizations in post-colonial Arab countries in the MENA region, such as: Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia. The three countries have witnessed an evident magnitude of political turbulence and have experienced Arab spring revolutions allowing a "fourth wave of feminism". The study aims at investigating the countries' diverse communicated messages and their interactivity on Facebook, as the most used SNS platform in the MENA region, and fill the literature gap in this segment. SNSs development in the MENA region provides the research with merits as the utilization of these new technologies by both organizations and individuals is rapidly expanding. Researches regarding the use of SNS in USA and UK have been conducted to tackle their importance, use, perception and role but scarce scholar attention has been given

to SNSs utilization in the Arab countries. Even though there is a great interest among Egyptians and Arabs in the SNS, there are no rigorous studies relating to their use, utilization and interactivity in the Arab countries and how their utilization varies among these Arab countries. Thus, this study is intended to provide beneficial analysis for those interested to find out how SNSs are differently used and employed by Women's Rights organizations among diverse Arab countries (Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia).

I.2 Research Questions

R1 In which way are Global Feminism and agenda setting influencing the content of Facebook pages in all three countries, if any?

R 2 Which of the three countries uses Facebook as a venue for Cyber-feminism the most?

R 3 Which of the Women's Rights organizations utilizes Facebook as a form of activism most effectively?

Chapter II

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

II.1 The Internet's and Social Media's Prominence

Since the 1990's, the world has witnessed the appearance of a prominent form of new media that has generated noticeable interest with the emergence of Internet. Some have, even, compared the Internet's capacity back then to Gutenberg's press mass production capacity which was the essential factor of the Industrial age (Luckman, 1999). As the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) developed, high-tech forms of communication were introduced. "Citizen Media", "New Media" and "Social Media" have all been terms that started to appear (Elsherbiny, Ali, & American University in Cairo, 2015). McClure (2010) has, further, elaborated how the ubiquity of the Internet has introduced a number of social media websites like Instagram and YouTube that have disseminated and circulated videos and photos. It has, also, introduced Facebook among the strongest platforms for networking where 25 billion content pieces are shared every month. Microblogs and blogs such as Twitter are other SNSs which will make the mobile by year 2020 the main tool for communicating via the internet.

The internet has pushed against boundaries and exhibited possible potential that is worth studying. that the internet has, undoubtedly, introduced a gateway for significant social and political changes globally, especially in the Middle East, through providing diverse social dynamics and boosting civic involvement. Moreover, it becomes a platform for entrepreneurship and business; even bringing new promises to gender equality (Hamdy, & Conlin, 2013). However, it is worth noting that previous empirical surveys have

constantly supported that women as internet users are under-represented and that earlier figures have reflected low participations rate that has risen and is still gradually rising (Scott, Semmens, & Willoughby, 1999).

II.2 Social Networking Sites' (SNS's) Definition

Social Networking Sites have had multiple definitions by different scholars. Boyd and Ellison have defined SNS as “Web based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” Another simplistic definition has been: “Social networking sites are web sites that allow people to stay connected with other people in online communities” (Kim, et al., 2009) (Harden & Beayeyz, 2013). White *et al.* (2009) defined SNS as “any web-based applications allowing individuals to connect, communicate, and collaborate with one another. This is usually done through individual user profiles and allows users to share information and join networks based on geographic location or interests.” (Mansour, 2012).

II.3 SNS Access in the MENA Region

It is crucial to know the extent to which the internet and SNS are penetrating the MENA region as this study intends to shed light on their use and significance especially with respect to how Arab Women's' rights organizations utilize such technological tools for communication. The following figures show the degree of penetration and usage of the internet and the most used Social Media platforms excluding direct messaging services (via Facebook and Twitter) based on the World Economic Forum (2015), Northwestern

University in Qatar (2015) and the Internet World Stats. (2015b – accessed on February 17th, 2016).

The total number of internet users in the Middle East, according to the World Economic Forum (2015) in Northwestern University in Qatar, is 68 million in 2010. It rapidly grew to 123 million in 2015 which means that internet users increased by 81%. In Africa, users grew from 116 million in 2010 to 331 million in 2015, an increase by 185 %. This indicates that Africa has the highest percentage of internet users global growth. The Middle East ranks the third fastest growing region with Internet users after Asia that has an 82% growth. This makes MENA, the region with the largest growing percentage of internet users, calling bluntly for scholarly attention.

Not only is the MENA region the most rapidly growing population of internet users but more precisely Arabs have Arabic with the largest proportional growth (+158%) of any major linguistic groups such as English (+63%), French (+63%), and Chinese (+58%) according to the Internet World Stats. (2015b – accessed on February 17th 2016).

Putting it simply together, this means that according to the World Economic Forum (2015) in Northwestern University in Qatar (2015), the number of internet users has almost doubled during the past five years. MENA has the fastest global online market growing, and the Arabic-speaking internet users has doubled since year 2010 compared to other languages' growth rate. However, there is a noticeable digital divide according to the World Economic Forum's (2015) figures, revealing that there is a digital divide in the region where internet penetration in the Gulf Countries is at or close to the level of penetration in the developed countries (KSA: 89%, UAE: 97%, Qatar: 90%).

Nevertheless, some parts of North Africa remain to be lagging behind (Egypt: 45%). A

country like Lebanon located in Western Asia has 79% internet penetration. Hence, this makes conducting a comparative study on diverse Arab countries in different areas of the MENA region of interest.

Internet bandwidth is also worth mentioning since it is considered a key factor contributing to the uptake of digital media since it controls how fast data can be exchanged and sent over wireless or wired connections. The World Economic Forum (2015) further discloses that the average of the MENA's internet bandwidth is 25 kb/s per user, Lebanon 15 Kb/s per user and Egypt the lowest of 5 kb/s per user. Those figures reveal the disproportionate internet bandwidth increase among different countries of MENA region countries which affects the degree of facilitation for organizations and users to utilize the internet and social media as a communicating tool.

Light must be shed on the top social media platforms used in MENA. Northwestern University in Qatar states that Facebook then Twitter are respectively the two top social media platforms used by users in the MENA region during 2015. 97% of the Egyptian respondents to the report collected by Northwestern University in Qatar stated that they post daily on Facebook, 29% post daily on Twitter and 87% generally use Facebook while 25% only use Twitter. Similarly, in Lebanon, 97% of the Lebanese respondents post daily on Facebook while 24% post daily on Twitter, and 81% generally use Facebook while 18% only use Twitter. As for Tunisia, it has been reported that 94% post daily on Facebook, 34% post daily on Twitter, and 91% use Facebook while 29% use Twitter. This makes Facebook the most used SNS platform in the MENA region. These three countries have the highest percentage of active users after Emirates. This has

encouraged the researcher to conduct a comparative study among the three countries on how such a highly used tool contributes to Feminism.

As the study chooses to focus specifically on Women's Rights Organizations. It must be noted that according to a survey conducted by the Northwestern University in Qatar during 2015, 52% of Arab women spend as much time socializing, face to face, as they do online. Unlike the Arab women, men sum up with a 56% preferring to communicate in person. This justifies why it is worth studying the fact that the Arab Women's Rights online organizations target mainly Arab women who have been identified by the survey to be the most active online users.

II.4 Arab Women's Rights Organizations

Since the study chooses to investigate Women's Rights Organizations in the Arab countries, some light ought to be shed on how their dynamic runs in the Arab world. It is noteworthy that most NGOs found in the Arab world, specifically women's rights and human rights NGOs aren't considered complete legal entities since they mostly do not have memberships. Therefore, they are referred to as "Private Voluntary Organization" (PVOs) instead of nonprofit organizations (Tadros, 2005). Registering as an NGO is a lengthy process that mostly ends with a rejection of the registration. Hence, human rights and women rights organizations prefer to become nonprofit companies such as in Egypt until an NGO law was passed during 1999, banning even that possibility. Accordingly, most women's rights organizations in the Arab world have no membership dues nor memberships (Tadros, 2005). As the internet emerged, virtual existence of such entities has become the idealistic alternative such NGOs resort to in order to overcome obstacles faced in reality. It has, also, facilitated audience's access to such entities whether to

passively obtain more information or actively engage online with the entity's messages. Such entities have now had a convenient platform to disseminate information and messages about their activities, causes and work. As passive and active audience appeared with the virtual existence of NGOs online, "curious" audience also appeared. They usually belong to younger age groups and demand more information. Furthermore, this has allowed shy audience to obtain any piece of information through a click of a mouse (Tadros, 2005).

Tadros (2005) suggests that the efficiency of the internet lies in the speed of information travel since human and women's rights organizations have been using the internet to send out reports frequently via e-mails to reduce costs. Similarly, online petitions and campaigns can cross the globe before it can be stopped by the authority. This has given the organizations the edge of increasing the facilitated information flow with the general public, clients, co-workers, funders, fellow agencies, and volunteers. Tadros (2005) adds that it remains early to accurately assess the internet impact on NGOs in the Arab public sphere. He highlights that it is undeniable that there is what he referred to as "parallel community" where activists and regular individuals in the Arab world interact and exchange notions and opinions freely allowing the public to "speak out". Tadros continues to elaborate on how the internet has specifically been of great potential for the Arab women's organizations. His case study stressed how "virtual activism" by such organizations is worth further studying due to its noticeable potential even though government and islamist content outnumber the feminist content online.

II.5 Arab Spring Countries and the Internet

Egyptian Women and the Internet

Less than 23.2% or one in four Egyptians access the internet on a weekly basis and are active online. 80.1% of that said figure has most probably accessed the internet during their past week to know the latest news and 70.3% has been watching online videos (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2014). The figures, also, reveal that greater than half of the users have used the interactive facilities provided by the internet such as online audio and video maker to circulate photos and videos. Those figures demonstrate how social networking sites, that are mainly composed of such interactive facilities, are crucial for Egyptians. As for the internet growth generally in Egypt, according to the Internet World Stats, the population was around 72,000,000 and internet users during 2000 were around 450,000. They grew to 5,000,000 in 2007 with 6.9% of internet penetration, a growth by 1,011.1% which is the fifth highest growth rate among Arab countries (Wheeler, 2008). The specific number of Facebook users in Egypt alone was 8,791,800 in 2011 which represented 26% of the Arab Facebook users (Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A., 2011). To focus on Egyptian women, it is worth mentioning that according to the World Bank and the UNESCO's communication and literacy indicators in the Arab world during 2002, the percentage of women above 15 who were able to write and read and can use the internet and SNSs of women's rights organizations was 46.9%, ranking the thirteenth among other Arab countries (Wheeler, 2008).

SNSs are growing popular in Egypt. While 20.8% or one in five Egyptians used a SNS over the past week, 84.9% of the internet users were active on SNSs over the past week.

Out of that figure, 95.9% use Facebook. Twitter might be popular but still remains a niche platform with 28.2% of the SNS users accessing it over the past week. This makes Facebook the most popular SNS platform in Egypt for news with 48.0% using it for that specific purpose (Broadcasting Board of Governors, 2014).

As it has been previously mentioned that Egypt represents the largest Facebook base of 3.4 million users, it therefore calls for scholar attention when it comes to examining cyber space and utilization of social networking platforms in the MENA region (Mansour, 2015). However, focusing on Egyptian women users, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) has no reports that provide exact figures of female users in Egypt but rather regional trends showing a rising role of women in the information technology realm (Wheeler, 2008). According to Broadcasting Board of Governors (2014), Egyptian women who, represent 69% of the population, are the ones more likely to be underrepresented in the Information Technology realm. Moreover, in an ITU meeting during 2001, held in Muscat, Oman, it was established that “Despite their significant role in ICT, women internet users are under-represented in the region and their potential (e.g., for work by telecommuting from home) needs to be further developed” (Wheeler, 2008). Thus, Egypt had an internet growth that reached 1.011.1% from 2000 till 2007 but ranked in the bottom tier of countries for internet penetration (6.9%) because poverty and illiteracy makes studying women’s empowerment through SNSs in the recent period of time a topic of interest. Consequently, empowering women through the internet, IT, and SNSs has been a goal that many have been thriving to achieve because it was a clear weak point (Wheeler, 2008). During 2005, the World Economic Forum study of gender gap worldwide illustrated that Egypt, among 58 other countries, had the worst

gender gap in numerous terms (BBC News, 2005) (Wheeler, 2008). Moreover, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak at the seventh conference of the National Council for Women has given a speech with the title “What Women Need”. She has hammered how important seeking women’s empowerment is and that it is best facilitated through numerous factors such as promoting IT awareness (Wheeler, 2008).

Lebanese Women and the Internet

According to the Internet World Stats, Lebanon had a population of 4,556,561 and a total of 300,000 internet users in 2000 that grew to 700,000 users in 2007 with a 15.4% of internet penetration. This is the fourth highest penetration percentage among Arab countries making it also a country worth investigating when it comes to examining how cyberspace can be a tool of empowerment (Wheeler, 2008). In 2011, Facebook penetration alone in Lebanon leaped to be 30.06% which is classified as a high penetration percentage. This has indicated that there is a pervasive use of Facebook in Lebanon and persistent growth of Facebook user penetration (Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A., 2011). The gender breakdown of Facebook users in Lebanon was 54% Facebook male users and 46% female users, branding Lebanon as the most gendered-balanced among the Arab countries (Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A., 2011). Adding up to the prior figures and focusing on Lebanese women, according to the World Bank and the UNESCO's communication and literacy indicators in the Arab world during 2002, the percentage of women above 15 who were able to read and write and can use the internet and SNSs of women's rights organizations was 82.2%, ranking the fourth among other Arab countries (Wheeler, 2008).

One of the most prominent feminist waves in Lebanon which makes it a country worth studying in the realm of cyber-feminism in the Arab world is the "Spring Revolution" wave. This feminist wave depends heavily on the use of internet and SNSs. It, also, promotes combating family violence, class conflict, sexism, and boosts peace through internet and social media (Stephan, 2014). This wave was triggered during March 2005,

by the political turbulence caused during Lebanese civilians' protest against Rafik Hariri's assassination and pressuring Syrian troops to withdraw from Lebanon. It gained magnitude during 2006 with Israel's intrusion into Lebanon. Throughout this era of political turbulence that was accompanied by an internet growth, feminists have found such conditions a suitable opportunity for women's rights movement to become more public through SNSs as autocratic systems have been demolished springing out organizations such as "KAFA" or "ENOUGH" in 2005 that utilized the cyber space (Stephan, 2014).

Lebanon is a country worth studying since, according to Meguerditchian in 2011, "Lebanon is a country celebrated among Arab nations for its protection of freedom of expression" (Venkatesh, 2014). According to Nash in 2011, there is no specific law censoring the online content on social media (Venkatesh, 2014). Hence, its blogosphere has new space that can afford identity construction and some describe it as "the blogging culture of outspokenness" (Venkatesh, 2014). This has made social media in Lebanon the available channel to express and vent the Lebanese opinions about major political or social happenings in the country without resorting to the traditional corrupted outlets. This, also, enables them to have the option of being exposed to news that has not been touched by the mainstream media in Lebanon (Venkatesh, 2014). According to Radsch, most bloggers in Lebanon used the English Language mainly as a medium of communication. However, later on, according to the Internet World Stats in 2012, as the Internet usage increased in the middle east, users still use English but the Arabic blogs started to noticeably increase (Venkatesh, 2014). All that has helped Lebanese women

find online spaces as a new venue for resistance and for fighting their oppression and attain more agency (Venkatesh, 2014).

Tunisian Women and the Internet

According to the Internet World Stats, Tunisia's total population was around 10,000,000 in 2007 and the internet users were around 100,000 during 2000. This figure grew to 953,000 in 2007 with 9.2% of internet penetration. This means that the internet growth rate in Tunisia was 853.8 % from 2000-2007, ranking it the seventh highest growth rate among the Arab countries (Wheeler, 2008). However, in 2011, Facebook penetration alone in Tunisia amounted to 26.25% which is classified as a high penetration percentage. Like Lebanon, this has indicated that there is a pervasive use of Facebook in Tunisia as well as persistent growth of Facebook user penetration (Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A., 2011). Furthermore, the specific number of Facebook users in 2011 in Tunisia was 2,667,620 users which represented 8% of all Arab Facebook users (Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A., 2011). A gender breakdown of the Facebook users in Tunisia shows that 59% of Facebook users are male and 41% female. This makes Tunisia the second gender-balanced Arab country after Lebanon (Mourtada, R., Salem, F., Al-Dabbagh, M., & Gargani, G. H. A. L. I. A., 2011). Since the study focuses on women, it is worth stating that according to the World Bank and the UNESCO's communication and literacy indicators in the Arab world during 2002, the percentage of women above 15 who were literate and were able to utilize the internet and SNSs of women's rights organizations was 65.3%, ranking Tunisia as the ninth Arab country with literate women using the internet (Wheeler, 2008).

Landorf (2014) highlights how social networking sites (SNSs) and digital media technology have penetrated the Tunisian daily life. Data surveys that are more recent than

the prior figures conducted in 2012, have reported that around 39.1% of the Tunisian population have online existence. This indicates the rapid growth of the internet population. The growth remains to increase rapidly in Tunisia Social Media and SNSs are the most popular websites despite the government's censorship. During the protests of December 2010, around 18% of the Tunisians had Facebook accounts and by 2013 around 41% of the Facebook accounts belonged to women. This is very indicative as women are a significant segment of audience existing online. It has been highlighted that the Tunisian female online participation increased especially during 2010-2011 protests (Landorf, 2014).

