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Framing of Female Leading Roles in Drama Series on Video Streaming Platforms

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Abstract: This comparative study examines the female-centered drama series aired on VOD services from three different genres. While several studies have established the stereotypical representation of women in the drama series, most research has focused on individual countries. The significance of this study relies upon the fact that the series is from VOD services, notably Netflix and *Shahid VIP*. The study bridges a gap in the literature by adopting a comparative perspective to analyze gender portrayals from six drama series, three from each country, from three genres. The contemporary drama genre included Valeria from Spain and *Leh Laa?!* Why Not?! from Egypt. Historical drama genre included Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable' from Spain and *Grand Hotel* 'Secrets of The Nile' from Egypt. And from the crime/thriller drama genre *Locked up* 'Vis a vis' from Spain and *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* 'Every week on Friday' from Egypt. This study utilizes a content analysis method over the entire population of the six series, six leading female characters analyzed. A total of 153 episodes were analyzed, resulting in 5,883 scenes for the female actors coded. Various research studies from different countries demonstrate that women are portrayed negatively, sexualized, and shown in traditional female stereotypes and roles such as weak, emotional, nonprofessionals, and housekeepers (Signorielli and Bacue, 1999; Abdelfattah, 2015; Atwan, 2006). Findings here revealed that women continue to be portrayed negatively in drama series across both countries and that stereotypical patterns continue to dominate the drama series. However, this study noted significant differences among countries.

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Introduction

The 20th-century media has furtherly impacted the false association between mass culture and women pre-dating the modern era (Lacalle & Castro, 2017), which gradually got the scholars less interested in television. It has been elaborated that when the television production was announced, largest part of total production was mainly drama and entertainment (Ibrahim, 1991). In that context, the last decade research about gender representation has become more prominent (Virginia Guarinos 2013; Menéndez, 2014) and there has been a wider interest in the creative roles performed by women in television (Rodríguez & Bravo, 2019). It has been alleged that television has now become the enemy of creativity and obviously killing it (Castelló, 2011). But the internet has figured a modified way through which television is consumed making alterations to the production of said content (Cascajosa 2009), which consequently has enabled the consumer to set the viewing rate, as *Netflix* and *Shahid VIP* does, so that the viewer decides when to watch each episode instead of weekly (Rojas-Lamorena et al, 2018). The development of on-demand audiovisual services, altered the traditional consumption patterns, and suggests a different framework in the study of the use of social networks (Subías & Molina, 2018).

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of female leading roles in Egyptian and Spanish drama, through three genres. Using framing and stereotype theoretical frameworks, this study's content analyzes six leading characters. Their portrayals compile diversified background stories. However, it is essential to highlight how these characters reflect the Spanish and Egyptian reality. Spanish and Egyptian Drama are eyeopeners regarding all the stereotypes delivered through the female leading roles. The analysis of the six characters is intended to shed light on the intersections of identity and the power of representation.

It has been referred in Spain to the possibility of verifying the fact that there was a difference in the leading characters' selection depending on whether they are selected by men or women for drama series (Santorun & Orosa, 2019). There is a male-dominated industry in Spain, however the television producer Teresa Fernández-Valdés is a relevant figure who is aware of how female centered plots can be developed within such TV industry (Rodríguez & Bravo, 2019). Series that mainly target female audiences add an attractive feminist aura with its narratives. Among their female leading characters, it is possible to find a wide range of women in powerful positions or in rebellion against the social issues. Orosa & Santorun (2019) stated that the gender stereotypes in the European media is visible. However, the engagement and the portrayal of women in the media are directly connected with their situation in real life (Baluta, 2015).

Moving to the Egyptian drama, it is branded by its ability to interact and deal with the emotions of the public, through several psychological processes including empathy as well as emotional awakening (Abdelmeged, 2018). The Egyptian drama work has been dominantly presented over Arab satellite channels, marking a starting point of an international movement that displays social heritage, norms, and even problems outside the framework of traditional templates for dealing with dramatic subjects (Abdelmeged, 2018). The fact that Egyptian series and films are widespread both in Africa and the Arab world, makes Egypt an intriguing case that draws the attention of both Africa and the Middle East (Mahdi,2015) Most researchers consistently mainly track the negative stereotypical depictions of Arab women in the media (Allam, 2008; Rahbani, 2010). Gender stereotypes in the media are significant, because they have been shown to influence attitudes towards women (Rahbani, 2010). Therefore, gender stereotypes in the Egyptian media creates, supports, and activates gender stereotypes among the viewers, which leads to sexism and discrimination against women.