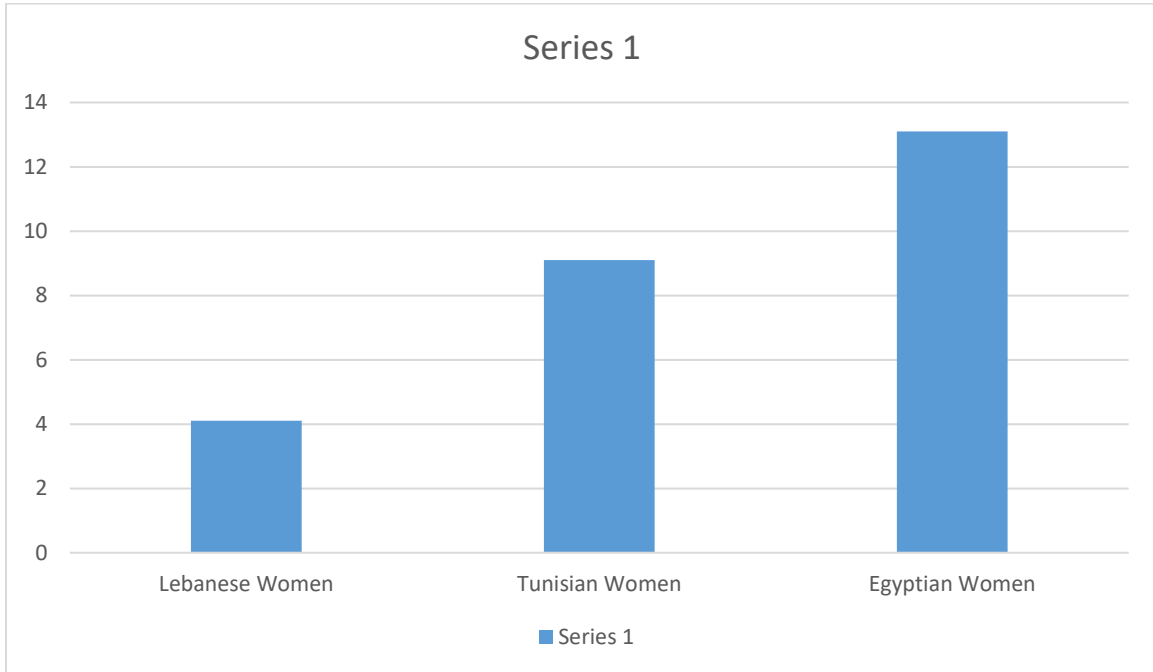
Tunisia is known as the country that ignited the following series of Arab spring revolutions, allowing many feminists and female cyber activists to have an active role practiced through SNSs, especially Facebook. Bloggers from Bahrain, Egypt, Libya and Yemen have also followed Tunisian Female activist's lead and showed solidarity with Tunisia. Lina Ben Mhenni is one of the many female cyber activists who appeared and participated in the revolution of "Tunisian Dignity" on December 17, 2010 until the formation of the constitution on February 2011 (Landorf, 2014). Lina's blog during the revolution was blocked and her Facebook account was suspended by the government of President Bin Ali who was ousted but that did not cease her online activism (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). In an interview done with her, she stated "I think this was because I was dealing with human rights issues. I continued to use my blog using proxies outside the country to get around the government's censorship. We had been living with online censorship for a long time, and so we learned how to get around it by using other technological means," (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). Lina has continued to explain the

form of activism she conducted through stating in the same interview the following “I have been denouncing all the injustices in Tunisia for more than two years through my blog. At the beginning of the revolution, I started covering what was going on in the capital city, Tunis. I took photos and videos of the lawyers' and students' demonstration, and I shared them online. And then one day I decided to go to Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine to be on the ground and to see what was going on. On the same day that I traveled to Sidi Bouzid, some friends whom I met on Facebook called me from the city of Regueb to say that the police had just killed five people. So, I went there to cover the incidents. There were no other media, and I took pictures of the bodies of these people and posted them on my blog. I also put a link to Twitter and I posted the link on Facebook, along with the pictures. And on January 14, I took part in the big demonstrations that led to the escape of Bin Ali. I was tweeting through my mobile phone, and I took live video through my mobile phone as well.” (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). Also “Amira Yahyaoui” was another female cyberactivist who participated during and after the revolution through SNSs and demanded the necessity of gender parity in the constitution. She created her NGO “Al Bawsala” that used SNSs to inspect constitutional assembly after Ben Ali’s fleeing from Tunisia (Landorf, 2014). The Tunisian female activists have utilized digital technologies to keep record and document protests, build new network of female activists through the cyber and feminist movements that existed online and mobilize these activists (Landorf, 2014). Women’s activism in Tunisia has inspired male activists as well and enhanced civic engagement in the country. Malek Khadrawi is a Tunisian male who has been inspired by the female activism during the revolution and has been motivated to direct “Nawaat” a group of Tunisian bloggers who covered the political events in Tunisia

(El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). The “Nawaat” site is an ideal example of citizen journalism in Tunisia (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). Khadrawi has lived and blogged in France during the Tunisian revolution. In an interview, he has commented on the online activism during the revolution stating the following: “During the revolution, I worked on transmitting and sharing information about what was happening inside Tunisia through collaboration with the Tunisian people who were uploading videos about the revolution. We used a blogging platform on Nawaat that used auto-post and cross-posting of these videos on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. I was also double-checking the validity and authenticity of these videos.” (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2012). Such online activism and protests have turned to offline activism, creating a new public sphere for the Tunisian and Arab women to live in.

Tunisia is of great interest for this study. Radical feminist groups like “Femen” and feminist organizations have emerged and embraced an anti-Islamic direction. The feminist movements post the Arab spring revolution have been binary and either Islamic or secular, controlling the gender relations in Tunisia different from other countries in the MENA region where they mostly tend to adopt Islamic feminism (Landorf, 2014).

Ranking of literate women using the internet among the three countries



Chapter III

LITERATURE REVIEW

III.1 Literature Review of the Utopian Versus Dystopian Perspectives of the Internet

Starting from late 1990s, both utopian and dystopian perspectives were developed concerning the phenomenon of the Internet and the theoretical conceptions evolved to clarify the Internet's sociability (Puente, 2008). According to Eubanks (1994), dystopian theories developed to shed light on the negative consequences of technological innovations such as dysfunction of social skills and isolation, as a counter-argument to the utopian notions (Puente, 2008). Media theorists like Robins (1996) have criticized online relationships and described it as extreme since it contributes to abnormal reactions and responses in reality. Robins, for instance, has defined the internet to be the escape venue from reality where users create their own alternative world that disconnects and isolates them from social reality (Puente, 2008). Slouka is an author that has validated Robin's view and supported that dehumanized social relations are created when the online life is seen as a convenient alternative to real life (Puente, 2008).

However, besides the prior criticism, feminist criticism and authors like Castells, 1997; Rheingold, 2003 who are non-feminist have developed a different approach concerning the "Internet Phenomenon" to form two perspectives. The first perspective is inspired by the utopian vision and some feminists think it is a crucial perspective for the feminism politics. It has been described and elaborated through metaphors that concentrate on the relationship between machine and women. Feminists

like Plant (1997) have based their perspectives on the utopian approach and used the mobility and flexibility of using the Web to explain how it facilitated the formation of new virtual communities that can gain freedom (Puente, 2008). In support of the utopian view, feminists like Wajcman, 1991; Wajcman, 2004 resorted to “technofeminism” as a solution to obstacles that block or hinder women’s access to new technology management. Hence, “technofeminism” puts Cyberfeminism in social reality that imbeds women’s access to advanced technologies. Wajcman’s “technofeminism” suggests enhancing social mechanisms that support the complete inclusion of women in programming, using and generating technology to overcome the “digital-gap” and reverse the dynamic of the sphere that is usually connected to masculinity (Puente, 2008). The utopian and dystopian vision have started concurrently and competed during the mid 1990s and the early 2000s. Andrews (2006), the Spanish feminist, has had a distinguishable analysis for the social communication that occurs through the internet which encompasses perspectives that can not merely be categorized as utopian or dystopian (Puente, 2008). Andrews depends more on heterogeneous perspectives where she explains that the internet is a double edged weapon that can be both a place for community development and obtaining mutual support as well as a place of exclusion (Puente, 2008). Opposing views on the internet and perspectives on how the internet influences reality’s dynamic, especially when it comes to feminists’ mostly utopian view of the internet as an efficient liberating tool, make studying the women’s organizations’ utilization of SNSs in Arab countries an interesting literature gap to fill. Hence, the following segment unpacks the “Cyber Activism” in the Arab countries.

III.2 Cyber Activism in The Arab Region

The Internet first penetrated the world for scientific and military purposes during the late 1960's. However, during the contemporary period, the internet has been dominantly used in a different form of social networking such as Twitter and Facebook. For that reason, Cyber activism has been devised to express the apparent social phenomenon in the current contemporary period, which is the utilization of virtual channels for social or political activism (Mansour, 2015). According to McCaughey and Ayers, individual activists' and grass root movements' usage of social media platforms as a mobilization tool towards social and political changes has made social media an important tool to study and gain better understanding of contemporary activism (Mansour, 2015).

Numerous scholars have attempted to define "Cyber Activism"; McCaughey and Ayers have argued that trying to define Cyber Activism is as problematic as defining activism while Sandor Vegh, on the other hand, has categorized online activism into; (1) advocacy/awareness, (2) mobilization/organization, and (3) action/reaction (Mansour, 2015).

The significantly increasing user base of Facebook and Twitter in the MENA region has prompted the importance of using social media platforms as a communication tool.

During April 2011, Facebook had over 677 million users with the Middle East having the largest number of new users, especially in the Arab countries that had protests. During March 2011, Twitter users were more than 200 million users who tweeted 4 billion (Mansour, 2015). The Gender breakdown of the prior Facebook users' figures, according to Dubai School of Government in May 2011, has shown that females are increasing from 32% during the end of 2010 to 33.5% in the first quarter of 2011. Globally, females

represent 61% of Facebook users which makes females the majority of users and are worth more scholar attention (Mansour, 2015).

According to the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information in 2012, the Arab world has feared the cyber platform and its accessibility claiming that it would destruct the conservative Arab society and its morality. However, the Arabic Network for Human Rights states that authoritative Arab countries' fear of having a new tool that can be used against their regimes is the actual cause that the Arab region fear cyber platforms (Mansour, 2015). This is why internet access is facilitated less in the Arab region through charging expensive internet connection fees like in Saudi Arabia where the internet services used to be charged for a very high value and was one of the last countries to have internet services available publically in 1999 (Mansour, 2015).

However, since the internet access is becoming globally inevitable for countless reasons, the internet access percentage has boosted from 2000 to 2010 alone by 40 percent of the population introducing new communication logics and networking. Hence, the internet in the Arab states and the world has provided for organizations, individuals and minority groups a chance to express their previously suppressed social, political and religious opinions through social media platforms, mainly Facebook and Twitter, and blogs (Mansour, 2015). Therefore, modifications and customizations has also been done to the Facebook platform in the MENA region since there has been about 15 million Facebook users in the MENA region. The figure increased noticeably during 2008 and 2009 which eventually directed the Facebook administration into introducing the Arabic interface that allowed 3.2 million more users to use Facebook in the MENA region in 2010. According to the prior figure, Egypt represents the largest Facebook base of 3.4 million users.

Twitter, as well, has been established to be the second main communicating platform in the region after witnessing expansion of the users from only 3000 in 2009 to 40,000 in 2010 (Mansour, 2015).

III.3 The Internet and Contemporary Feminist Intervention

Susan Luckman, the Australian feminist scholar, has suggested that the possibility of cyberspace to bring people into a “network arrangement” is vast through creating a community where countless communication opportunities are present for staying in touch and exchanging notions like an “enhanced telephone”, as she referred (Luckman, 1999). Technological advancement and the internet are usually hypothesized as the launching point to a contemporary society with less limitations (Luckman, 1999).

According to Susan, utilizing information technology mediation towards broadminded social ends has been noticeable. Cyberfeminism has been the most well-known avenue for such technological (especially the internet) intervention that has mediated structures of power and facilitated the contemporary feminist intervention to environments that usually intimidate feminist points of view (Luckman, 1999). Hence, feminists who are employed in the information technology industries have supported that the internet is a vital social institution that requires female’s attention (Luckman, 1999).

The introduction of ICT has provided a convenient platform not only for women but also for organizations and NGOs as well to tackle issues that have been overlooked or ignored by the mainstream media to reach a larger population that mainstream media might have been unable to access previously. It is undeniable that the internet has successfully brought women’s views and news to the public domain, having websites that exclusively and specifically targeting women (Sandys, 2005). In support to that, a report on the Arab

nations has stated that the internet accessibility has been ranked as the third most important women's issue after domestic violence and poverty (UNDP,2002) (Hamdy, & Conlin, 2013). Hence, this research aims at filling that literature gap existing in the realm of existing variances in Women's Rights organizations' utilization of SNS in the Arab Countries.

III.4 Fourth Wave Feminism

As previous scholars have supported that the internet and SNSs are tools worth studying to further unravel its dynamic and continuously changing influence for feminists, this section sheds light on a factor that is believed to be a crucial catalyst for Cyberfeminism in the Arab world.

Over the past couple of decades, the Arab region has experienced instability and turbulence where previous autocratic hierarchies are collapsing and former alliances are being separated through the series of "Arab Spring Revolutions" that have occurred in a number of Arab countries. Such turbulence has made multicultural feminism salient as such unstable situations have given women's rights movement a convenient opportunity to bring their desires forward and create what is known as "The Fourth Wave Feminism" (Stephan, 2014). Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon have been among these Arab countries that experienced the most intense turbulence making them of great interest for this thesis.

Lebanon experienced a year of turmoil during 2005 as the "Spring revolution" or "Cedar Revolution" erupted in March. Lebanese civilians protested Rafik Hariri's assassination to pressure Syria into retreating their troops from Lebanon (Stephan, 2014). Lebanese women have played a main role by protesting against the Syrian occupation, giving feminism an additional dimension through Lebanon's liberation (Stephan, 2014). As for

Tunisia, it was December 17, 2010 when the martyrdom of Mohamed Bouazizi, who set himself on fire before the governor's house as a result of being abused by the police, sparked Tunisian protests across the country and it was sustained and organized through SNSs and cell phones (Landorf, 2014). Tunisian female bloggers, like Lina Ben Mhenni, used SNSs to spread information about the protests to the rest of the MENA region and motivate Tunisians to participate and protest. By January 14, 2011, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, the Tunisian president responded to the protest and fled to Saudi Arabia (Landorf, 2014). The digital media and Tunisian women's role cannot be neglected and invites scholar attention to the Fourth Wave Feminism that had an increased magnitude during the Arab spring.

Last but not least, Egypt was among the countries that experienced intense turbulence and women played a main role through SNSs and digital media. The protests erupted in Egypt during the formerly known to be "Police Appreciation Holiday" on January the 25th, that was afterwards known to be "Day of Rage" after its mobilization and organization through the Facebook page "We are all Khaled Said" (Landorf, 2014). The incidents escalated until the 11th of February when Hosni Mubarak, the former president, stepped down and the army became in charge (Landorf, 2014). Feminist writers and activists such as the Egyptian Nawal El Saadawi were actively participating and responding to the revolution's incidents optimistically (Landorf, 2014).

According to Newsom and Lengel in 2012, numerous feminist scholars anticipated that the Arab spring's influence would enhance and promote gender equality and women's rights in the MENA region (Landorf, 2014). The following articles have specifically tackled and noted that feminist scholars may have to investigate and analyze in depth

their role in order to know the Arab Spring's impact on Arab women (Landorf, 2014). In the text "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1984), Chandra Mohanty tackles the imperialism of Western feminist's role. Mohanty also critiques the Western Feminism's project and how it dominantly constructs "Third World Woman". She debates that the scholarship of feminism (writing, reading, textual or critical) is embedded in relation to power. Moreover, she uses Michel Foucault's sexuality and power theories in "The History of Sexuality" Volume I (1976) where she explains that "This mode of defining women primarily in terms of their object status (the way in which they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems) is what characterizes this particular form of the use of "women" as a category of analysis" (Landorf, 2014). That article has become a climax point for feminist scholarship and it shifted to acknowledging the hegemonic and reductive categories' existence. However, in media, public sector, humanitarian, and non-governmental organizations sector "Third World Women" continue to exist. During the late years, the feminist discourse has been modified by Western authorities like the United States to justify their military invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan under the umbrella of "the role of women" (Landorf, 2014). The Arab spring has gained scholar attention as it denotes a recognizable narrative for readers from the West. The notion of the authoritarian regimes that are brought down by the crowds to call for basic rights and reforms is common but numerous questions beneath such a scenario is generated to unpack the causes embedded. The chair of Iranian comparative literature and studies at Columbia University, Hamid Dabashi, addresses such an argument in his book "The Arab spring: The End of Post Colonialism". He suggests an investigation on the revolutions through building up on Edward Said's

“Orientalism” theory (Landorf, 2014). He supports the notion that such revolutions are not merely overthrowing a regime but further terminating “conceptual categories, political terminology and intellectual frames of reference that are fundamentally Western” (Landorf, 2014). His analysis supports that Arab spring is a launching point with an unknown ending to shift the Arab sphere to a more “inclusive universalism” and drifting the globe away from the Eurocentric and Western thought which opposes what Thomas Friedman and Bernard Lewis have written (Landorf, 2014). As Edward Said’s theories may dominate his writings, Dabashi has provided interesting frameworks to situate the Arab Spring in (Landorf, 2014). Johansson- Nogués has also been among the writers who provided a framework for the Arab spring that was gendered. Nogués has analyzed activism through the lens of gender to focus on Egyptian, Tunisian and Libyan women and their role in Arab uprisings (Landorf, 2014). She focuses on separating activism from women’s rights post protests and highlights that even though women in Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia have participated actively in the Arab springs, their calls for gender equality and women’s rights have been overlooked (Landorf, 2014). Her debate can be referred to as a feminist critique on the democratic transitional phases. It focuses on harassments and violence that have been inflicted on women to limit their presence in protest. It, also, states that new femininity depends on “the ability of women’s collectives to organize, mobilize, and expose themselves to further risks” as she said (Landorf, 2014). All the previous articles all attempt to analyze the impact of the Arab spring and to make sense out of it through investigating multiple factors like: economic, social, historical, political in order to know how it has been shaped and how it has impacted certain groups, especially women. However, focus has been put mainly on the women’s

themselves and scarce analysis has been directed to the main Arab spring tool SNSs and the entities' that have been formed and have been hype during the revolution and political turbulence. Hence, this thesis intends to focus on the most turbulent countries that has had hype organizations on the most used SNS platform, that is Facebook.