Studying drama is still relatively new, especially when compared to other mass mediated popular culture in the Middle East (Gordan, 2018). This study is interested in unleashing the outline of female leading role from the perspective of Egyptian and Spanish drama, the possibilities brought up by the new global online system of production and distribution of media content based on VOD streaming service technologies, as well as the gender representation created by drama based on female testimonies in this new industrial environment.

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of female leading roles in Egyptian and Spanish drama, through three genres. Using framing and stereotype theoretical frameworks, this study's content analyzes six leading characters. Their portrayals compile diversified background stories. However, it is essential to highlight how these characters reflect the Spanish and Egyptian reality. Spanish and Egyptian Drama are eyeopeners regarding all the stereotypes delivered through the female leading roles. The analysis of the six characters is intended to shed light on the intersections of identity and the power of representation.

Literature Review

Importance of Drama

Drama is free to process, dealing with different subjects in bolder ways but not free from the pressures of political and economic forces in society (Metwally, 2009). As discussed in a study by Metwally (2009), drama plays a role in removing the boundaries between reality and fiction by eliminating the dramatic nature of actual events. The danger of the drama that it is possible to present a different reality than the real reality. The study furthermore mentioned that this might affect the viewer in creating a perception of his existence based on what he sees in the drama in the dealings of individuals with society, its members, and institutions, based on the image that he is of a sketchy and distorted form. The individual lives in a fictitious reality different from the social fact (Metwally, 2009). The researcher significantly stated that the realism of the characters and ideas presented in the drama is related to the number of hours spent experiencing them.

Abu-Lughod (2005) argued, that the drama may be one of the richest and most interesting elements of nation building in Egypt, as it works at both the culture as well as sociopolitical levels. This was clarified, as it was told that the introduction of drama managed to attract a significant amount of audience in Egypt (Abu-Lughod, 2005). Elghazaly (2018) referred to a study that was conducted by Iman Sobhi in 2016 entitled "Role of television drama in changing public attitudes towards social issues" where the study found that there is a positive and statistically significant correlation between the intensity of watching Egyptian drama shown on satellite channels and the level of adoption of certain social behaviors.

A study by Darwesh (2003) stated that Egyptian drama has a way that could entail individual or collective forms of violence against particular groups. Such that the portrayal of girls as romantic and men as the powerful man responsible for providing all the family's

financial requirements is stereotypical. Darwesh (2003) also demonstrated that the media holds the stereotype of men and women, which is evident in dramas, primarily serials, and movies. Such that women are undervalued and misplaced through media that do not conform to women's well-being. This resulted in offering masculine social and cultural values that contribute to the reproduction of unequal ideas and relationships between men and women and create a false awareness among members of society that allows them to accept stereotypes and promote prevailing ideologies. Darwesh (2003) also discussed the male-to-female presentation and found that men's activities are more highlighted and that their roles outweigh those of women. In addition, Darwesh (2003) pointed out that the majority of roles played by women in films turned out to be secondary roles, with 69.8% of their proportions and 30.2% of the leading roles.

When the television production was announced, the largest part of the total production was mainly drama and entertainment (Ibrahim, 1991). As time went on the Egyptian television series started to gain its fame with local viewers and its popularity was determined by the number of seasons that each drama series produced and the renewal of more seasons meant more success and fame for the drama series (Arabic: musalsalat) (Gordon, 2018).

Drama deals with different social phenomena in Egyptian society. It is one of the most important forms of art. It has a tremendous capacity to influence the recipient audience, to combine the knowledge and cultural base (Elghazaly, 2018). The Egyptian television drama industry has witnessed a dramatic fall since the appearance of private channels and satellite broadcasting (Parolin,2019). As it was significant how television dramas opened discussions about the Egyptian traditions, including breaking taboos of treating historical characters, and showing those eras not simply as stages for family dramas, or social criticism covered in stories (Gordon, 2018).