III.5 Women Empowerment through ICT (Internet and SNS) in the Arab Region

It has been noted by politicians, scholars and social researchers that Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) such as mobile phones, internet, social media and especially SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter have played a pivotal role in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This has been especially evident in the Arab countries to support struggles towards democracy and human rights (Mansour, 2012). SNSs have proven to be one of the most used online activities in addition to e-mailing and information searching (Mansour,2012). SNSs have gradually, but steadily, and strongly become a cultural and social phenomenon, as its impact is becoming evident by the number of globally increasing users.

Since the creation of SNSs, numerous studies have been conducted to focus on various aspects like: connecting with friends (Agarwal *et al.*, 2009; Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Boyd and Heer, 2006), social relationships (Choi *et al.*, 2011), management and creation of identity (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Boyd and Heer, 2006), culture and structure (Lewis *et al.*, 2008), age (Gayen *et al.*, 2010), gender (Geidner *et al.*, 2007), participation (Zhou, 2010; Thelwall, 2008), learning (Zywica *et al.*, 2011; Paganim and Hofacker, 2010), education (Hew, 2011; Al-Daihani, 2009), SNSs used in libraries (Dickson and Holley, 2010; Al-Daihani, 2009; Willett, 2009; Chu, 2008), benefits (Shu and Chuang, 2010;

Lewis *et al.*, 2008), employment (Gayen *et al.*, 2010), interests (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Kanagavel and Velayutham, 2010), workplace (Bennett *et al.*, 2010), and entertainment (Rothschild, 2011) in an attempt to answer questions regarding SNS platforms and why, where, how and by whom they are used (Mansour, 2012). However, an essential connection such as the internet and SNSs empowering women has been lacked in the MENA region even though cyberspace has been found an essential factor catalyzing women's empowerment in MENA developing countries.

The apparent and current new technologies and expanding convergence of media have caused a strong impact on the communication and information work done by the women's movement. The technologies provide a potential for a groundbreaking social interaction that encompasses bottom-up communication and peer as well as new opportunities for reproduction as well as dissemination of information that is relevant for females (Sandys, 2005). There is an expanding body of evidence supporting ICT (Information and Communication Technology) benefits for empowering women. The internet has become a crucial tool for women's empowerment since it has provided secured online spaces protected from harassment where women can easily practice freedom of expression and have the privilege of privacy of communication to combat gender discrimination and endorse women's human rights. Some of the aspects provided by the internet and ICT that helped women empowerment have been facilitating access to political participation, education, human development prospects, and health and nutrition (Sandys, 2005).

The ICT and the internet are important for women in developing countries in particular.

A study by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) conducted

on ICT strategies for reducing poverty states that according to trends “ICT [strategies] have been applied to systemic improvements important to poverty reduction such as education, health and social services delivery, broader Government transparency and accountability, and helping empower citizens and build social organization around rights and gender equality” (Sandys, 2005). They have assisted women empowerment through boosting the power they have over making decisions to shape their lives and allowing them to participate in decision-making and overcoming isolation and giving them a voice. Nevertheless, gender discrimination still exists persistently in education, allocating financial resources for business development, training opportunities, and labor markets which hinders women’s full potential of utilizing the internet and ICT for the optimum political, social and economic empowerment (Sandys, 2005). Hence, researches and initiatives on the internet and women empowerment must be sustained focusing on the following areas that help enabling women empowerment in developing countries.

Women’s Economic Empowerment Enabled Through the Internet

ICT and the Internet can help women become economically empowered through connecting them to a wider spectrum of markets and deliver sufficient information to them, opening up economic opportunities and expanding their social network.

ICT and the internet have:

- Given women the chance to become owners of ICT-accessed projects and employees at business ventures that are newly created,
- Constructed an environment where women can be trained and participate in activities that develop the community and advocate for their priorities and needs at their convenience,

- Built tools that are ICT-based and target women's tailored needs and are run by females as well, such as e-commerce initiatives, literacy programs, courses for business planning and facilitating access to trading information services,
- Introduced a new sector of ICT with new job opportunities that enable entrepreneurship and salaried employment in the sector itself, and
- Developed direct connections between traders and women, creating local, regional and global markets; hence, avoiding male dominated market structures and middle men, all through the e-commerce initiatives (Sandys, 2005).

An example of an economically empowering model of ICT utilization for women would be the women dairy producers in India who use "Dairy Information System Kiosk (DISK)" that controls and organizes a data-base that holds veterinary services information and all milk cattle as well as any other practical information for the dairy sector (Sandys, 2005).

Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment Enabled Through the Internet

Regarding education, both developing and developed countries have recently been directing efforts to merge traditional and new ICT teaching methods through using computers, radio, and television to create distance education and e-learning centers that support training and education of women and girls. In order for women and girls to enter the information economy, two main factors must be established: high literacy rates and ICT training. To achieve optimum benefit of the prior ICT education and training, women and girls must have language and basic computer literacy. Women are under-represented in technology and science because of the continuous gender gaps in education caused by domestic responsibilities, socio-cultural practices and

hindered mobility. All the said factors add to inequality and gender difference of that particular field (Sandys, 2005).

Concerning health, the internet and ICT have great potential to assist health initiatives for women at national, regional and global levels. That potential has been particularly demonstrated in developing countries where the ICT and internet applications have contributed to disseminating health information and connecting women to health professionals. An example of that would be an organization such as “Satellite” that is a successful project in developing countries and is a US-based NGO that deconstructs barriers and facilitates access to health information through the internet and “HealthNet” is its global communication network (Sandys, 2005). Thus, the internet can be used by women to help them gain primary roles in households and communities as disseminators of health information. Sandys, in 2005, mentioned that the United Nations worked to help set up model health clinics in Egypt’s rural areas to help women get trained and gain access to health information through the heavy use of ICT.

Women’s Political Empowerment Enabled Through the Internet

Technologies have been used in unprecedented methods for networking purposes, advocacy and political participation. Currently, Women’s organizations have stood out for the empowerment and strategic uses of ICT to propagate women’s rights (Sandys, 2005). Examples of that would be when the five and ten year reviews for “Implementation of the Platform for Action” during 2000 and 2005 as well as “The Fourth World Conference on Women” have resulted in an immense global mobilization

and networking for Women's Movement through the ICT and the internet (Sandys, 2005).

In E-Governance, not only is ICT a powerful tool to enforce education, political participation and economic empowerment but also to improve citizen empowerment and democracy. It helps foster a transparent governance by facilitating interaction and communication for citizens and governments, promoting equity, empowering minorities and reviving civic institutions. This can be narrowed down to specifically providing women with a platform for voicing their needs and rights since they have been overlooked, neglected and isolated especially by the authoritative regimes in the developing countries (Sandys, 2005). E-governance has gained vital importance in governments since it facilitated the delivery of governmental services through applying ICT and prompted accountability and transparency by allowing citizens and direct public to participate in Government activities which is a key element to women's empowerment and gender equality (Sandys, 2005). ICT and social media platforms, in particular, have the potential to play a vital role in E-governance. According to Jaeger et al., in 2012, social media provided a new and innovative way to promote ongoing citizen/government interaction that eventually show an influence on the evaluation and formulation of public policies. It, also, helps to construct a healthy more democratic society by involving citizens in the public affairs (Elsherbiny, Ali & American University in Cairo, 2015).

Empowering Women Against Violence

Last but not least, the internet and ICT have provided a safe sphere for women and girls who are victims or survivors of violence to freely express and share their experiences or seek help in a virtual space to give more positive information against violence that targets

women. For Women to benefit from these virtual spaces, the ICT and Internet access must be provided. For the ICT, Internet and particularly social media to be an effective advocacy tool on violence against women, the realities and needs of women must be identified, addressed and highlighted (Sandys, 2005). Hence, capacity-building steps must be taken to enable women to have an internet access and trust and use ICT and social media as a medium to vent, communicate and share experiences (Sandys, 2005). According to Sandys in 2005, experience has displayed that it is vital to set Internet-based advocacy along with more traditional methods of communication media.

III.6 Arab Women's Empowerment Stance in The MENA Region

In order to decide to what extent Arab women in the MENA region are empowered, women's global issues and defects must be mentioned first. To begin with, one third of the women world wide will be exposed to violence, two million females under the age of 15 are annually forced into sex trade, and the women in Africa are twice the number of men who are affected with HIV (Zuhur, 2003).

Empowerment has been previously defined as the following: "Certainly we may track a great many changes that have occurred in the direction of empowerment, but women have yet to achieve or realize many of the ideal stages of empowerment. Hence it is certainly more rational to define empowerment as a process rather than an end-point." (Zuhur, 2003).

Therefore, the following key events in diverse Arab countries will shed light on Arab women's progress towards empowerment. Zuhur has explained in 2003 that empowerment is a process through which women grow to higher levels of education, economic rights and political and legal rights; and quoted the following as a frame for

women's empowerment definition; "Women should be able to work, and advance in any career they select; possess economic rights to own and dispose of property, and pay for goods at the same rate as others. And, women should obtain bodily rights - the rights to control their own health and fertility, and prosecute those who engage in domestic violence, rape, harassment, or other violations of women's bodies. Empowerment may also include legal rights that actually accord women certain advantages such as hiring or educational preferences in areas where women have historically lacked access or differential rights such as paid maternity leaves, or the state and criminal justice system's cooperation in enforcing laws that protect women. Empowerment extends beyond acts or attitudes of governments, for it should include women's increased knowledge of the history of women in their own country/region, and the social and psychological effects of patriarchy".

The following are the events that show the success rate of women in the region:

Successes

- In January 2001, at Egypt, a new law was passed to facilitate Egyptian women's separation by allowing "KHULA" which is getting an easy divorce by returning gifts and received money to husband (National Council for Women, 2013).
- There has been a commitment to the number of Parliamentary seats for women who entered the 2002 elections in Morocco.
- Stories and studies about women who penetrated the male dominated fields as prominent business women or sportswomen has increased.

- Thousands of NGOs were created to develop and sustain projects that pursue legal reformations and empower women economically, educationally and politically in Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan.
- The number of people who opposed violence against women is growing. This is illustrated through evidence such as when Emirates coordinated a program to punish and identify harassers, when Jordan launched a campaign that punished honor killings, and when NGOs in Lebanon and Egypt were dedicated to combating this issue (Zuhur, 2003).

Vague Factors

- Egypt legitimizing “Urfi” (Unannounced) Marriages, which may be a double edged weapon as it approves mostly adolescence’s marriages but can cause an increase in fertility rate for younger age groups (Zuhur, 2003).

Failures

- 47 Saudi women got arrested for taking part in a “driving demonstration” during 1990 that was followed by Bin Baz’s “Fatwa” against women’s driving.
- Statistics have shown that a large number of Egyptian women alone, practice FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) and the death of numerous girls due to complications post the FGM procedure that takes place in public health facilities (Nasser, 2012).
- Polygamy is frowned upon, yet increasing in the Arab countries and usually drives the male to divorce his wife and seizes any economic support to her or the children, leaving divorced mothers abandoned (Zuhur, 2003).

- A “Fatwa” has also been approved by the Saudi Committee that states women and their guardians are not permitted to postpone marriages for educational reasons since elementary school education is sufficient for females (Abou El Fadl, 2002).
- Crimes of honor and martial kidnapping continue to happen in the rural areas of the Arab countries
- Sudan still witnesses public beating and violations as well as sentencing women to jail for dressing inappropriately and for demonstrating.
- Algeria has women who are shot in streets for not wearing the “Hijab”.
- The blocked campaign at Lebanon trying to legalize civil marriage.
- Numerous Arab countries grant the children their citizenship based on the Father’s rather than the mother’s nationality.
- Islamists attacking prominent feminists in the Arab countries such as, Nawal al-Saadawi in Egypt and Toujan al-Faisal in Jordan (Zuhur, 2013).

Chapter IV

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

IV.1 Cyberfeminism

Like cyber activism, Cyberfeminism has been a term used for the emerging perspective of the feminist theory that seeks overcoming differences of power that has excluded females in the mostly masculine digital sphere. Cyberfeminism has permitted women to overcome any obstacle that may act as a controlling factor by providing cyberspace that can be easily accessed and used (Stephan, 2013). Cyberspace has been particularly made suitable for women's activism since it has limited cultural and institutional norms and nontraditional spaces (Vogt & Chen, 2001). The internet is one of the few media channels that is accessible to minorities and women's activism with Facebook users exceeding 800 million globally, posted tweets that exceed 200 million daily, and thousands of pictures and You tube videos posted daily, supporting that activists, individuals, supporters, now, have a new venue that facilitates being informed and involved (Stephan,2013).

During the early 1990s, Cyberfeminism appeared as a field for criticism and analysis for those interested in everything related to new technology and its interconnections with gender specifically in the Internet realm that is emerging as "mass media" (Paasonen, 2011). Numerous definitions have been set for Cyberfeminism and how it is identified with feminism. Activists, artists and scholars who have been interested in gender media technology constructed groups and networks to create such sets of meanings for

Cyberfeminism. However, by the early 2000s, the term was more likely to be used as a synonym for new media feminist studies as the cyber-feministic activities began to disappear during that time (Paasonen, 2011).

As Paasonen argues in her article, “Revisiting Cyberfeminism” in 2011 that Cyber feminism’s definition was problematic and was never clear nor concrete which allowed activists, scholars, and artists interested in new media technology and the related gender issues to use the term “Cyberfeminism” interchangeably with feminist studies done on new media which according to Paasonen makes “much lost in such a conflation.”. Hence, Paasonen has revisited Cyberfeminism through defining and investigating the “cyber” prefix and the types of technologies utilized for Cyberfeminism by publications, projects, events and networks.

IV.2 How Cyberfeminism is Originated and Evolved Among Scholars

As the internet has offered potential for Feminists to find new ways of working since it now provides transparency, diversity and inclusion that has been more difficult to achieve before and may lead to change and action, Cyberfeminism consequently emerged (Hawthorne, & Klein, 1999). This is apparent as women's groups and women who gained more support through the internet and used it effectively to exchange experiences, create alliances and disseminate any notions they have (Hawthorne, & Klein, 1999).

Cyberfeminism started during 1991 in Adelaide, Australia as "Virginia Barratt, Julianne Pierce, Francesca di Rimini and Josephine Starrs" who were a group of female artists who decided to intervene the French feminist theory and art through VNS Matrix (Paasonen, 2011). The VNS Matrix created "A cyberfeminist manifesto for the twenty-first century" in respect to Donna Haraway's prominent "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" that was published originally in 1985, and on a large billboard the following was displayed;

"We are the modern cunt
positive anti-reason
unbounded unleashed unforgiving
we see art with our cunt we make art with our cunt
we believe in jouissance madness holiness and poetry
we are the virus of the new world disorder
rupturing the symbolic from within
saboteurs of the big daddy mainframe
the clitoris is a direct line to the matrix

VNS MATRIX

terminators of the moral code^[11]

mercenaries of slime^[11] go down on the altar of abjection” (VNS Matrix, 1991), (Paasonen, 2011).

Virginia Barratt, Julianne Pierce, Francesca di Rimini and Jasephine Starrs adopted the feminist theory in a playful way through the cyberpunk imageries that were futuristic and the projects VNS Matrix created such as “Corpusfantastica MOO” and “All New Gen” gained noticeable attention during the early and mid 1990s in the digital arts (Paasonen, 2011). “Ironic commentary”, “critical appropriation” and “playful exploration” were all strategies used by the VNS Matrix and their type of Cyberfeminism came in the form of the virtual spaces of MOOS and MUDS (multi-user domains and dungeons), cyberpunk fiction, creative writing, culture of games, and media art.

Later on, the British Sadie Plant who was a cultural theorist has also been recognized for developing the term by quoting VNS Matrix’s “the clitoris is a direct line to the matrix” and using it as a slogan for her cyberfeminist platform “Feminisations: Reflections on Women and Virtual Reality” (Plant, 1996), (Paasonen, 2011). Plant, in her writings that were published during 1995 and 1997, created a general narrative of networks, technology and women starting from prehistory to computing’s early era. this was the beginning of cyber-netic systems that are self organized and networked communications. Such narratives were written in a metaphoric way to link machines and women both as tools of the masculine society (Paasonen, 2011). According to Plant’s perspective, the increase of smart machines is parallel to women’s liberalization (Paasonen, 2011). Plant’s essays were published widely during the 1990s making her the most well known

cyberfeminist author. She was known for remaining optimistic in her feminization as she believed in automated liberalization through complex systems. This made her work receive techno-utopianism critiques that subsequently drew-out to Cyberfeminism as a whole, making Plant receive significant critique from fellow cyberfeminists like Hawthorne, Klein and Squires (Paasonen, 2011). Hawthorne, and Klein focused more on the notion of “Communication Technology” rather than “Information Technology” believing that women’s groups focused more on the notion of communication that was further facilitated through the internet rather than putting emphasis on the “Information Technology” (Hawthorne, & Klein, 1999). It was quoted in their book Cyberfeminism that “The Information highway is not about computers or phones or technology-it is really about talking to each other for work, for fun, for talking with our families, for developing businesses, running government and for community action, It is about using whatever technology is out there to do what we have always done when we need to talk with each other to make something happen-it is about communicating...” (Hawthorne, & Klein, 1999).

Nancy Paterson who is an artist based in Toronto is the third leading figure linked to the “Cyberfeminism” term due to her essay “Cyberfeminism” which she wrote in 1992. Through this essay, Paterson highlighted gender diversity and her version of Cyberfeminism was articulated as “very much an emerging philosophy” illustrated through “a focus on cultural diversity, trans-gender politics and recognition of the ubiquity of technology” (Couey et al., 1996) (Paasonen, 2011). Paterson (1992) focused on outlining different feminism departures through analytical engagements with the internet, electronic media and virtual reality applications, besides the artistic and political

discourses which these are rooted in. Even though Paterson's writing was disseminated through the Web, neither her essay nor her art have been circulated, reprinted and referenced as much as Plant's work or VNS Matrix. Some even argue that Paterson's work on defining Cyberfeminism may have been forgotten (Paasonen, 2011).

According to Paasonen (2011), Carolyn Guertin (2003) has pointed out that Cyberfeminism was evolving concurrently in three distinct countries in the world: UK through Plant, Australia through VNS Matrix, and Canada through Paterson. The prior Cyberfeminist were defined differently in terms of theoretical argumentation and politics. During the 1990s, numerous slightly interconnected definitions of Cyberfeminism were given, but they were never ordered or arranged into a clear cut defined movement. It is worth mentioning that the Cyberfeminism activity was not restricted to the Anglophone world. It stretched to different continents with diverse languages such as Eastern Europe that had a "Cyberfeminism club of St. Petersburg" that launched its activity around 1994 (Mitrofanova, 1999, p.12) (Paasonen, 2011). Through such environment and in this context, cyberfeminism became an interesting arena for further investigation about technology and gender and invited innovative and diverse talks on politics and feminism. Throughout the history of cyberfeminism it has found an attractive topic for investigation and studying due to its diversity and the potentiality of media technologies (Paasonen, 2011). The existence of Old Boys Network, a group that mainly consists of Helene von Oldenburg, Verena Kuni, Claudia Reiche and Cornelia Sollfrank but extends to include more artists, activists, and theorists, and its activity had made Germany a hub for cyberfeminist activity (Paasonen, 2011). Platforms were provided through Cyberfeminist Internationals and organized by OBN like The First (1997), Next (1999), and Very

(2001) for interested individuals in Cyberfeminism to explore, meet and critically reflect on digital technologies (Paasonen, 2011). The Cyberfeminist Internationals' participation was in fact international with a greater number of Europeans than North Americans, and they provided multiple articulations for cyberfemnmism which was different from that of Sadie Plant's one (Paasonen, 2011). Provocations, interventions, media art projects and poetic manifestos were done by such networks (Paasonen, 2011). Jenny Sundén (2001) perceives Cyberfeminism to be dissected into practice-based and theoretical variations which are basically characterized by activist initiatives and philosophical sophistication which come together in art projects of Cyberfeminism (Paasonen, 2011).

Putting it simply, Cyberfeminism has been used since the early 1990s to refer to the feminist activity occurring in the cyberspace (Cullen, 2013). Cullen has criticized Cyberfeminism in her Feminism and Twitter masters research to have a prevalent problem which is that Cyberfeminism perceives the cyberspace as a utopia and that all customary traditions like gender difference is destructed. Cullen states that it is apparent that cyberspace is not a utopia through quoting the following "every social issue that we are familiar with in the real world will now have its counter-part in the virtual one" (Spender, 1996) and Cullen strongly related the prior quote to women's rights issue. Cullen through that quote clarifies and highlights that the quote supports the notion that there is discrimination online just like reality.

Hence, given the controversial literature of the Cyberfeminism theory and its fluctuating appearance since its emergence in the 1990's, this study will use the Cyberfeminism framework to investigate its existence in the most used SNS in the Arab world, that is Facebook.

IV.3 Global Feminism

Global feminism, which is also known as Transitional Feminism, appeared when the need to generate a feminist argument in relation to discussions about globalization that have been continuous since the 1990s (Dubois, 2005) (Cullen, 2013). In other words, global feminism examines the effects and impact of globalization on women's issues (Cullen, 2013). One of these effects is the feminists' tendency to politicize women's issues that go beyond national borders (Mendoza, 2002) (Cullen, 2013). Cullen also highlighted that global feminism is very similar to global journalism theory that surpass any geographical boundaries during the globalization era we live in now.

Cullen, according to Dubois in 2005, also pin points that an apparent way of global feminism is utilizing SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter to create global unification and gradually demolishing national identity, believing that it will help create a community closer to utopia. Cullen quotes Dubois to clarify that the prior is done through feminists creating a "virtual, imagined, transnational community of diverse social movements" through SNSs. Cullen points out that, according to Escobar in 1999, that creating such a community will eventually aim at giving global unification a greater prominence in comparison to national identity.

IV.4 The Three Waves of Global Feminism

It was during the years (1880 – 1930) that the First Wave of Global Feminism took place. Numerous organizations mainly aimed at serving issues such as equality in education, peace, equal pay, industrial training, religious and social welfare concerns (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). This facilitated Global mobilization and the formation of more new transitional women's organizations during the years 1880-1900. They tackled a wider range of issues in diverse contexts. Among the earliest transitional influences were the Mother's Union which was established in Britain and was religious in nature. The most transitional organizations were generally based and led in the West (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). While Europe and North America were achieving a major milestone in the realm of women's rights movements through winning the right for women to vote, other countries were still in the process of gearing up in women's rights movements (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Western women introduced and facilitated Global feminism in Asia and Africa during the decades of colonial rule in diverse sectors such as: legal status, political representation, education and health which was welcomed or opposed back then depending on the variance of the colonized women's orientation (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Colonized women sometimes entwined the transitional women's movements with colonization and opposed it as a symbol for nationalism and resisting colonialism. In Kenya for example, during 1920-1931 and in the 1950s movements to abolish female genital cutting were resisted and local people would go as far as to circumcise themselves as a form of protest to colonization (Ferree & Tripp, 2006).

The wave took place after the World War II during 1945-1975. Women became more active and mobilized as they exerted efforts in order to resist colonialism and

protect the independence of their country African women had evolved women's movements that had their own distinct goals and core philosophy the organizations that had North American and European focus became more international (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). After World War II, during 1945, the UN commission on the status of women was established and it was aiming to promoting and boosting international advocacy, supporting women's rights in diverse and collective spheres (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). The third wave of transitional women's mobilization started in the year 1985 till present. it was until then when the global South has started to challenge the ideological dominance of the North through framing the international women's agenda as transitional mobilization or global feminism started to expand concurrently (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). During the 1970s, the West's social movements and Women's movements up roared and global interaction among such entities started to broaden and allow even more new international networks and organizations to form and focus mainly on violence against Women, prostitution, peace, poverty, human rights, reproductive rights and women's health which hammers the salience of this thesis and makes women's organizations in the Arab countries that experienced political turbulence worth studying (Ferree & Tripp, 2006).

IV.5 Regional Influences on Transitional Women's Activism and Their Waves

Women activism in Africa according to Synder was not simply and directly absorbed from the West but rather evolved from a native bases and later influenced by international women's movements. African women's organizations have also pushed UN Economic Commission for Africa to found a training center for women (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Ferree & Tripp also quoted that in Africa "Transitional feminist networks have emerged in the context of a growing population of educated, employed, mobile and politically aware women around the world". New and increasing types of communication such as SNSs, e-mails, and faxes have worked as a catalyzer to globally networking and priming women's issues in the South (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Governments, as well, have encouraged the emergence of international norms and committed to international treaties that directed dynamics in the South to give more attention to the women's status and magnifying transitional feminism's magnitude in the south making this thesis's research questions worth investigating (Ferree & Tripp, 2006).

Ferre & Tripp in their book "Global Feminism" have stated that global feminism is not global in scope but may sometimes be regional in nature and especially in Africa.

Numerous gender norms have been diffused across national borders by African regional networks to set global standards regarding specific women's gender issues (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Regional networks have been defined by the book as being "organized by and for women" in certain geographical context and may depend on external or foreign funding, but they articulate their own policy objectives (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). Africa particularly has witnessed two waves of regional activism.

The first wave of regional activism in Africa was during 1950s to 1970s when women gathered at sub-regional and regional level to unravel and discuss similar problems to plan potential solutions. They are “organized by and for women” in certain geographical context and may depend on external or foreign funding, but they articulate their own policy objectives (Ferree & Tripp, 2006).

The Second Wave of regional activism in Africa was during 1980s to 2000s, Autonomous organizations boosted in number and regional networks were revitalized since the international and domestic political contexts facilitated that during that time (Ferree & Tripp, 2006). The second wave continues today, however, the economic crisis has caused the structural adjustment of some programs but these developments promoted the formation of regional and national women’s networks and associations (Ferree & Tripp, 2006).

IV.6 Agenda Setting

As the political turbulence in Iraq emerged, the media fixated its coverage on the war and that was apparent through the US media outlets as the war coverage dominated the media boosting the war salience (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). This supported the notion that the media tells us what to think and draws our attention to the topics it only sheds light on. 70 years were spent to test and experience media's influence on voters but the first two decades showed diminutive indications of the media's impact on voters and on shaping their opinion. Klapper's limited-effects model for mass communication originated from there. It opposed Walter Lippmann's claim of agenda-setting (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). However, a transition occurred during the 1960's as the direction was altered away from the law of minimal consequences and diverted towards agenda-setting. McCombs and Shaw conducted a study in 1972 to support Lippmann's agenda-setting theory using the 1968 presidential elections and tested the correlation between public agenda and media agenda. The results supported that there was a correlation between the two elements to support agenda setting over selective perception (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). More studies were carried out to derive piled up results that tested agenda-setting effect after the prior Chapel Hill experiment, from which interesting results emanated. Shaw and McCombs examined voters during 1977 in Charlotte, North Carolina to support that topics were of ascending importance to the public depending positively on the weight of its news coverage in the Charlotte Observer, An affirmative relation was revealed to emphasize the agenda-setting effect during elections in 3 different locations: Indiana, Lebanon, Evanston and Indianapolis (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). Researchers started tackling other issues to examine the theory such as civil rights, viewing crime dramas, and energy

supply that showed outcome indicative of the agenda-setting effect (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). As numerous studies were conducted to support the agenda setting theory, the most reliable outcomes would be the ones from the laboratory tests where the elements or variables altered and controlled. “Defense preparedness” was among the matters tested by Lyengar and Kinder in 1987 using laboratories to expose a sample of viewers to TV news programs focusing on diverse topics to test its increasing importance to the audience and defense preparedness showed consistency of agenda setting (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). Most results have emphasized how media practitioners affect what we choose to see and how we see it. This includes social media content creators as well. In other words, agenda setting suggests that media can direct the citizens’ attention to certain issues or topics if given greater weight in media. Consequently, this can create consensus among the audience to perceive how vital these issues are (Moon, 2008). This will eventually lead to the encouragement of citizens to solve certain problems and overlook others through “civic engagement” (Moon, 2008). The theory mainly implies that the media creates the salience of topics in the public’s mindset and shape their importance (Sharma, 2012). “Lasswell believed that the media plays a critical role in directing our attention to issues” to create “a correlation of attention on certain issues by the media, the public and policymakers at the same time” (Moon, 2008). Since, agenda setting is directly related to the public agenda and public opinion, directing and shaping the salience of topics and issues that can empower women, this makes this theory relevant to the present thesis. The thesis will examine the frequency of topics concerning women and investigate if content creators on the Facebook pages of Women’s Rights Organizations pages are amplifying and focusing on certain topics to

set an agenda and to direct the audiences' attention towards certain issues or not. This means that if a certain category of women empowering topic has been given greater weight in comparison to the other topics this will eventually mean that the public opinion has been directed in a certain way to overlook other topics that may be salient as well as crucial to empower Arab women in reality. It has been for that reason that Walter Lippman argued that the image in the people's mind may vary and differ in comparison to reality (Tan & Weaver, 2009). Lippman's reasoning has been later supported by McCombs and Shaw when they experimented this through voting of citizens during presidential elections in Chapel Hill, North Carolina as mentioned before (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). Walter Lippman, in the early 1920s, in support of the above, he added that the public opinion responds to the "pseudo-environment" that is formed by the news, meaning that the public agenda and people's opinions are dependent on what the media disseminates (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009).

There are numerous factors that may contribute to setting the agenda such as the social ideologies and psychology of media creators, politicians, public officials, journalists, individuals such as presidents and public relation practitioners (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). An example of that would be the state media which is mainly impacted and influenced by the information received from the government that consequently is reflected in the agenda (Tan & Weaver, 2009).

There is another factor known as "inter-media agenda setting" which is the impact of diverse media outlets on each other (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). For instance, when a major news outlet disseminates a topic, other media channels will probably do the same and tackle the same issue. A similar influence also can exist between websites and

traditional media (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009). Other studies also revealed that op-ed pages in major newspapers were impacted by blog-activism (McCombs & Reynolds, 2009).

Chapter V

METHODOLOGY

V.1 Research Methodology

This exploratory study will tackle its research questions revolving around Egyptian, Tunisian, and Lebanese Women's Organization Facebook pages and Cyberfeminism on these platforms, through employing triangulation through content analysis and in-depth interviews as research techniques. The content analysis methodology employed should investigate three main realms of the selected pages' posts: i- The purpose of the post or the topic it tackles, ii- the users' interactivity with the posts, and iii- are interactive features such photos, videos, hashtags, mentions and links present or absent. Qualitative in-depth interviews will be conducted with 12 interviewees to provide additional data to support or refute the content analysis descriptive outcome and give more insight on the following research questions.

V.2 Research Questions

The researcher attempts to answer and give more insight on the following research question.

R1 In which way are Global Feminism and agenda setting influencing the content of Facebook pages in all three countries, If any?

R 2 Which of the three countries uses Facebook as a venue for Cyber-feminism the most?

R 3 Which of the Women's Rights Organizations utilizes Facebook as a form of activism most effectively?

V.3 Triangulation Approach: Quantitative Content Analysis and Qualitative In-depth Interviews

Content analysis is one of the solid research methods used by most scholars in the mass media studies due to its effectiveness to investigate media content including virtual content (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Content analysis has been given numerous definitions among them, a definition by Walizer and Wienir (1978) that articulates content analysis to be “any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information.” Kerlinger (2000) has, also, given another definition that states content analysis to be “a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). To further elaborate Kerlinger’s definition, three concepts must be involved throughout the content analysis: the first is that the content selected as a sample must be consistent and selected according to proper and consistent rules with an equal chance of being selected and there must be uniformity in the coding and analysis process, the second concept is that the coder’s personal biases should not interfere in the content analysis and that is combated through setting objective operational definitions for classifications, and the third and final concept is be that content analysis should be a solid and accurate quantitative method that represents the body of messages and provide the researcher with a statistical tool to facilitate analysis and interpretation (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The scope of this thesis is limited to Facebook as a SNS since according to the literature review, it is the most used social media platform in the countries studied.

The study aims at fulfilling more than one use identified by Wimmer and Dominick in their book. The first use this study aims at fulfilling, is the descriptive use which provides a description of the “communication content”, that is the posts shared by the pages’ administrators and exploring the purpose of the post and which feminist topic does it tackle, examining the interaction and sociability of the post through the number of shares, likes and comments and observing if the administrator uses any special features to promote interactivity on the post. The second use is providing a starting point for further media effect studies to investigate the latter effect of the Cyberfeminism and global feminism activity on the users for example and opening up the potential to unravel and conduct build up studies such as cultivation researches on Facebook (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The qualitative in-depth interviews will also be done to provide a deeper insight of practitioners’, activists’ and scholars’ perspective on the Egyptian women rights organizations’ activity on Facebook as an SNS. In-depth interviews are known to be a qualitative method used by scholars to give a clearer insight of opinions and are usually conducted on a concise sample (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

V.4 Defining the Universe

As this study aims at examining the online feminism and activism, it will analyze social media since it has become crucial to the social feminist and activist movements.

Feminists have realized that embracing digital media as a substantial space for activism is vital (Clark, 2015). More specifically, the study will focus solely on Facebook as the main communicating platform linking Arab Women's Organizations and Arab women, since Facebook has a large number of users in the MENA region of around 3.2 million users (Mansour, 2015). Facebook has been precisely chosen, since it has been the platform where the spark of the fourth wave of feminism ignited and where the Arab spring of 2011, paving a path for the fourth wave of feminism and Cyberfeminism to take place (Landorf, 2014). Putting it in a simpler way, Facebook will be the main communicating outlet to be studied since it played a prominent role in the Arab spring which led to the Fourth wave of feminism which eventually made Cyberfeminism and global feminism on Facebook worth investigating.

More precisely, three official Facebook pages has been chosen, each page represents a women's organization in each country to be studied. The content analysis will begin as of the first post in each page published by the administrators in year 2015, and end with the final post in year 2015. It has been stated that ever since the "Arab Spring" in 2011, thousands of women through the region have played a noticeable role in combating traditional gender roles and ending dictatorship. This has helped to revive Cyberfeminism, especially during the year 2015 which is considered crucial for online feminist activism and Cyberfeminism (Matos, 2017). The posts will be thoroughly examined through content analysis that will provide descriptive analysis to all posts'

elements such as: comments, replies, likes, tags, special features used (videos, pictures, and GIFs). A total of 193 posts have been selected as a sample through using systematic random sampling. The three Facebook pages that will be investigated and which belong to Arab women's organizations are: "The National Council for Women in Egypt" a page for an Egyptian Women's organization; "KAFKA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation", a page for a Lebanese Women's Organization; and "Gameyat Nesa Tunisyat (in Arabic), or "Femmes Tunisiennes", Association of Tunisian Women" a page for a Tunisian Women's organization.

As for the Interviews, they will be targeting intellectuals such as the scholars who have gender studies background, recent or previous practitioners, and activists who have previous experience or knowledge about the realm of women's rights and may be members of women's rights organizations.

V.5 Population (Sample)

Since the number of posts and their likes and comments to be investigated over the year 2015 in all three pages are massive, the sample studied will be selected through systematic random sampling.

This will be applied through using a sampling interval which will be every third post starting the first post of year 2015 until the final post in year 2015 in all three pages. This sampling method is more accurate than the simple random sampling; however, there may be a single defect to this method which is periodicity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The selected post, according to the sampling interval, will have its likes, comments and any special features included in it investigated. However, it is worth noting that the Tunisian Facebook page has less posts and will generate less results in comparison to the Egyptian

and the Lebanese pages since the internet penetration and number of Internet users were less than Lebanon and Egypt during year 2000. Both Lebanon and Egypt remain ahead since Egypt has a bigger population and Lebanon has a higher internet growth and penetration percentage in comparison to Tunisia according to the literature review (Wheeler, 2008).