The Egyptian drama is one of the primary national forms of television, as confirmed by a study conducted by the Federation of Radio and Television entitled "Arab and Foreign Drama Material." The study revealed that 98.7% of the public followed the Arabic drama (Metwally, 2009). In addition, Egyptian soap operas are the content that young people prefer to watch on television (Metwally, 2009). Programs showing Egyptian social behavior, including treatment of women as second-class citizens, could form an important source of public awareness in nearby countries where such programs are broadcasted (Kposowa & Ezzat, 2016). What the Egyptian television represent culturally, politically, ideologically will take time to get a recognition.

The Egyptian drama has a major role in the formation of the mental image of the Arab character (Abd El Hady, 2016). Abd El Hady (2016) also added that it might have a powerful impact that it allows people to unconsciously adapt attitudes, beliefs and values that are presented graphically or even textually. Even adapting a certain image regarding Arab women.

Most of the studies that had examined the representation of female character were done on cinema. Such as a study by Hussein Said Abdul Majid confirmed that the cinema distorted the image of Egyptian women and presented them negatively, and did not focus on their real problems. (Abdelmegeed, 2001). Hamza (2018) had analyzed Egyptian films to examine such elements. He concluded that the films attempted to diagnose the social reality of many women in Egyptian society, and the filmmakers try to highlight the negative aspects of Egypt's traditional value system (Hamza, 2018). Studies stated that many series showed more interest in women's issues. The Egyptian drama is written in a wrong, fast way, presenting the series without any analyses of the society or the characters shown (Samir, 2018). However, giving in the fact that fewer studies have examined the portrayal of female characters in drama, therefore this study aims to fill this literature gap.

Studying drama series is still relatively new, mainly when compared to other mass mediated popular culture in the Middle East (Hamdar & Moore, 2015). It is also debatable due to the rise of social media and online programming, which most of it is intendedly designed to avoid state monitoring and censorship (Gordon, 2018). As for the gender representation, it witnessed a breakthrough back in 2018 in women's image in drama and that the negative portrayals of women declined (Samir, 2018)

Redvall et al (2018) have looked at the genres of drama in general, it is fair to state that they noticed that the basic dimensions are very much alike of genre formats, types of narratives, themes and characters. The formats of drama are three, starting with contemporary drama, which revolves mainly around the structural elements of contemporary society. Redvall et al (2018) clarified that everyday life in families and in a broader social context are the aspects of which contemporary drama is made. Contemporary drama has a strong place in European drama Redvall et al (2018) and Egyptian drama (Samir, 2018). The second type of drama is crime or thriller genre, which simply takes the viewer out of his/her comfort zone by showing the base of a peaceful reality. Redvall et all (2018) also stated that crime drama includes breakage of basic rules and standers upon which societies are built. Turnbull (2014) pointed out that crime drama has a number of generic codes and sub-codes, related themes, characters and conflicts. Redvall et all (2018) then support this by stated how this is probably one of the reasons the genre of crime drama is popular worldwide. Lastly, the third and last type is historical drama. Redvall et all (2018) explained it as a challenged extraction from our contemporary life, it is mostly challenged by past powerful conflicts and dramatic events that have somehow influenced our present-day world.

Donders et al (2013) have stated that an excellent shaped medium such as the television will face danger from technology companies that devote in platforms rather than investing in television content. They have also added that this dynamic has its way of

destroys the motive to create the kinds of movies, television and journalism that consumers demand (Donders et al, 2013).

Framing of Females in Arab Media

Arab women's representation is always predictable, illiteracy, low socio-economic standing, and in contrast to traditions which causes financial problems are all obstacles that are expected to affect their status in society (Allam, 2008). In that same context, Ateya (2014) noted that the majority of the female characters are portrayed as housewives from the middle class. The findings of that study showed that reinforce that middle and lower classes of women are now more represented in the Egyptian media industry, about 46 percent and 54 percent of the research sample respectively.