As for the in-depth interviews, the sample of 12 interviewees will be kept confidential. solely the researcher and advisor will have access to their identities. The participants will be selected through purposive sampling from surrounding networks at the university, through contacts collected from attended conferences, or referrals from professors in the field of gender studies and journalists. The confidentiality of the interviewees is crucial in order to gain their opinions and criticism freely without any restrictions including their identities. Some interview questions revolved around the challenges and limitations in the country or the organizations they work for that may hinder women's empowerment and these questions have to be answered freely.

V.4 Unit of analysis and Operationalization

The unit of analysis in this study will be the post published by the pages' administrator and all its components (likes, comments, special features) which may contain content that will function as indicators to investigate the presence of Cyberfeminism and Global feminism to be compared among the three women rights organizations.

V.5 Unit of Analysis “Operationalizing the Variables”

Feminism: It is the greater and broader goal of altering and challenging “gender relations” that undermine women in comparison to men (Ferree, & Tripp, 2006).

Cyberfeminism: Cyberfeminism includes “cyberactivism” which refers to the online feminist civic engagement as well as the historical feminism which evolved and has become more adequate to meet the transformed conditions of the Information Age (Eudey, 2012).

Global Feminism: Is the examination of the impact and effect of the globalization wave on women's issues (Cullen, 2013).

Post: Facebook Wall Post is a facility offered by Facebook for corporates or organizations with fan pages to exercise their engagement with and respond to their users and fans (McCorkindale, 2010). A Facebook post may contain different media types such as a text, photo, video, link or other content which facilitates more online engagement and gives it media richness or more “vividness of online content” encouraging users to interact by liking, sharing or commenting (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015). A post may be an

entertainment post, informational post, remuneration post containing special offers to attract users. It may also be a social posts that is intended to elicit interaction with users through questions or statements that grant an opportunity for further responds on the post (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

Like: “like” is a blue button that was introduced to Facebook in 2009. It has become a part of the Facebook users’ daily routine to express engagement. There are six different types: emotional liking, socially responsible liking, social performative liking, informational liking, routine liking, and low-cost liking. Most users believe that such likes help in promoting causes and for that it may be considered a form of humanitarian support and civic engagement (Brandtzaeg & Haugstveit, 2014).

Comment: Is considered a form of online engagement exercised by the users to express their opinion or voice their complaints. The more the number of comments on a post, the stronger the indication of the post’s impact or success is, since it is an indication that users invested time to interact with the post and share their opinion (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015). A comment may be by the page’s admin or the organization controlling the fan page in order to respond to and sustain conversations with users. The organization will be considered unresponsive from the user’s standpoint in case of not responding to a user’s complaint. (McCorkindale, 2010).

Hashtag: is commonly used in social networking sites to indicate a shared context of topics or events. It may indicate the spread or the popularity of the idea using the following sign “ # ” prior to the topic (Ma, Sun, & Cong, 2012).

Mention: Tagging or mentioning other users through social networking sites in content disseminated to a large number of audience started in late 2006 on Twitter and in 2009 on Facebook. It is the action where users of SNSs adopt the “at” sign “@” followed by a particular username as a representation of that user’s profile as a method to refer public posts to specific users (Savage, Monroy-Hernandez, Singer, & Hollerer, 2013).

Video: Is an interactive multimedia usually comes in “Flash Video” format since it has interactive capabilities, is smaller in size and easy to share and use on the web (Godwin-Jones, 2007). A video is added to a post usually to boost interaction and help make the post content more vivid (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

Photo: Is a visual imagery employed as a form of a symbolic creation for Facebook users’ world or identity or a visual imagery of the message a Facebook admin may want to convey (Mendelson , & Papacharissi, 2010). The photos may be shared, liked, labelled or tagged and are considered a “performative element” provided by Facebook to facilitate connectivity, communication, presentation of self or voicing opinions (Mendelson , & Papacharissi, 2010).

Event: Is a post created by the page admin or the organization moderating its fan page to promote an event, provide information about it and have the chance to contact the members who marked themselves as attending which gives an opportunity to create relationships (Evans, 2010).

GIF: “Graphic Interchange Format” is a digital file format that is considered a key tool for communication in digital cultures. It was introduced to the web and started to become ubiquitous during the late 1990s (Miltner, & Highfield, 2017). Numerous levels of meanings may be contained in a single GIF due to their symbolic complexity of having infinite “looping repetition” making it an ideal digital communication tool that may be posted, shared or liked on Facebook (Miltner, & Highfield, 2017).

Link: A link comes from a referral system that contains a classified arrangement for classifying and categorizing web pages that the system reclaims from the World Wide Web. Each link is assigned to a Web page that is in a specific classification. Links are also called “URL’s” (Goodman, 1999). Links may be included in Facebook posts and facilitate online engagement. They, also, give the post more online vividness since they provide additional information (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

Economic Empowerment: For women, economic empowerment may be resembled in perceiving the economic resources as a source of supremacy and power. Hence, it advocates methods that may influence the allocation of assets in the family, society or community as a whole with the aim of improving women’s ability to create wealth and

improve her social status (Kapitsa, 2008). Economic empowerment may, also, be perceived as the significance of women's access to assets and economic resources rather than their allocation only (Kapitsa, 2008). Economic resources may be in the form of income which facilitates the access of other societal resources like: decent work, high quality education that allows the formation of public opinion later on (Kapitsa, 2008). Ambassador at the NCW Mona Omar has indicated that economic empowerment is simply getting the means to earn money in order to be independent and make a living (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Political Empowerment: Dr. Manal Maher El Gamiel, Parliament Member, has stated that political empowerment may be defined as helping or enabling women to be capable of playing a meaningful role in the political realm and to own the capacity and tools that may efficiently equip them to play that role (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Socio-economic Empowerment: Dr.Marianne Azer has indicated that socio-economic empowerment may be simply explained in working on changing the existing stereotype of women and adjusting the mindset of the culture to accept women in more dominant positions, situations and jobs (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Health Empowerment: Health empowerment may be defined as a concept where individual competencies and strength, proactive behavior to social change and social policy, and natural helping systems are linked and it must be accompanied with

knowledge. In the healthcare domain, empowerment is linked to “determinant of improved health status”, while powerlessness is associated with “ill health” (Camerini, Schulz, & Nakamoto, 2012).

Educational Empowerment: Is working towards empowering the learning environments to give learners options in their learning process that can help them resolve any limitations or problems. Consequently, this will allow them to build personal meanings that may help make these individuals more independent and more competent decision-makers (Saye, 1997).

Combating Violence: Violence against women has become a global issue. It comes in diverse forms such as: stalking, sexual assaults, violence in intimate relations, trafficking, and any violation that harms the women’s psyches or bodies. Combating violence comes in the form of working towards hindering the previously mentioned and any other form of violent practices (Htun, & Weldon, 2012).

V.6 Inter-coder Reliability

This research’s coding is conducted by two independent coders who are trained and oriented with the variables’ definitions. The sample, later on, has been equally split and assigned to the coders. The two coders have afterwards switched samples and randomly selected a subsample for recoding it to examine the inter-coder’s reliability amongst them. The randomly selected subsample has been a percentage extracted from the original sample to be coded by the other coder. The responses of the recoded

subsample have been compared to the originally coded sample in order to examine the inter-coder reliability. The inter-coder reliability was finally calculated by using the Holsti (1969) formula

$$= \frac{2(m)}{n_1+n_2}$$

and it is used for the nominal data (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The “M” represents the number of coding decisions which the two coders agreed on, “N1” and “N2” are the sum of the coding decisions done by the first and second coder, respectively” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

The total number of posts compared among the first and the second coder is 30, which means the total number of responses and questions answered by both coders is 1015 and the total number of responses or questions answered that the coders agreed upon were

$$978. \text{ Coding decisions } = \frac{2(978)}{1015+1015} = 0.963$$

which means that the Inter-coder reliability = 96% which is a high percentage and significant. This indicates that the research results are reliable among the two coders.

Chapter VI

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

VI.1 Result Overview

The results reported in this study are the outcome of applying the triangulation methodology which combines both the quantitative content analysis and the qualitative in-depth interviews. The quantitative content analysis method was applied on a total of 193 posts from three different Facebook pages administered by Women Organizations from Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia. The three countries have been selected for this comparative study since all three countries experienced the fourth-wave of feminism due to the political turbulence they have experienced. All three countries are post-colonial countries which creates a relatively similar political environment. Finally, all of them have had the usage of Facebook precisely by women boosted during the year 2015. This is, as previously mentioned, because that ever since the “Arab Spring” in 2011, thousands of women through the region have played a noticeable role in combating traditional gender roles and ending dictatorship. This has which helped revive Cyberfeminism, especially during the year 2015 which is considered crucial for online feminist activism and Cyberfeminism (Matos, 2017). The three Facebook pages investigated included: 42 posts from “The National Council for Women in Egypt” (https://www.facebook.com/pg/ncwegyptpage/posts/?ref=page_internal), a page for an Egyptian Women organization: 128 posts from “Kafa (Enough) Violence and Exploitation” ([https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=kafa%20\(enough\)%20violence%20%26%20](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=kafa%20(enough)%20violence%20%26%20)

exploitation), a page for a Lebanese Women Organization; and 23 posts from “Gameyat Nesa Tunisyat, Association of Tunisian Women, or Femmes Tunisienne” (<https://www.facebook.com/femmes.tunisiennes/>), a page for a Tunisian Women organization. The three pages have been selected according to their pioneering fan base, that is measured by the number of page likes, in comparison to other Women Rights Organizations’ pages of the same country. The list of organizations was compiled through contacting professors, activists and snowballing and selected since they had the largest number of likes in comparison to the other pages collected. The Egyptian National Council for Women in Egypt has around 781,000 likes on its page, the Lebanese KAFA has around 129,100 likes on its page and the Association of Tunisian Women page has around 10,300 likes. The content analysis has been investigated the posts selected according to systematic random sampling throughout the study period that included every third post out of all posts published by the administrators of the page in the year 2015. Each post has been examined to know the purpose of the post in order to know the topic tackled and reach a conclusion whether the topics tackled by the pages’ administrators are impacted by global feminism or not and to examine if each page separately focused on a specific category of topics which might suggest that there is agenda setting. The post is further investigated through its user’s likes, shares, and comments to measure the user’s interactivity on the page and reach a conclusion regarding which users have utilized Facebook as a venue for Cyberfeminism the most. Finally, the post comments, replies, and special features posted by the administrators will be examined to identify which page is the most efficient at encouraging the usage of Facebook as a tool for fruitful exploitation regarding the Cyberfeminism aspect. 12 in-depth interviews have

been conducted as the second research method to grasp a deeper insight on Facebook as a venue and a tool for Cyberfeminism. It has also been used to collect professional perspectives on the globalization and the agenda setting of feminist topics tackled on Facebook and SNSs. Face-to-Face or over the phone interviews have been conducted with university professors and scholars in the gender studies realm, activists and members of Egyptian Women's Rights Organizations. The 12 interviewees have been selected using purposive sampling in the surrounding networks at conferences attended such as the Arab – US Association for Communication Educators Conference, or at the university or through referrals collected from journalists and professors in the gender studies realm. The interviews have tackled questions that helped add insight to the three research questions in order to support or refute the content analysis's quantitative and merely descriptive outcome.

VI.2 Research Questions Analysis and Discussion

RQ1: In which way are Global Feminism and agenda setting influencing the content of Facebook pages in all three countries?

The results emanated from this study have supported that the topics tackled in the three Facebook pages from the three different countries are to a very great extent globalized or unified. This means that the pages have tackled a similar, unified or globalized category of topics the most. The study has categorized the topics tackled in posts into seven categories: the economic empowerment category, the political empowerment category, health awareness, the socio-economic empowerment category, combating violence, the educational empowerment and Others. The content analysis' descriptive results have supported that all three pages' posts have tackled the "Socio-economic empowerment" category of topics the most with a total of 75.6% of the posts belonging to that category. A similar and globalized pattern that has also been noticed across all three Facebook pages, is that the "Health" category has been tackled the least with a total of 4.1% of posts belonging to that category. The outcome that the most and least tackled topics have been similar across all three Facebook pages suggests that all three pages are impacted and influenced by a wave of globalization supports the theory of Global Feminism which suggests that the effects and impact of globalization influence women's issues (Cullen, 2013). The total category of topics tackled in a descending order across all three pages were as following; "Socio-economic empowerment" with a total of 75.6% posts, "Combating violence" with a total of 44%, "Political Empowerment" with a total of 28%, "Educational Empowerment" with a total of 20.7% posts, "Economical Empowerment"

with a total of 18.7%, “Other” with a total of 6.7% and finally “Health” with the least percentage of 4.1% posts.

In the Egyptian page of “National Council for Women in Egypt” alone, the results have presented the “Socio-economic empowerment” category on top with a total of 81% posts “Political empowerment” comes next representing 66.7% of NCW’s posts, “Educational empowerment” follows with 35.7% of the page’s posts, “Economic Empowerment” signifies 31% of the posts, “Combating violence” comes with a much lower percentage of 9.5% posts, “Health Empowerment” embodies 7.1% and finally the rest of the posts representing 4.8% belonging to the “Other” category. Since the majority of posts are concentrated in mainly the first two categories and the percentages vary greatly in the concentration of posts’ topics, this suggests that agenda setting theory applies to this page since the percentage of posts significantly vary and are far from being equal or close.

In the Lebanese page of “KAFA”, the results that stemmed from the page content analysis have showed that “Socio-economic empowerment” represented 72.9% of the page posts, “Combating Violence” follows with 57%, The percentage of posts that belonged to other categories dropped significantly to 18% of the posts belonging to “Educational empowerment”, 16.4% for “Economic empowerment”, and then “Political empowerment” with 11.7% of the page posts, the “Other” Category had 8.6% of the posts and finally “Health” signified the least percentage of the page posts to be merely 3.9%. Agenda-setting, also, applies to the Lebanese “KAFA” Facebook page according to the prior findings and justifications. the category of topics

In the third page, “Association of Tunisian Women”, the highest percentage of posts signifying 82.6% belong to the “Socio-economic empowerment” category of topics,

followed by the “Political empowerment” posts with 47.8%, “Combating violence” with 30.4%. The percentage of posts belonging to the remaining category of topics then drop drastically to 8.7% representing “Economic empowerment” and 8.7% representing “Educational empowerment”. Unlike the the other two Facebook pages, the “Health” and “Other” category of topics had 0% of the posts. These results support that agenda-setting was higher and more intense than the other two pages since distribution of posts among all categories were diminished. In fact, two categories have been completely overlooked on the Tunisian page.

The following tables are to illustrate and facilitate previewing the results.

1- Economic Empowerment:

Table No (2)
Economic Empowerment

| Facebook Page | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 13 | 21 | 2 | 36 |
| | % | 31% | 16.4% | 8.7% | 18.7% |
| No | F | 29 | 107 | 21 | 157 |
| | % | 69% | 83.6% | 91.3% | 81.3% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

2- Political Empowerment

Table No (3)
Political Empowerment

| Facebook Page Political Empowerment | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 28 | 15 | 11 | 54 |
| | % | 66.7% | 11.7% | 47.8% | 28% |
| No | F | 14 | 113 | 12 | 139 |
| | % | 33.3% | 88.3% | 52.2% | 72% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

3- Health Awareness

Table No (4)
Health Awareness

| Facebook Page Health Awareness | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 3 | 5 | - | 8 |
| | % | 7.1% | 3.9% | - | 4.1% |
| No | F | 39 | 123 | 23 | 185 |
| | % | 92.9% | 96.1% | 100% | 95.9% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

4- Socio-economic Empowerment

Table No (5)
Socio-economic Empowerment

| Facebook Page Socio-economic Empowerment | | The National Council for Women | KAF A (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | | | |
| Yes | F | 34 | 93 | 19 | 146 |
| | % | 81% | 72.7% | 82.6% | 75.6% |
| No | F | 8 | 35 | 4 | 47 |
| | % | 19% | 27.3% | 17.4% | 24.4% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

5- Combating Violence

Table No (6)

Combating Violence

| Facebook Page Combating Violence | | The National Council for Women | KAF A (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|-----------------------|-------|
| | | | | | |
| Yes | F | 4 | 74 | 7 | 85 |
| | % | 9.5% | 57.8% | 30.4% | 44% |
| No | F | 38 | 54 | 16 | 108 |
| | % | 90.5% | 42.2% | 69.6% | 56% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

6- Educational Empowerment

Table No (7)

Educational Empowerment

| Facebook Page Educational Empowerment | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 15 | 23 | 2 | 40 |
| | % | 35.7% | 18% | 8.7% | 20.7% |
| No | F | 27 | 105 | 21 | 153 |
| | % | 64.3% | 82% | 91.3% | 79.3% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

7- Others:

Table No (8)

Other

| Facebook Page Other | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 2 | 11 | - | 13 |
| | % | 4.8% | 8.6% | - | 6.7% |
| No | F | 40 | 117 | 23 | 180 |
| | % | 95.2% | 91.4% | 100.0% | 93.3% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

8- Other purposes of the post

Table No (9)

Other purpose of post

| Facebook Page Other purpose of post | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Total |
|---|---|--|--|-------|
| Sex Trafficking | F | - | 1 | 1 |
| | % | - | 9.1% | 7.7% |
| Right to Grant Citizenship to Children | F | - | 1 | 1 |
| | % | - | 9.1% | 7.7% |
| Environmental Empowerment | F | - | 1 | 1 |
| | % | - | 9.1% | 7.7% |
| Domestic Workers Suicide | F | - | 1 | 1 |
| | % | - | 9.1% | 7.7% |
| Commemoration of 6th of October victory | F | 1 | - | 1 |
| | % | 50% | - | 7.7% |
| Child Marriage | F | - | 3 | 3 |
| | % | - | 27.3% | 23.1% |
| Child Marriage | F | - | 2 | 2 |
| | % | - | 18.2% | 15.4% |
| Child Marriage | F | - | 2 | 2 |
| | % | - | 18.2% | 15.4% |
| Camp | F | 1 | - | 1 |
| | % | 50% | - | 7.7% |
| Total | F | 2 | 11 | 13 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% |

RQ2: Which of the three countries uses Facebook as a venue for Cyber-feminism the most?

This question aims at investigating the level of users' interactivity across all three countries' Facebook pages. This will be implemented through measuring the users' sharing, engagement, and promotion of the page posts. More precisely, the question outcome and results will emanate from the content analysis that measured each post's number of "Likes", "Shares", "Replies among users" to determine if they are dialoguing, and "Comments by users", and finally dissecting these comments into three categories: "Users Pro-Feminism", "Users Anti-Feminism", and "Neutral Users".

The number of users' "Likes" and "Shares" has been used as an indicator of sharing and promoting the page as a venue for Cyberfeminism. The like button during the study period was an indicator of solely promoting the post since the reactions button has been reinvented only during February 2016 to express other opposing reactions to the post such as anger and astonishment (Pool, & Nissim, 2016). Hence, "Likes" and "Shares" have been used as an indicator of promoting the page as a venue for Cyberfeminism. In the Egyptian page of "The National Council for Women in Egypt" alone, 100% of the page posts have received (1-499) likes by users, while the Lebanese page having the highest number of "Likes" by users 78.9% of the posts have received (1-499) likes, 15.6% of the posts received (500-1499) likes, and finally 5.5% of the posts received the highest number of likes (1500-3500) likes. Finally, the Tunisian page "Association of Tunisian Women" has reported the lowest number of users' likes. The like button has showed the Tunisian users to have the lowest percentage of interactivity and promoting

Cyberfeminism through liking the feminist posts on the Facebook page. 17.4% of the posts on the Tunisian page receive no likes at all, and 82.6% of the rest of the posts received (1-499) likes only.

Table No (10)
Number of likes

| Facebook Page How many likes | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| No | F | - | - | 4 | 4 |
| | % | - | - | 17.4% | 2.1% |
| 1:499 | F | 42 | 101 | 19 | 162 |
| | % | 100% | 78.9% | 82.6% | 83.9% |
| 500: 1499 | F | - | 20 | - | 20 |
| | % | - | 15.6% | - | 10.4% |
| 1500: 3500 | F | - | 7 | - | 7 |
| | % | - | 5.5% | - | 3.6% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As for the number of “Shares” that has been used as an indicator and a measuring tool of using Facebook to promote Cyberfeminism, the Egyptian “NCW’s” users have come second in place in utilizing Cyberfeminism through sharing 52.4% of the page posts received no shares at all and 47.6% of the remaining posts received (1-49) shares. As for the Lebanese “KAFA” page, it has been ranked as the highest page to have users promote Cyberfeminism through sharing posts. 17.2% of that page posts received no shares, 59.3% of the posts received (1-49) shares, 21.9% of the posts received (50-499) shares and finally 1.6% of the posts received the highest number of shares among the three

pages (500-3000) shares. Finally, the Tunisian page has had the lowest figures representing the user's utilization of the page to promote Cyberfeminism. 87% of the posts received no shares at all and only 13% of the posts received up to (1-49) shares only.

Table No (11)
Number of shares

| Facebook Page How many shares | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| No | F | 22 | 22 | 20 | 64 |
| | % | 52.4% | 17.2% | 87% | 33.2% |
| 1: 49 | F | 20 | 76 | 3 | 99 |
| | % | 47.6% | 59.3% | 13% | 51.3% |
| 50: 499 | F | - | 28 | - | 28 |
| | % | - | 21.9% | - | 14.5% |
| 500: 3000 | F | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| | % | - | 1.6% | - | 1% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Another segment of findings to answer this research question and help give more comprehensive findings and insight has been using the number of comments and replies by users as a measurement tool for the users' interactivity on the women's' organizations Facebook page. This will consequently indicate that they have or have not used Facebook as a venue for Cyberfeminism. "KAFA" the Lebanese page has, like the prior findings, been ranked as the highest page with the most interactive users giving the highest number

of comments. 84.4% of KAFA's posts has received comments by users. The Egyptian "National Council for Women in Egypt's" page was ranked as the second page with the most interactive users utilizing the page as a venue for Cyberfeminism. 47.6% of the NCW's posts received comments from users. Finally, the least page with interactivity of comments has been the Tunisian page "Association of Tunisian Women" which have had users' comments on 8.7% of its posts only. The total percentage of posts for all three pages together that received users' comments was 67.4% and only 32.6% of posts for all three pages did not have any comments. This percentage suggests that users of the three pages have the tendency and the well to be interactive. This can be boosted through the initiatives of the pages administrators. Hence, the last research question will be answering how the three pages exert effort to utilize their Facebook page for fruitful exploitation.

Table No (12)
Users' Comments

| Facebook Page Are there comments | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|-----------------------|-------|
| | | Yes | F | 20 | 108 |
| | % | 47.6% | 84.4% | 8.7% | 67.4% |
| No | F | 22 | 20 | 21 | 63 |
| | % | 52.4% | 15.6% | 91.3% | 32.6% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

The number of comments by users have been categorized into interval numeric scale where the number of likes have been grouped into (1-49), (50-99), and (100-200).

The following table clarifies the percentage of number of likes on each page.

Table No (13)
Number of Users' Comments

| Facebook Page How many comments are by users | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------|-------|
| No | F | 26 | 22 | 20 | 68 |
| | % | 61.9% | 17.2% | 87% | 35.2% |
| 1: 49 | F | 16 | 94 | 3 | 113 |
| | % | 38.1% | 73.4% | 13% | 58.6% |
| 50: 99 | F | - | 8 | - | 8 |
| | % | - | 6.3% | - | 4.1% |
| 100: 200 | F | - | 4 | - | 4 |
| | % | - | 3.1% | - | 2.1% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Findings of comments by users have been made more reliable through measuring the spam comments and excluding them. The spam comments have also been insignificant in comparison to the users' interactive comments' figures. "NCW" page has a total of 4.8% spam comments, "KAFA" has a total of 9.4% spam comments, and finally the "Association of Tunisian Women" had a total of 0% spam comments.

Table No (14)
How Many Spam Comments

| Facebook Page | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| How many spam comments | | | | | |
| No | F | 40 | 116 | 23 | 179 |
| | % | 95.2% | 90.6% | 100% | 92.8% |
| 1 | F | 1 | 5 | - | 6 |
| | % | 2.4% | 3.9% | - | 3.1% |
| 2 | F | 1 | 4 | - | 5 |
| | % | 2.4% | 3.1% | - | 2.6% |
| 3 | F | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| | % | - | 1.6% | - | 1% |
| 11 | F | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | % | - | 0.8% | - | 0.5% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Also to help give a clearer vision of the user's interactivity through commenting, the comments on each page have been categorized to either "comments promoting feminism" or "comments opposing feminism" and "neutral comments" to compare among the three pages on how opinionated the users are while using the page as a venue to promote or dispute the tackled feminist topics. This section's findings support previous findings. Moreover, "KAFA's" users are the most opinionated among the three pages with 78.9% of its posts have users' comments that promote the page's feminist tackled topics and support them and 35.2% of the pages' post have users' comments that dispute, oppose or counter-argue the feminist topics tackled by the page. this suggests that "KAFA" has been the most successful in being a platform for users to voice their opinions and use the page freely as a venue for Cyberfeminism. Similarly, "NCW's"

page has come second to “Kafa” in having opinionated users as 38.1% of the posts have users comments that are supportive and 7.1% of the other posts have comments that oppose the topics tackled by the page. The Tunisian page, however, has emanated 0% of promoting and disputing comments. this has stressed the diminished findings to support that Tunisian users are opinionated and have voiced opinions on the Facebook page.

Table No (15)

The Number of User's Comments that Promote Feminism and the Page's Objective

| Facebook Page Promoting comments | | | The National Council for Women | Kafa (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |
| No | F | | 26 | 27 | 23 | 76 |
| | % | | 61.9% | 21.1% | 100% | 39.4% |
| 1: 49 | F | | 16 | 90 | - | 106 |
| | % | | 38.1% | 70.3% | - | 54.9% |
| 50: 99 | F | | - | 8 | - | 8 |
| | % | | - | 6.3% | - | 4.1% |
| 100: 150 | F | | - | 3 | - | 3 |
| | % | | - | 2.3% | - | 1.6% |
| Total | F | | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (15)

Number of User's Comments that Oppose or Dispute Tackled Topics and the Page's Objective

| Facebook Page comments that oppose or dispute | | | The National Council for Women | Kafa (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---|---|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |
| No | F | | 39 | 83 | 23 | 145 |

| Facebook Page comments that oppose or dispute | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | % | 92.9% | 64.8% | 100% | 75.2% |
| 1: 9 | F | 3 | 37 | - | 40 |
| | % | 7.1% | 28.9% | - | 20.7% |
| 10: 24 | F | - | 6 | - | 6 |
| | % | - | 4.7% | - | 3.1% |
| 25: 50 | F | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| | % | - | 1.6% | - | 1% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (17)

Number of User's Comments that are Neutral

| Facebook Page neutral comments | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| No | F | 39 | 95 | 20 | 154 |
| | % | 92.9% | 74.2% | 87% | 79.8% |
| 1:4 | F | 3 | 27 | 3 | 33 |
| | % | 7.1% | 21.1% | 13% | 17.1% |
| 5: 14 | F | - | 4 | - | 4 |
| | % | - | 3.1% | - | 2.1% |
| 15: 30 | F | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| | % | - | 1.6% | - | 1% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

One final finding that has been used to further help measuring the user's level of interactivity and utilization of Facebook as a Cyberfeminism venue is the count of replies among the users. This indicates that there has been dialoguing among the users and further supports the notion that Facebook has become a platform for voicing opinion, sharing it and discussing it. Findings have again suggested that "KAFA" has dialoguing among users existent in the replies to the comments as 45.3% of the posts have replies to the comments. However, the bigger percentage of posts 54.7% in "KAFA" had no user's replies at all and in the Egyptian and Tunisian Facebook pages inexistent percentage of replies and dialoguing among users was found. These findings suggest that all three Facebook pages still have to work on boosting dialoguing among its users.

Table No (18)
Number of Replies on Comments among Users

| Facebook Page replies on comments by users | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| No | F | 42 | 70 | 23 | 135 |
| | % | 100% | 54.7% | 100% | 69.9% |
| 1: 49 | F | - | 54 | - | 54 |
| | % | - | 42.2% | - | 28% |
| 50: 99 | F | - | 3 | - | 3 |
| | % | - | 2.3% | - | 1.6% |
| 100: 150 | F | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | % | - | 0.8% | - | 0.5% |

| Facebook Page replies on comments by users | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------|-------|
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

RQ3: Which Women’s Rights organizations utilize Facebook as a form of activism most effectively?

This final research question is to measure and focus mainly, not on the user’s end, but rather on the Facebook administrators’ side. The findings of this question have mainly focused on measuring the page’s administrators’ efforts to facilitate making Facebook page a more user friendly and interactive platform for users to easily utilize this platform and become encouraged and have their interactivity enhanced in a sustainable manner. This has been measured through the percentage of posts by the administrator that has been disseminated to the audience and contained any special features such as: “photos”, “videos”, “events”, “links”, “mentions or tags”, “hashtags”, and finally “GIFs”.

The prior special features, that have previously been explained in the literature, that when used by the pages’ administrators, it becomes more vivid and helps to enhance the user’s tendency to interact or trigger interaction. The second fragment of findings for this research question, has investigated the number of “comments” and “replies” and “special features” used by administrators to measure if they are not only triggering interactivity but are also trying to sustain it with the users.

Findings of special features in posts have showed that “KAFA’s” administrators have used almost all special features the most except for “links” and “events” that have been used the most by the Egyptian page “NCWE” and then comes “KAFA”. The Tunisian page “Association of Tunisian Women” has obtained the second ranking in using all special features in its posts except for “links” and “events” where it was the least among

the three Facebook pages to use them. The Egyptian “NCWE” Facebook page has used all special features the least in comparison to the other two pages. However, pioneered by using “links” and “events” the most. Accordingly, “KAFA’s” figures indicate that it is the page that demonstrated the highest findings for factors triggering the user’s interactivity explaining why the users have the highest level of interactivity in the previous research question. Pertaining to the Tunisian page the administrators exert more effort than the Egyptian page’s administrators to trigger interactivity. Yet the level of users’ interactivity in the Egyptian page surpassed the Tunisian users’. This, also, suggests that there is a possibility for the Egyptian page’s users’ interactivity to surpass the Lebanese page if more indicators and special features have been used to boost and enhance interactivity.

The total percentage of posts for all three pages together of using the special features is as follows in a descending order: “links” existed in 63.5% of the posts showing it is the most utilized feature, “photos” are in 60.7% of the posts, “hashtags” come third as it is found in 55.6% of the posts, “videos” and “events” are both present in 16.3% of the posts, “mentions or tags” are only in 6.7% of the posts and finally “GIFs” are used only in 0.6% of the posts. This reveals that “Links”, “Photos” and “Hashtags” are the most used special features by administrators during 2015.

Table No (19)
Special Features by Administrators in Posts

| Facebook Page post contains any special features | | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |
| Yes | F | | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | | 73.8% | 98.4% | 91.3% | 92.2% |
| No | F | | 11 | 2 | 2 | 15 |
| | % | | 26.2% | 1.6% | 8.7% | 7.8% |
| Total | F | | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (20)
Photo(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contains photo(s) | | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | | | | | | |
| Yes | F | | 10 | 86 | 12 | 108 |
| | % | | 32.3% | 68.3% | 57.1% | 60.7% |
| No | F | | 21 | 40 | 9 | 70 |
| | % | | 67.7% | 31.7% | 42.9% | 39.3% |
| Total | F | | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (21)

Video(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contains video(s) | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | - | 25 | 4 | 29 |
| | % | - | 19.8% | 19% | 16.3% |
| No | F | 31 | 101 | 17 | 149 |
| | % | 100% | 80.2% | 81% | 83.7% |
| Total | F | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (22)

Event(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contains event(s) | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 11 | 17 | 1 | 29 |
| | % | 35.5% | 13.5% | 4.8% | 16.3% |
| No | F | 20 | 109 | 20 | 149 |
| | % | 64.5% | 86.5% | 95.2% | 83.7% |
| Total | F | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (23)

Link(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contains link(s) | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 23 | 80 | 10 | 113 |
| | % | 74.2% | 63.5% | 47.6% | 63.5% |
| No | F | 8 | 46 | 11 | 65 |
| | % | 25.8% | 36.5% | 52.4% | 36.5% |
| Total | F | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (24)

Mention(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contains mention(s) | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | - | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| | % | - | 8.7% | 4.8% | 6.7% |
| No | F | 31 | 115 | 20 | 166 |
| | % | 100% | 91.3% | 95.2% | 93.3% |
| Total | F | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (25)
Hashtag(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contains hashtag(s) | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | 1 | 97 | 1 | 99 |
| | % | 3.2% | 77% | 4.8% | 55.6% |
| No | F | 30 | 29 | 20 | 79 |
| | % | 96.8% | 23% | 95.2% | 44.4% |
| Total | F | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table No (26)
GIF(s) Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page post contain GIF(s) | | The National Council for Women | KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Yes | F | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | % | - | .8% | - | 0.6% |
| No | F | 31 | 125 | 21 | 177 |
| | % | 100% | 99.2% | 100% | 99.4% |
| Total | F | 31 | 126 | 21 | 178 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

As for the second fragment of findings for this research question, the number of comments and replies by the pages' administrators have been measured to indicate and compare which pages' administrators exert effort to sustain the interactivity with users and not merely to trigger it.

The reported results emanated from a number of comments by administrators have been surprising since 100% of the posts in the Egyptian and Tunisian pages have comments by administrators while “Kafa” that pioneered all previous findings come second to them and has only 93% of its posts with comments by administrators.

Table No (27)

Number of Comments Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page comments by the admin | | The National Council for Women | Kafa (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 0 | F | - | 9 | - | 9 |
| | % | - | 7.0% | - | 4.7% |
| 1 | F | 42 | 119 | 23 | 184 |
| | % | 100% | 93.0% | 100% | 95.3% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

However, the number of replies on comments by the administrators have contradicted the above finding. The Lebanese page has the highest number of replies by administrators (25.8% of the posts has replies by the administrators). The Egyptian page has only 2.4% of its posts with administrator’s replies and finally, the Tunisian page has no replies by the administrators at all. The replies’ outcome, however, may be considered insignificant in comparison to the comments’ findings since there has been a total of 95.3% of posts with comments in all three pages and only 17.6% of the posts in all three pages has replies by the administrators.

Table No (28)
Number of Replies Posted by the Administrators

| Facebook Page replies are posted by the admin | | The National Council for Women | KAFSA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation | Femmes Tunisiennes | Total |
|---|---|--|---|-----------------------|-------|
| 0 | F | 41 | 95 | 23 | 159 |
| | % | 97.6% | 74.2% | 100% | 82.4% |
| 1 | F | 1 | 16 | - | 17 |
| | % | 2.4% | 12.5% | - | 8.8% |
| 2 | F | - | 11 | - | 11 |
| | % | - | 8.6% | - | 5.7% |
| 3 | F | - | 3 | - | 3 |
| | % | - | 2.3% | - | 1.6% |
| 4 | F | - | 1 | - | 1 |
| | % | - | 0.8% | - | 0.5% |
| 6 | F | - | 2 | - | 2 |
| | % | - | 1.6% | - | 1% |
| Total | F | 42 | 128 | 23 | 193 |
| | % | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

To further measure the magnitude of administrators' comments and replies to sustain interactivity, special features used by the administrators have also been measured. "KAFSA" the Lebanese page may have had the least number of comments by administrators in comparison to the Egyptian and Tunisian page but the administrators of the Lebanese page use special features the most in their comments (30% of the page's posts contained special features in admins' comments and replies). The Tunisian and Egyptian pages have, however, used 0% of the special features in the administrators' comments and replies.