However, with the Arab media frequently portraying women in a certain way, this had complicated the problems rather than fixing them (Allam, 2008). The media industry begins the portrayal of the female roles always deviant and abnormal, and only gives a small part for the positive side; therefore, an incomplete, distorted image of women is drawn (Abdelfattah, 2015). Additionally, television drama plays a big role in shaping the image of women, whether positive or negative, strong or weak, real or imaginary (Abdelfattah, 2015). In this context, Abdel Raouf (2004) stated how women are presented in a negative manner, such that they are depicted as corrupts who violate taboos and traditions, or being actively part of criminal or illegal activities such as prostitutes, drug addicts or dealers (Abdel Raouf, 2004).

Media has the power to make and unmake the image of women in society, and this cannot be denied or underestimated (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1990). Scholars argue that in Musalsalat (dramatic series in Arabic) women appear in secondary submissive, highlighting women's charms, along with some scenes that arouse sexual urge (Abdelfatah, 2015), and dependent roles reflecting the so-called 'ideal Arab or Muslim woman' (Kharroub, 2016;

Matar, 2007). There are women who played an influential and effective role religiously and historically. But the media industry such as cinema and television were not able to attain the proper representation for women (Abdelfattah, 2015). According to Abdelfatah (2015), looking back at the most famous historical female figure in the Egyptian cinema, which is Rabaa Al-Adawiya, she was shown as a dancer and a woman who enjoyed drinking, dancing and escort men. The media industry tends to rely on portraying women to pleasure and excitement.

In his column in Al-Ahram, Professor Farouk Juwaida says, Free Margins under the title "Women in Series " (2012)

> I do not think that there are works of art that offended women the way Ramadan series did in 2012. Many pictures were presented by the series about women came with an unequal degree of negativity. She is the defeated wife that falls as prey to a man under the appearance of religion at times and under the influence of money and wealth at other times. She is the fallen woman in a matter of etiquette. She is a professor at the Faculty of Law who practices all forms of fraud and deception in the name of law, and then she turns into a murderous woman in a terrible bloody scene...as if the authors of the series chose the fastest way to distort women…Starting with marriage, ending with deception, dishonesty and files of morality, passing through planned murder and premeditation, and how many sins are committed in the name of the serials.

As according to Abdelfattah (2015), that it has been proven in various studies that dealt with images and representations of women in various Arab media; programs, series, and movies give in distort images of women. To illustrate, Allam (2008) stated how women have gained greater access to education, which made them become economically independent gradually. However, the television drama still struggles with developing the status of a

woman from her traditional role, between serving her husband rather than sharing her life with him. However, the reality of the media directed at women confirms that it tended to marginalize her intelligence and has dealt with her in a manner of "It's just a body" (Abdelfattah, 2015). Abdelfattah (2015) also added that the dictatorship of such material and its wide spread over a large area of broadcast media, impacts media perception of women. As males start to see women as a beautiful face and body with targeted abolition of the soul of the mind thought and understanding (Abdelfattah, 2015). A common belief among feminists indicates that the effect of television is potentially dangerous on the image of women as their portrayal is mostly from negative perspective (Auter, 2010; Hess & Grant, 1983).

The visual programs directed at Arab women in their goals and the nature of their contents do not reflect the values of the Muslim community in which they appear and are promoted. Rather, it beatifies the Western woman's model and shows it in a way that is firmly established in the minds that it is the model (Abdelfattah, 2015). Arab women in the media are "present, but not heard" (Rahbai, 2010). Such that when the television came, the woman's image did not change much from her image in the cinema, rather it was an extension of it (Abdelfattah, 2015). And that was because most of the TV creators were affected by what images they saw of women in cinema, other times they are also partners in drawing that image in both cinema and television (Abdelfattah, 2015). The author also has added that there were no serious attempts to alter to a unique and realistic picture of women as partners. Even if the image of women on television is less negative from her image in the cinema. On the television screen, the audience can find a serious woman and a struggling woman. As for an educated woman, a university professor, a nuclear scientist, and other positive examples, but we did not find them (Abdelfattah, 2015).

Signorielli and Bacue (1999) used "respect" in relation to three elements; found, their age, and their occupations. When you look at the nature of women's portrayals, research has

consistently found the stereotyped representation of women, such as being emotional, weak, romantic, thin and concerned about appearance. Moreover, women are more often portrayed in a negative light; sexualized and shown in traditional female stereotypes and roles such as nonprofessionals and housekeepers. Abdelfattah (2015) mentioned in his book that the researcher Iman Baybars conducted research to identify the opinion of the Egyptian woman in the image presented of her in the media, and she concluded that 30.8% of the research sample saw that the image of women in the media is superficial, concerned with appearance only and exaggerates it, whether by showing them too strong or too weak, and sexual overtones.

The quest for modernity and focusing on modern images of women, and within that it was required from the media industry to keep the basic means of traditionalism through the representation of women in limited roles to women's domestic and life affairs (Abdelfattah, 2015). In this context, the Egyptian television drama was keen in including respect to the status of women. To illustrate, Abdelfattah (2015) stated in his book that the Egyptian television screen was able to restore to the woman's personality some of her truth that cinema had neglected through many actresses who expressed women, their feelings and their social life, and among these:

Artist Faten Hamama, Laila Fawzi, Suad Hosni, Sawsan Badr, Bossi, Yousra, Samira Ahmed, Afaf Shuaib, Sabreen, Nermin El Feki, Karima Mukhtar, Majida Zaki, Shahira, Mervat Amin, Raghda, Samiha Ayoub, Sabreen, Hala Fakher, Kuwaiti women Suad Abdullah, Hayat Al Fahd and Emirati Samira Ahmed.

Concluding, that although women are most of the times portrayed as "an artful devil who seeks nothing but pleasure, marital or extra-marital. All she wants is to catch a man, any man since this is every woman's highest goal" (Ateya, 2014; Ramzi, 2004). These typical framing for women -scantily clad dress and seductive dancing (Atwan, 2006)- might start

emerging other problems, such it decreases the status of Egyptian women and might corresponding rise physical violence (Kposowa & Ezzat, 2016). On the other hand, Arab women are turning to media as a mean for their empowerment, and as a tool to advance their progress and development in their communities (Rahbani, 2010). And positive media exposure is the key to unlocking the route to women's empowerment (Sakr, 2004).

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of female leading roles in Egyptian and Spanish drama, through three genres. Using framing and stereotype theoretical frameworks, this study's content analyzes six leading characters. Their portrayals compile diversified background stories. However, it is essential to highlight how these characters reflect the Spanish and Egyptian reality. Spanish and Egyptian Drama are eyeopeners regarding all the stereotypes delivered through the female leading roles. The analysis of the six characters is intended to shed light on the intersections of identity and the power of representation.

Framing of Females in European Media

Television did not differ much from cinema in presenting women through serials, even if they hide sex and dance scenes in series, they still present different and various models for women while creating a large space for women to express their personality through dramas (Abdelfattah, 2015). This section of the literature review aims to explore the representation of women from the Spanish drama perspective.

A Spanish study conducted by Santiago Santorun & Berta Orosa (2019) mentioned the aspect of the image of women in the media was all the same in the decade of the 90s and it was reinforced in the 2000s. As the authors talked about how there are productions that are done that reflects the general conception of women in society. The news minimally included the image of women in sport, ethnic or racial origin. The study stated that most of the

television news coverage when given the attention to women, it is purely "feminine" issues, such as breast cancer. But that was intended by the media as a way of constructing identities of both gender (Santorun & Orosa, 2019).

Various researches have been directed to study the effects of television programs on society –and they are studies of interest–, these studies mostly conclude that the television has one of the greatest power and influence as a communication medium over viewers (Rojas-Lamorena et al, 2018). The influence that the television has comes in the form of different programs and series, as well as the content included in them. The different surfaces of the society are then influenced in the consumption, lifestyles or even behavior of viewers (Rojas-Lamorena et al, 2018). Coyne et al (2014) noted that the various media outlets such as movies, magazines, videos musicals or television present gender stereotypes which are noticeable. Rojas-Lamorena et al (2018) support that by stated that such stereotypes are tailored more to the women, as portraying certain roles associated with women. Consequently, Painter and Ferrucci (2017) stated that there is a clear placement of women within the patriarchal system, as a result of television programs assuming that the male perspective has the greatest importance in the lives of women.

However, as mentioned in the Spanish research by Rojas-Lamorena et al (2018) the evolution and empowerment of female characters have become noticeable with the development of the television series. This is done though making the characters more real and current, by highlighting the modernization of role models or reproduce, through more current characteristics (Cvitanovich, 2013). The Spanish study by Smith (2018) built upon the pervious perspective, by mentioned examples of how the Catalan language series have range of plots that reflect social debates. For examples, including divorce, homosexuality among men, drugs or alcoholism had a presence; later, other social topics appeared including AIDS, bullying, and homosexuality among women (Smith, 2018).