VI.3 Interviews' Analysis and Discussion

This study depends on the triangulation methodology and 12 in-depth interviews have been conducted, in addition to the content analysis to get a deeper insight on how university professors and researchers in the realm of gender studies, activists, members and employees of women's rights organizations perceive Cyberfeminism on women's rights organizations' Facebook pages. Hence, the following are the findings obtained from the interviewees as an attempt to get a clearer vision on where SNSs stand in the realm of Arab women's empowerment and specifically in Egypt. Moreover, other aspects have been inspected as an attempt to support or refute the content analysis's findings.

Prominence of SNSs' Role to Empower Arab Women:

According to the literature review, SNSs and specially Facebook are ripe for studying since "according to the World Economic Forum (2015) in Northwestern University in Qatar (2015), the number of the internet users has almost doubled during the past five years. MENA has the fastest growing online market globally. The number of Arabic-speaking internet users has doubled since the year 2010 compared to other languages' growth rate." Also precisely talking about Facebook it is considered among the strongest platforms for networking as mentioned before, where 25 billion content pieces are shared every month (McClure, 2010). Since mobile phones will soon enough be the main communicating tool through internet, it is inevitable not to ask the interviewees if they think SNSs can fruitfully empower women and how. An interviewee has clarified that SNSs have a lot of potential to empower women especially economically since Facebook has facilitated small businesses for women and provided them with a source of income

(Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December, 2017). This is due to the fact that Facebook has now offered economic engagement and “GIG Economy is the next big thing” (Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December, 2017). Other interviewees have agreed that Facebook has become a vital platform for women to voice their opinion (Social media specialist at NCWE, Personal Communication, December 4, 2017), (Advocacy coordinator at the center for Egyptian women’s legal assistance (CEWLA), personal communication, December 7, 2017), (Employee at National Council for childhood and Motherhood, personal communication, December 5, 2017) ,(Activist, blogger and journalist, personal communication, March 19, 2018). Another interviewee has added that women also have become more politically involved through SNSs especially after the Egyptian revolution (Gender studies master’s holder from the university of LEEDS, personal communication, December 12, 2017) . This supports the study’s justification for choosing countries that experienced revolution and political turbulence and for the study period that was post the revolutions and political turbulences.

Other interviewees have another perspective on the importance of SNSs’ role in empowering women. An interviewee has argued that only a certain class of women in Egypt are being empowered since they have the affordability of technology and that empowerment comes ascendingly when they influence the less fortunate (University professor and employee in the media sector of foreign affairs department in NCWE, personal communication, February 6, 2018). Another interviewee has stated that women on the SNSs are still being hindered since they face cyberbullying. It that may be even “more vitriol since the predator is masked behind the screen” and that the real main role

of SNSs would be documentation and archiving (Gender studies master's holder and employee at the NGO "Kheir W Baraka", personal communication, December 20, 2017). Another interviewee has commented: "I strongly believed in SNS as an empowering tool due to its reachability." (External relations specialist at the International Cooperation Department in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017). Finally, a single interviewee has a moderate perspective about the role of SNSs stating that SNSs has been partially fruitful since a large segment of the Egyptian women still do not have an internet access (Board member in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

Special Features' Effectiveness:

Since special features are used as a measurement tool in the content analysis to trace the level of interactivity and the degree to which the Facebook pages' administrators are trying to trigger and sustain the user's interactivity. It is reasonable enough to ask the interviewees which special feature they believed is the most effective.

Numerous interviewees believe that videos and photos are the most effective. An interviewee has highlighted that videos and photos are most efficient especially if the video has a catchy message and means of communication (University professor and employee in the media sector of Foreign Affairs Department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018). Another interviewee agree adding that photos and videos are more effective if they have celebrities in them (External relations specialist at the International Cooperation Department in NCW, personal communication, December 4). An interviewee believes that visual special features are the most impactful (Advocacy coordinator at the center for Egyptian women's legal assistance CEWLA, personal communication, December 7, 2017).

Another group of interviewees has agreed that hashtags are the most impactful. Two interviewees clarify that hashtags are the most impactful since Egyptian women can tag along with the international hashtags that easily go viral like “#MeToo” (Employee at the National Council for childhood and Motherhood, personal communication, December 5, 2017) (Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December, 2017).

Another interviewee builds up on that and also agrees that hashtags are powerful due to how easy it is for them to go viral because they are “short and catchy” like #تاءمربوطة that managed to turn into a complete campaign (Board member in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

Other interviewees think all special features are equally important since each feature is more effective to various groups of women. Nevertheless, they have affirmed that visual features are the most effective since we live in a visual era (Activist, blogger and journalist, personal communication, March 19, 2018) (Social media specialist at NCW, Personal Communication, December 4, 2017). However, one final interviewee states that special features are not significant and other factors such as sharing real life experiences are the most effective factor of all (Gender studies master’s holder and employee at the NGO “Kheir W Baraka”, personal communication, December 20, 2017).

To conclude, most interviewees agree that visual special features such as photos, links, videos and the hashtags were the most effective tool used by Facebook page administrators which explains why the page administrators of all three Facebook pages in the content analysis used links, photo(s) and hashtags in 63.5%, 60.7%, 55.6%, respectively. This is the highest percentage of special features used across the three pages.

Where Egyptian Women's Organizations' Stand Virtually

Since the study focuses on comparing where Cyberfeminism stands in Egypt and specifically on Facebook in comparison to Lebanon and Tunisia and since the interviewees are all Egyptian and come from the pool of gender studies realm that focus on Egypt and Egyptian Women's Organizations' members or employees, it ought to examine their standpoint on the Egyptian Women's Organization's utility to the Facebook as a platform for Cyberfeminism and empowering women optimally. A few interviewees supported the notion that Egyptian Women's Organizations are in fact utilizing their Facebook pages optimally to empower Egyptian women. "NCW has been using Facebook extensively lately" as stated by one of the interviewees (Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December 4, 2017). "I feel optimistic about the Egyptian Organization's activity on Facebook it is catching up with international organizations like UN women." (External relations specialist at the international cooperation department in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017). Only a single interviewee is on the fence when it has come to where the Egyptian virtual activity stands. "Some organizations use Facebook optimally to empower women and others do not. Some organizations need to work on the content and use more interactive tools to help women and girls tag along." (Advocacy coordinator at the Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance CEWLA, personal communication, December 7, 2017).

The majority of interviewees, however, agree that all Egyptian organizations still have a long way to go in order to have their SNSs categorized as sites that efficiently and optimally utilize their platforms for Cyber feminism and empowering Egyptian women.

“Organizations need to start conveying realistic stories instead of focusing on spreading awareness only. They also need to break free from the traditional norms and traditions.” (Activist, blogger and journalist, personal communication, March 19, 2018). “I believe new older age groups are being introduced to Facebook and their orientation of using Facebook is limited. Hence, interactive and user friendly tools such as live streaming of positive stories may be used by organizations”, stated one of the interviewees (University professor and employee in the media sector of foreign affairs department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018). Another interviewee agrees with the prior ones and indicated: “Organizations in Egypt still have a long way to go, NCW for example has a lack of topics on its Facebook page and they mainly focus on success stories only and overlook the realistic hardships of women in Egypt that may need attention and solutions.” (Employee at National Council for childhood and Motherhood, personal communication, December 5, 2017). Affirming the prior statement, another interviewee highlighted the following “Egyptian Organizations are far from utilizing Facebook optimally to empower Egyptian women since the climate is not ripe for mobilizing or campaigning outside the confines of the state approved messages.” (Gender studies master’s holder and employee at the NGO “Kheir W Baraka”, personal communication, December 20, 2017). “More research is needed by the Egyptian organizations and more information access should be facilitated on Facebook through providing links to reports and to other information publically on SNSs.” Another interviewee agree on the said comment (Board member in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

The majority of interviewees have supported the notion that Egyptian Women's Organizations need to optimize utilizing Facebook as a tool for empowering women which goes along with the content analysis's outcome that Egypt's administrators compared to Tunisia and Lebanon had the lowest percentage of posts using the majority of special features which are used as a measuring tool to measure the effort exerted by the administrators to trigger and sustain interactivity on the page. Hence, according to the content analysis's and the interview's findings, Egyptian Organizations need to use more features, techniques and enrich the content in order to provide an efficiently empowering platform for Egyptian women.

SNSs Versus Traditional Media Channels

It is vital to understand how the interviewees perceive SNSs as a channel for women's empowerment in Egypt in comparison to other media Channels. This is to obtain a more comprehensive insight on SNSs vitality and especially in Egypt without depending merely on statistical numbers mentioned in the literature review. The 12 interviewees have been divided into half when asked about their insight on where SNSs stand in comparison to other media channels. 5 interviewees have not been completely pro the notion that SNSs are the ultimate platform and channel for empowering Egyptian women. "Television and radio still conquer the media landscape in Egypt due to the fact that they are attractive, ubiquitous, and easy to access" (University professor and employee in the media sector of foreign affairs department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018). "All channels are equally important, however, SNSs have an advantage when it comes to freedom of speech" (Activist, blogger and journalist, personal communication, March 19, 2018). "SNSs might be of great efficiency when it comes to empowering

women, however, television remains the most efficient empowering channel especially for women of older age groups.” (Employee at National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, personal communication, December 5, 2017). “It would be impossible to compare the media channels; each channel has a stronger impact on a specific distinct group of audience.” (Gender studies master’s holder from the University of LEEDS, personal communication, December 12, 2017). The said has been statements of the interviewees who supported the fact that SNSs are not the ultimate media channel to empower Egyptian women.

Another group of 5 interviewees has unanimously agreed that SNSs are the unsurpassed media channel to empower women. “I believe SNSs are the best chance for women to voice their opinions freely and become empowered. They can post on their own walls, blog or even start their podcast.” (Gender studies, master’s holder and employee at the NGO “Kheir W Baraka”, personal communication, December 20, 2017). “SNSs retain the greatest unexplored potential and are on the rise.” (Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December 4, 2017). “SNSs are the most powerful tool used to power and fuel any campaign which also makes it the most influential and empowering channel for women” (Advocacy Coordinator at the Center for Egyptian Women’s Legal Assistance CEWLA, personal communication, December 7, 2017).

It is apparent that all interviewees including the ones who have specific concerns about the efficiency of SNSs, unanimously believed in their potential as a platform for empowerment and voicing opinion of women.

Egyptian Women Organization’s Content on Facebook

Interviewees are also asked if they think the current content being disseminated on Facebook pages of Egyptian women's organizations is impacted by global feminism and agenda setting; hence, they have tackled similar topics or not to know if their outlook may support the content analysis's findings. The majority of interviewees have in fact supported the content analysis's outcome which suggested that both agenda setting and global feminism have shaped and influenced the topics tackled in the organization's Facebook pages. "Topics tackled by the organizations in Facebook belong to a narrow spectrum of topics. Organizations have to try and breakthrough the boundaries of the agendas set and dig deeper to tackle deeper issues. (Employee at the National Council for childhood and Motherhood, personal communication, December 5, 2017). "All topics tackled usually focus on violence or harassment only. Other issues that are worthy of attention need to have light shed on it like "marital rape", "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender" (LGBT), and emotional violence that has never been mentioned on the Egyptian Facebook pages." (Gender studies, master's holder from the university of LEEDS, personal communication, December 12, 2017). "Arab women's rights organizations are now only tackling similar issues to that of the UN women's issues and the 2030's agenda issues." (Board member in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

Only two of the interviewees have a different outlook on that issue. "Egyptian SNSs still have a long way to go and a larger amount of content to create in order to decide if topics are unified or not." (Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December 4, 2017). A final interviewee, unlike all others, has stated the following; "Content on Egyptian organization's SNSs is variant and diverse and only need

consistency.” (University professor and employee in the media sector of foreign affairs department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018).

Challenges Facing Cyberfeminism on SNSs in the Egyptian Women’s Organizations

The final aspect that has been investigated with the interviewees is the challenges and obstacles facing the Egyptian women’s organization and hinders their utilization of SNSs as a platform for Cyberfeminism. There has been an unanimous response that obstacles existed and needed combating. “Illiteracy, poverty, and not giving younger generations a proper chance to utilize the platform and make it more dynamic” (University professor and employee in the media sector of Foreign Affairs Department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018). “Cyberbullying, Electronic gatekeeping, and illiteracy are major hindrances facing organization’s SNSs.” (Activist, blogger and journalist, personal communication, March 19, 2018). “Sustaining funds for any project and the negative social norms and customs have stalled the SNSs potential benefits” (External relations specialist at the International Cooperation Department in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017). “Lack of coordination and alignment, inefficient internal communication in organizations and restricted access of users to information are critical challenges facing SNSs operationally in Egypt.” (Board member in NCWE, personal communication, December 4, 2017).” Lack of designers, lack of social media specialists with a background of working in the field of women’s rights, and finally the lack of strategy and financial resources are everlasting challenges facing Cyberfeminism on SNSs in Egypt.” (Advocacy coordinator at the center for Egyptian women’s legal assistance CEWLA, personal communication, December 7, 2017). One final interviewee has concluded concluded the obstacles that hindered Cyberfeminism by

stating the following: “The greatest challenges for having a genuine Cyberfeminism platform on the organizations’ SNSs would be the government’s mobilization to such platforms.” (Employee at National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, personal communication, December 5, 2017).

Social Networking Sites in Tunisia and Lebanon

A Lebanese life coach and activist in a political party named “Tayar Al Mostabal” has stated the following in a personal interview on April 16, 2018. “I think the social media has changed the communication dynamic for women in Lebanon and has played a vital role in empowering them through voicing their opinions freely in diverse realms including politics, economics and education,” “Women’s’ organizations have utilized SNSs to empower women but I still think the civil society has a bigger role that is more efficient. There are also challenges that may face the women organizations’ utilization for SNSs such as the lack of funds that organizations may be receiving, the traditional unprogressive norms and the male-dominant society’s mindset.”

Also an Egyptian member of the elected supreme council and member of the organization and chief officer of international relations in the Free Egyptians Party and activist has stated the following when asked about the SNSs role in Tunisia in a personal interview on April 18, 2018 18/4/2018, “SNSs have a main role in empowering women in Tunisia given that its ubiquitous, cost-free, and have provided a platform to openly discuss Tunisian women’s issues, especially on the political and economic level. Tunisian population is literate to a great extent. Hence, SNSs have been an efficient platform for the Tunisian women and men to call for gender equity. The organizations have globally utilized the cost-free platform to diffuse their notions including Tunisian organizations.

However, Tunisian organizations still have a long way to go for full utilization. In Tunisia, challenges are less than others since the internet penetration and access to Facebook is growing, but language may still be a barrier since they use many languages that not all of them may be aware of.”

VI.4 Conclusion

Overall, three core findings could be abstracted from the research. First, that global feminism does apply to all three Facebook pages in the three countries. In other words, the most tackled topics and the least tackled topics across all three Facebook pages belong to the same category of topics. This means that all three pages have been influenced by the same globalization wave that influenced the women’s issues on their Facebook pages. Furthermore, the same content analysis results that emanated from the investigation of topics tackled and the measurement of their distribution on these pages have supported that the agenda setting theory applies to all three pages and has been the most intense in the Tunisian Facebook page. This is due to the fact that the distribution of topics tackled has not been even and all pages’ posts have concentrated on tackling two topic categories at the most. As mentioned in the literature review, the agenda setting is directly related to the public agenda and public opinion, directing and shaping the salience of topics and issues that can empower women. It has been essential to measure the weight of each topic tackled on each page and notice if content creators on Facebook pages of women’s rights organizations pages are amplifying and focusing on certain topics to set an agenda and direct the audiences’ attention towards certain issues or not. According to the findings, all three Facebook pages have in fact amplified only certain topics and completely overlooked other topics. This according to Walter Lippman’s

argument mentioned in the Literature review is a perfect example of how the salience of certain topics in people's mind can differ from its actual salience in real life because of the media effect (Tan & Weaver, 2009).

The second finding, shed light on the user's activity on all three Facebook pages and has compared the level of interactivity which consequently reflected the level of user's utilization of the platform as an avenue for Cyberfeminism. All three pages have shown that the users are interactive and have great tendency to practicing, sharing and expressing feminism on Facebook. However, the Lebanese page has demonstrated the highest level of users' interactivity on the Facebook page and the users have been the most opinionated in their comments. Egypt has come second even though according to the literature review Egypt represents the largest Facebook base of 3.4 million users in the MENA region and that twitter has been the second main communicating platform in Egypt (Mansour, 2015). Finally, the Tunisian page which has user's activity stem from its page but no comments whatsoever reflected solid pro or against feminism opinions. This has supported the notion that there are diminished findings to support that the Tunisian users are opinionated and have voiced opinions on the Facebook page. There has been one more final observation worth mentioning and might be intriguing for further future research, that is there has been no dialoguing or comments among the users to each other at all in the Egyptian and the Tunisian Facebook page and existed mildly in the Lebanese page.

The Third and final finding has revealed that the Lebanese page pioneered the results that supported the fact that its page's administrators exerted the greatest effort to encourage and sustain the user to fruitfully exploit their Facebook page as a platform for

Cyberfeminism. The Tunisian page has come second to the Lebanese and finally the Egyptian page. This finding explains why the Lebanese page's users have the highest level of interactivity. It, also, suggests that the Egyptian users have a chance of surpassing the Lebanese level of interactivity if administrators exert more effort to encourage and sustain the user's fruitful exploitation of the Facebook page to be utilized as a platform for Cyberfeminism.

The Interviews conducted have added insight to the results, focusing exceptionally on the Egyptian Cyberfeminism and its potential on SNSs. The majority of interviews have supported the prominence of Egyptian SNSs and its noticeable unexplored potential to empower Egyptian women. The interviewees have advocated the notion that Egyptian Women's Rights Organizations still have a long way to go in order to optimally utilize SNSs and especially Facebook to empower Egyptian women. This may be due to the narrow spectrum of topics tackled on the Egyptian SNSs to empower women as most interviewees suggested, or due to the diverse challenges in the Egyptian environment facing women's rights organizations and hindering their utilization of SNSs to empower women.