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By the 90s, there was a certain transformation in the gender stereotype that emerged, which pointed out that there is a "timid decline" in the representation of the decorative women (Santorun & Orosa, 2019). Yet a study that was conducted by Santorun & Orosa (2019) showed results after analyzing 1,688 European digital media news, the usage of sexist language. The sexist stereotypes were 70.71% in the Italian newspaper *Corriere Della Sera*, 80.45% in the Portuguese newspaper *Jornal de Notícias*, and 45.76% in the Spanish newspaper *El País* (Santorun & Orosa, 2019). This shows that the construction of gender in Spanish television –whether programs or series–add up to a growing body of research (Lacalle & Castro, 2017).

As mentioned previously, women tend to be stereotyped in a certain way and sexualized in the media (Coyne et al. 2016). This is portrayed in series through the incorporation of violent scenes, high doses of sexual content (Bourdaa, 2014) and, violence against women (Santorun & Orosa, 2019). Al- Sayed and Gunter (2012) mentioned that "sexual content" means "any depiction or portrayal of talk/behavior that involves sexuality, sexual suggestiveness and sexual activities/relationships". Farrar *et al*. (2003) also added that sexual content also includes "affection that implies potential or likely sexual intimacy". In this context, Gallager (2014) stated that younger female character is portrayed empowered with their sexual boldness. Which brings the attention to Bazzini et al (1997) has found that the age of the female character shown has an influence in such representation, such that older women were depicted as more unfriendly, less intelligent, and less physically attractive than younger ones.

Galán (2009) believed that these stereotypes are common to be present on television, because they facilitate the understanding of the characters. Viewers will then be able to identify the characters because of the predictable behaviors that are given frequently to the female characters. Yet, Rojas-Lamorena et al (2018) viewed that these contexts affect the

attitudes and behaviors of the viewers. However, Galán (2009) also considers that television series hold portrays an image that is similar to the society, which plays an important role in the understanding gender roles and stereotypes.

Santorun & Orosa (2019) stated that the gender stereotypes in the European media is visible. Such that the female identity itself is deformed by the filters that are produced by certain television series. According to the Spanish study by Santorun & Orosa (2019), the involvement and presence of women in the media are directly linked to their situation in real life. The authors have stated that European female roles when they are protagonists they represented as victims of the narrated event and / or have unfavorable socioeconomic status and situation. Furthermore, Santorun & Orosa (2019) detected three main ways in the European media –programs and series– that women are kept relegated to as role, despite the clear reduction of negative gender marks –mainly through language–. Firstly, they are not usually news authors; secondly, they are usually secondary sources; and lastly, in the series, women with unfavorable situations prevail, which promotes a traditional female role and stereotype (Santorun & Orosa, 2019). Adding to that, Lacalle & Castro (2017) identifies in their study two types of young women in the 21st century, which are the "can-do girls" and "at-risk girls". The author simply clarified by mentioned that one represents the role model type and the other represents failure. Yet, they stated that the Can-do girls are mostly involved in any shape of "double entanglement". Lastly, Lacalle & Castro (2017) have given in the fact that females are stereotyped either as subjective which is a female who wants to be like men for the sake of domination or objective which is a female hyper-sexualized to appeal to men.

The Development of Video on Demand Streaming Service

Netflix & Shahid VIP

In the recent years, technology has been going for advanced upgrades, for example, establishing new Internet platforms, however there has been significant ones that stood out the most such as *HBO*, with its variants *HBO GO* and *HBO NOW*, or *Netflix* (Rojas-Lamorena et al, 2018). On-Request or on-demand audiovisual communication services have expanded as the digitization process (Gavilán & Cambrón, 2018). Gavilán & Cambrón (2018) have given a definition for video on demand services (VOD from now on) as they are those in which the user can select a program on request through the internet (Gavilán & Cambrón, 2018). Technological advances took the way once there had been a weakening of live television and the growth of recorded programs, as well as for the introduction of new genres, with made-for-TV films and series (Prokhorova, 2003).

The Internet has modified the way television is consumed and, consequently, it has also modified the production of said content (Cascajosa 2009), allowing the consumer to set the viewing rate, as *Netflix* does, so that the viewer decides when to watch each episode instead of weekly (Rojas-Lamorena et al, 2018). The development of on-demand audiovisual services, altered the traditional consumption patterns, and suggests a different framework in the study of the use of social networks (Subías & Molina, 2018). It could be said that the television system is facing a thoughtful transformation as a result of the changes introduced by new technologies in distribution and consumption (Cascajosa-Virino, 2018). Cascajosa-Virino (2018) has added that in the last five years period, the changes have accelerated with the emergence of VOD services, and the television ecosystem has had some modifications that are a result of the commitment to the production of original content and high penetration by VOD services. Pinpointing that traditional television will not disappear (Cascajosa-Virino, *2018).*

improved to a new structure of episodes which are directly produced for VOD service.

According Rojas-Lamorena et al (2018), all these circumstances have caused a great expansion of television series in recent years, giving rise to the "Third Golden Age of Television". To clarify the variety of series, streaming VOD service has given the viewer the ability to choose what best suits their tastes and preferences (Rojas-Lamorena et al, 2018).

Traditional television exists with formats that vary on the internet, with consumption on demand on other screens such as mobiles, tablets and smartphones (Barrio et al, 2020) along with subscription television and with other audiovisual content distribution platforms such as *Netflix*, Amazon or HBO (Wayne, 2018). These platforms seem to act as an outer competitor for the television (Clares-Gavilán, 2019) that resulted with some bad times for traditional television and, additionally the viewership rate had been decreasing (Barrio et al, 2020). Barrio et al (2020) had mentioned a quote in their study by De Moragas stating that "The Internet does not displace television, but rather power", which adds up with what Montemayor-Ruiz and Ortiz-Sobrino (2016) stated in Barrio et al (2020) study consider regarding the television and the digital age. The authors believe that the television will remain the key instrument for arranging and transferring the cultural elements to the digital age, aside continuing to be the medium for social communication (Barrio et al, 2020).

On the contrary, a study by Del Olmo & Diaz (2020) that the new audiovisual platforms with the streaming, highly customizable and on-demand content are showing a growing influence that is establishing a serious competition to the traditional television channels again do not make the focus that it is a competition between television and VOD. . Along with this, the interactivity that audiovisual content providers present is creating a paradigm shift in the activity of television audiences, breaking the hegemony of the traditional audiovisual and television industry (Del Olmo & Diaz, 2020).

A study by Yang Wang & Lobato (2019), has given a general definition of the term "platform" which they have clarified it depends on one's cultural location. They clarified that it literally translates as "interface" that is built and used for a specific purpose (Yang Wang & Lobato, 2019). Additionally, a platform –such as *Netflix*– is "portal-like", because it foregrounds professional content and offers a strongly organized and programmed TV-like experience (Yang Wang & Lobato, 2019). Currently the user not only accesses audiovisual content through traditional screens, movie theaters and television, but also through new devices that allow consumption on demand at any time and place (Gavilán & Cambrón, 2018).

A study by Ormaechea & Lorenzo (2018) had conveyed what *Netflix* as a streaming VOD service is. As they mentioned that it is a streaming service that allows its customers when they are internet-connected to reach content on their devices, such as watching a wide variety of series, movies, documentaries. The authors also added that it also operates with a personalized system for recommendations and suggestions, that are prior identified from the users' profiles. Sanson & Steirer (2019) added that *Netflix* has been known for identifying the elements that most likely achieve the user's satisfaction and succeed in driving consumption. Additionally, *Netflix* –as a brand– enjoys a very good reputation internationally and that there are more than 2,000 titles that could be found in the *Netflix* catalog, but they exceed in particularly with their own production (Ormaechea & Lorenzo, 2018). Jongbloed (2016) has highlighted the perspective of how *Netflix* has altered some of the forms of consumption of television production, which in a way raised greater questions to the idea of television and its products. This was supported by Del Olmo & Diaz (2020) in their study stating that the internet and mobile phone have appeared as the new distributors of audiovisual content, as a result from the adjusted form of communication for the television, since the content is no longer produced only on television. In other words, in a very short time the VOD services

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have become a second window for the series, while the series are still in broadcast (Cascajosa-Virino, 2018).