Chapter VII

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

VII.1 Recommendations

Since there is a noticeably scarce number of Cyberfeminism Studies in Egypt and in the MENA Region, further studies should be conducted to further explore this very ripe region for studying this phenomenon.

This study has used content analysis as its core research methodology to provide descriptive results of the existence of Cyberfeminism on the three Arab countries' (Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia) Facebook pages and compare the existence. The study aims at being a launching point for future build-up studies to be conducted and to investigate Cyberfeminism deeply. The present study has investigated Facebook only, future studies should target examining other dynamic SNSs in the Arab world such as Twitter and Instagram that has recently gained a noticeable ascending number of users. For future studies, more recent years should be examined and compared with the ascending or descending level of Cyberfeminism and its magnitude. This research covered the year 2015 since it witnessed the highest virtual activity due to the political turbulence and revolutions that have taken place in the three countries and have been a common factor among the three countries.

This study has interviewed activists, members and employees of Egyptian organizations, and professors form gender studies since they were individuals of expertise and may have insight on the SNSs' Cyberfeminism performance. However, future studies may interview and focus on a different group of Interviewees such as the feminists and users

of the organizations' pages to educate others about the Cyberfeminism activity in the Arab region to test the effect of such page's activities on them.

VII.2 Limitations

This study has faced a number of limitations. The first limitation has been the difficulty of compiling a comprehensive list of Women's Rights Organizations in the MENA region since most organizations are not officially registered in the government, in ministries such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity. Hence, the only method to compile the list has been through obtaining the list of contacted women's organizations in the MENA region from women's organizations in Egypt and not all organizations were cooperative. In fact, many organizations were rather resistant to provide any information. Another limitation was that the in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals of expertise from Egypt only which may be considered prejudiced. Interviews should have been conducted with more individuals from Lebanon and Tunisia as well. This was not achieved due to the limited time and resources that could have facilitated access to the interviewees in different geographical areas if available.

Another challenge that faced the content analysis process has been the periodicity of posts since systematic random sampling has been used to carry out the sampling. Some posts also required the coders to go back in order to comprehend the purpose of the post because numerous posts have been built up on previous ones that have not been included in the sample. Another limitation is getting a translator in order to translate the French posts in the Tunisian page. One final limitation that could have provided a clearer insight on the user's activity if it did exist, was that in 2015 the study period of the research had

features that were not yet applied to Facebook, such as: the specific time of post and the reaction button instead of the like button only.

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APPENDIX

Appendix (A): Investigated Facebook Pages:

Egyptian “National Council For Women in Egypt (NCWE)” – Facebook Page:

The National Council for Women
Amira Home

ncwegyptpage ncwegypt ncwegypt Tel:23490060 (60) Fax:23490066

المجلس القومي للمرأة
2017
عام المرأة المصرية
YEAR OF THE EGYPTIAN WOMAN
#سر_قوتك

The National Council for Women
(المجلس القومي للمرأة)
@ncwegyptpage

Home About Photos Videos Posts Poll Notes Events

Liked Following Share ... Send Message

Photos

Community group in Cairo, Egypt
Open now

Community See all

Invite your friends to like this Page
847,022 people like this
850,236 people follow this

Lebanese “KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation” Page:

KAFA
ENOUGH VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION
كفى عنف واستغلال

KAFA (enough)
Violence &
Exploitation
@kafa.lb

Home About Events Photos Videos Community Reviews Posts Youtube

Liked Following Saved ... Contact Us Send Message

Status Photo/Video

Write something on this Page...

Upcoming Events

The AUB Secular Club, in collaboration with KAFA,

Charity in Beirut, Lebanon
4.6 ★★★★★

Community See all

Invite your friends to like this Page
130,102 people like this
128,909 people follow this
Mariam Saleh and 3 other friends like this

Tunisian “Association of Tunisian Women” Facebook Page:

جمعية نساء تونسيات
@femmes.tunisiennes

Home
About
Photos
Videos
Events
Notes
Contact
Posts
Community
Create a Page

Liked Following Share ...

Send Message

Status
Write something on this Page...

Photos

Non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Tunis, Tunisia

Community See all

Invite your friends to like this Page

10,307 people like this

10,244 people follow this

Appendix (B): English Interview Questions

Question 1:

Do you think Social networking sites have a fruitful role in empowering Egyptian, Lebanese, and Tunisian women? How?

Question 2:

What are the most efficient special features (videos, hashtags, pictures, tags, etc....) that Women's Rights Organizations can use on Facebook to empower women?

Question 3:

Do you think Egyptian, Lebanese, and Tunisian Women's Rights Organizations utilize Facebook optimally to empower women? If not, may you provide suggestions to optimize the utilization of the respective Facebook accounts?

Question 4:

Where do Social Networking Sites stand in comparison to other media channels regarding empowering women?

Question 5:

Do you think the content of Facebook posts disseminated by Women's Rights Organizations target similar or unified purposes?

Question 6:

What are the most common challenges that Egyptian, Lebanese and Tunisian Women's Rights Organizations might face to utilize social networking sites?

Appendix (C): Arabic Interview Questions

سؤال ١:

هل تعتقد ان مواقع الإتصال الإجتماعي لديها دور في تمكين المرأة؟ كيف؟

سؤال ٢:

ما هي الخصائص المميزة (مثل الفيديوهات – الصور – الهاش تاج – التاجز - ...إلخ) التي يمكن لمنظمات حقوق المرأة استخدامها على الفيسبوك لتمكين المرأة؟

سؤال ٣:

فى رأيك، هل تستخدم منظمات حقوق المرأة المصرية و اللبنايه و التونيسييه الفيسبوك بشكل فعال لتمكين المرأة؟ فى حالة الإجابة بلا، ما هى مقترحاتك لاستخدام الفيسبوك بالشكل الأمثل و لتفعيل تمكين المرأة؟

سؤال ٤:

كيف تقارن مواقع التواصل الإجتماعي بوسائل الإعلام الأخرى في مجال تمكين المرأة؟

سؤال ٥:

هل تعتقد أن محتوى صفحات الفيسبوك التي تنشرها منظمات حقوق المرأة يناقش قضايا متشابهة أو موحدة؟

سؤال ٦:

ما هي التحديات التي قد تواجه منظمات حقوق المرأة فى مصر و لبنان و تونس لاستخدام مواقع التواصل الإجتماعى لتمكين المرأة؟

Appendix (D): Code Book

Code Book

Questions/Responses

Section 1 of 4

Comparative Study on Cyberfeminism of the Arab Women's Organizations (Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon)

Form description

1- Coder ID

Choose: 1- Coder (1) / 2- Coder (2)

1

2

2- Name of Facebook Page

Choose: 1-The National Council for Women / 2-KAFA (enough) Violence and Exploitation/ 3-Femmes Tunisiennes

1

2

3

3- Post ID

Short answer text

4- Date of Post * Month, day, year

After section 1

Continue to next section

Section 2 of 4

Purpose of the Post

This section explains which topics does each post tackle.

1- Economic Empowerment * Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

2- Political Empowerment

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

3- Health Awareness

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

4- Socio-economic Empowerment

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

5- Combating Violence

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

6- Educational Empowerment

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

7- Other * Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No (If yes, please mention the topic/purpose of the post in the following question)

1

0

8- Other purposes of the post

Short answer text

Section 3 of 4

Interactivity of Users

This section explains to what extent do users use the Facebook pages as a venue for Cyberfeminism

1- How many likes by the users are there on the post?

Short answer text

2- How many shares by the users are there on the post?

Short answer text

3- Are there comments on the post

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

4- How many spam comments?

Short answer text

5- How many comments are there by the users?

Short answer text

6- How many user's comments promote feminism and the page's objective? Short answer text

7- How many user's comments oppose or dispute feminism and the page's objective?

Short answer text

8- How many user's comments are neutral?

Short answer text

9- How many replies on comments are there by users?

Short answer text

Section 4 of 4

Women's Rights Organizations' Fruitful Exploitation of Facebook

This section explains to what extent do the page admins encourage and boost users to utilize Facebook usefully to promote Cyberfeminism.

1- Does the post contain any special features posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No (If "No", skip to question 9)

1

0

2- Does the post contain photo(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

3- Does the post contain video(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

4- Does the post contain event(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

5- Does the post contain link(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

6- Does the post contain mention(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

7- Does the post contain hashtag(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

8- Does the post contain GIF(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

9- How many comments are posted by the admin?

Short answer text

10- How many replies are posted by the admin?

Short answer text

11- Does the comment or reply contain any special features posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

12- Does the comment or reply contain a photo(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

13- Does the comment or reply contain a video(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

14- Does the comment or reply contain event(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

15- Does the comment or reply contain link(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

16- Does the comment or reply contain mention(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

17-Does the comment or reply contain hashtag(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

18- Does the comment or reply contain GIF(s) posted by the admin?

Choose: 1-Yes/ 0- No

1

0

Appendix (E): “Operational Definitions”

Feminism: It is the greater and broader goal of altering and challenging “gender relations” that undermine women in comparison to men (Ferree, & Tripp, 2006).

Cyberfeminism: Cyberfeminism includes “cyberactivism” which refers to the online feminist civic engagement as well as the historical feminism which evolved and has become more adequate to meet the transformed conditions of the Information Age (Eudey, 2012).

Global Feminism: Is the examination of the impact and effect of the globalization wave on women’s issues (Cullen, 2013).

Post: Facebook Wall Post is a facility offered by Facebook for corporates or organizations with fan pages to exercise their engagement with and respond to their users and fans (McCorkindale, 2010). A Facebook post may contain different media types such as a text, photo, video, link or other content which facilitates more online engagement and gives it media richness or more “vividness of online content” encouraging users to interact by liking, sharing or commenting (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015). A post may be an entertainment post, informational post, remuneration post containing special offers to attract users. It may also be a social posts that is intended to elicit interaction with users through questions or statements that grant an opportunity for further responds on the post (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

Like: “like” is a blue button that was introduced to Facebook in 2009. It has become a part of the Facebook users’ daily routine to express engagement. There are six different types: emotional liking, socially responsible liking, social performative liking, informational liking, routine liking, and low-cost liking. Most users believe that such likes help in promoting causes and for that it may be considered a form of humanitarian support and civic engagement (Brandtzaeg & Haugstveit, 2014).

Comment: Is considered a form of online engagement exercised by the users to express their opinion or voice their complaints. The more the number of comments on a post, the stronger the indication of the post’s impact or success is, since it is an indication that users invested time to interact with the post and share their opinion (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015). A comment may be by the page’s admin or the organization controlling the fan page in order to respond to and sustain conversations with users. The organization will be considered unresponsive from the user’s standpoint in case of not responding to a user’s complaint. (McCorkindale, 2010).

Hashtag: is commonly used in social networking sites to indicate a shared context of topics or events. It may indicate the spread or the popularity of the idea using the following sign “ # ” prior to the topic (Ma, Sun, & Cong, 2012).

Mention: Tagging or mentioning other users through social networking sites in content disseminated to a large number of audience started in late 2006 on Twitter and in 2009 on Facebook. It is the action where users of SNSs adopt the “at” sign “@” followed by a

particular username as a representation of that user's profile as a method to refer public posts to specific users (Savage, Monroy-Hernandez, Singer, & Hollerer, 2013).

Video: Is an interactive multimedia usually comes in "Flash Video" format since it has interactive capabilities, is smaller in size and easy to share and use on the web (Godwin-Jones, 2007). A video is added to a post usually to boost interaction and help make the post content more vivid (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

Photo: Is a visual imagery employed as a form of a symbolic creation for Facebook users' world or identity or a visual imagery of the message a Facebook admin may want to convey (Mendelson , & Papacharissi, 2010). The photos may be shared, liked, labelled or tagged and are considered a "performative element" provided by Facebook to facilitate connectivity, communication, presentation of self or voicing opinions (Mendelson , & Papacharissi, 2010).

Event: Is a post created by the page admin or the organization moderating its fan page to promote an event, provide information about it and have the chance to contact the members who marked themselves as attending which gives an opportunity to create relationships (Evans, 2010).

GIF: "Graphic Interchange Format" is a digital file format that is considered a key tool for communication in digital cultures. It was introduced to the web and started to become ubiquitous during the late 1990s (Miltner, & Highfield, 2017). Numerous levels of

meanings may be contained in a single GIF due to their symbolic complexity of having infinite “looping repetition” making it an ideal digital communication tool that may be posted, shared or liked on Facebook (Miltner, & Highfield, 2017).

Link: A link comes from a referral system that contains a classified arrangement for classifying and categorizing web pages that the system reclaims from the World Wide Web. Each link is assigned to a Web page that is in a specific classification. Links are also called “URL’s” (Goodman, 1999). Links may be included in Facebook posts and facilitate online engagement. They, also, give the post more online vividness since they provide additional information (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

Economic Empowerment: For women, economic empowerment may be resembled in perceiving the economic resources as a source of supremacy and power. Hence, it advocates methods that may influence the allocation of assets in the family, society or community as a whole with the aim of improving women’s ability to create wealth and improve her social status (Kapitsa, 2008). Economic empowerment may, also, be perceived as the significance of women’s access to assets and economic resources rather than their allocation only (Kapitsa, 2008). Economic resources may be in the form of income which facilitates the access of other societal resources like: decent work, high quality education that allows the formation of public opinion later on (Kapitsa, 2008). Mona Omar has indicated that economic empowerment is simply getting the means to earn money in order to be independent and make a living (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Political Empowerment: Dr. Manal Maher El Gamiel, Parliament Member, has stated that political empowerment may be defined as helping or enabling women to be capable of playing a meaningful role in the political realm and to own the capacity and tools that may efficiently equip them to play that role (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Socio-economic Empowerment: Dr. Marianne Azer has indicated that socio-economic empowerment may be simply explained in working on changing the existing stereotype of women and adjusting the mindset of the culture to accept women in more dominant positions, situations and jobs (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

Health Empowerment: Health empowerment may be defined as a concept where individual competencies and strength, proactive behaviour to social change and social policy, and natural helping systems are linked and it must be accompanied with knowledge. In the healthcare domain, empowerment is linked to “determinant of improved health status”, while powerlessness is associated with “ill health” (Camerini, Schulz, & Nakamoto, 2012).

Educational Empowerment: Is working towards empowering the learning environments to give learners options in their learning process that can help them resolve any limitations or problems. Consequently, this will allow them to build personal meanings

that may help make these individuals more independent and more competent decision-makers (Saye, 1997).

Combating Violence: Violence against women has become a global issue. It comes in diverse forms such as: stalking, sexual assaults, violence in intimate relations, trafficking, and any violation that harms the women's psyches or bodies. Combating violence comes in the form of working towards hindering the previously mentioned and any other form of violent practices (Htun, & Weldon, 2012).

Appendix (F): Women’s Rights Organizations in the MENA Region

Egypt:

New Woman Foundation.

Women and Memory Forum.

Center of Egyptian Women Legal Aid.

Appropriate Communication Techniques for Development (ACT).

Women’s Forum for Development.

Alliance of Arab Women.

Egyptian Association for Family Development.

“Nazra” Association for Feminist Studies.

“Omni” Association for Rights and Development.

“Heya” Foundation

Al- Taqwa Association for Women’s and Children’s Rights

Al-Monqith Organization for Human Rights

Centre for Egyptian Women Legal Assistance (*“Coalition of Women’s NGOs in Egypt: National Council of Women”*, 2011)

El-Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture- Egypt

Freedom to Support Democracy and Human Rights- Egypt (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Women's Health Improvement Association

Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (Eissa, December).

Arab Women’s Solidarity Association International United (AWSA-United)

(Stephan, 2013)

Syria:

Al-Thara Magazine- Syria

Civilian Association in Syria

Democracy and Civil Rights Center in Syria

Equal Citizenship Center - Syria

Feminist Citizenship-Equality Movement- Syria

Syrian Association for Citizenship

Syrian Citizenship Center

Syrian Female Journalists Network

Syrian Feminist Lobby

Syrian Women's Association

Syrian Women's Organization

Yazidi organization for Documentation

Women's Initiative Organization- Syria (*"In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission"*, 2016)

Palestine:

Annajdh Palestinian Women's Development Society

The Association of Women's Action- Palestine (*"In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission"*, 2016)

Lebanon:

Anti- Racism Movement- Lebanon

KAFA- Enough Violence and Exploitation- Lebanon

Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Nasawiya

CRTD-A (Stephan, 2013)

Tunisia:

Femmes Tunisiennes

Arab Institute for Human Rights (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Yemen:

Awam Developmental and Cultural Foundation- Yemen

Peace Associates –Yemen

The Union of Civil Society Organizations (UMM) - Yemen

To Be Organization – Yemen

Hawa’a Organization for Relief and Development

Volunteers Coalition for Women’s Rights- Yemen (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Iraq:

Awan Organization for Awareness and Capacity Building

Iraqi Center for Woman's and Child’s Rights

Iraqi Dar As- Salaam Center

Iraqi Network for 1325

Iraqi Organization for Academic Youth

Yazidi organization for Documentation

Iraqi Amal Association (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Libya:

Libyan Judges Organization

Libyan Women Platform

The Constitution Protects Me Network- Libya (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Emirates:

International Federation for Human Rights (*“In the Context the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Global Organizations based outside the MENA Region but covering it:

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Women's Democratic Organization

Women Leaders Institute (*“In the Context of the 60th session of the UN Commission”*, 2016)

Appendix (G): Table of Acronyms

| | |
|-------|---|
| CEWLA | The Center for Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance |
| DISK | Dairy Information System Kiosk |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| GIF | Graphic Interchange Format |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IDRC | The International Development Research Centre of Canada |
| IT | Information Technology |
| ITU | The International telecommunication Union |
| LGBT | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender |
| MENA | The Middle East and North Africa (region) |
| MUDS | MULTI-User domains and dungeons |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| PVOs | Private Voluntary Organizations |
| SNSs | Social Network Sites |