There are elements that attract the users to the services of VOD (Keating, 2012). As Cascajosa-Virino (2018) mentioned in her study that *Netflix* has three main characteristics, firstly it has wide and varied catalog, secondly unlimited access to the catalog and lastly *Netflix* is a service that focuses on image quality, and user friendly. To clarify the last element, it has ease in browsing, searching and accessibility through multiple devices (Cascajosa-Virino, 2018).

Cascajosa-Virino (2018) significantly highlighted that in Spain the market for video on demand services offered independently experienced a rapid expansion, by which Gavilán & Cambrón (2018) added that there has been a development over the last few years over this sector with international projects like *Netflix* and *HBO,* even with national operators such as Movistar+ and Vodafone One. Yet the VOD services had a slow process in its first introduction in Spain (Gavilán & Cambrón, 2018).

Gavilán & Cambrón (2018) furtherly discussed in their study that there are currently 46 VOD portals that operate in Spain which are devoted to promote films and television series. They also clarified that there are national portals such as Filmin and Filmtech and others which are international such as the big international technology companies Apple (iTunes) and Google Play, *Netflix* portals, *HBO* and *Amazon Prime*. In this aspect the authors also added that in Spain, there is one in four households that is subscribed to a payment platform.

Netflix has constantly expanded its catalog throughout its time in Spain, since that users have now more options than ever (Ormaechea & Lorenzo, 2018). Although it only arrived in Spain in October 2015 (Sanson & Steirer, 2019). Furthermore, it can be affirmed confidently that TVC (Televisió de Catalunya) offers the best Internet television service in Spain and one of the most advanced and popular in Europe (Castelló, 2012).

Khalil & Zayani (2020) covered the perspective of VOD service entering the Arab world, but in particular *Netflix* in 2016. They have notified that the younger generations turned to online video content and withdrawn from the viewership of satellite television – both free-to-air and Pay-Tv–, which was shown later with the increase for the demand of streaming services. *Netflix* managed to obtain a strong base in the market. The authors initially mentioned that *Netflix* suffered from the specifics of the market in the Arab world, it was clarified that these specifics include high television penetration, widespread of piracy for both film and television content, economic differences, and other aspects. But the Netflix had its subscription rate increase gradually along with its competitors, which include local 'catch-up' TV players such as MBC Group's *Shahid VIP*. However, Khalil & Zayani (2020) highlighted that Netflix remains the leader in subscription video on demand with 27% of the MENA region, followed by STARZ Play Arabia with 10% of the MENA region.

In the same context, a study conducted by Rasha Allam & Sylvia Chan-Olmsted (2020) focused on the development of the SVOD in Egypt, in particularly three platforms which are *Netflix*, *Shahid Plus* and *Watch iT*. The authors stated that the expansion of an active subscription-based video streaming services has been witnessed in Egypt, internationally such as *Netflix* and regionally such as *Shahid VIP*. It was further mentioned that *Netflix* and *Shahid VIP* have been able to achieve successful rates. Yet, a local platform, *Watch iT*, is struggling to survive. Allam & Chan-Olmsted (2020) conveyed that the platforms should concentrate on the factors that would affect the users' experience, such that the Egyptian audiences are now exposed to different platforms. These factors include producing high quality content, investing in technical aspect to measure audiences' behavior, and the technical alignment of content. *Netflix* and *Shahid VIP* have invested in producing originals and transnational content, which have helped them as VOD services attract many subscribers lately (Allam & Chan-Olmsted, 2020).

VOD platforms deliver more flexible atmosphere to its users either by allowing them to choose what to watch and when, or by providing uncensored content –in contrast to TV broadcast– (Ramon Lobato, 2019). Aside from that the audience are more active now, as a result individual no longer accept to receive a package of content that they are not interested in (Stan J. Liebowitz and Alejandro Zentner, 2012). That is why there is a fast pace towards big data content such as *Netflix* and drifting away from traditional media (Stan J. Liebowitz and Alejandro Zentner, 2012). *Netflix* is formulating itself into a global channel for what might serve as premium television, consequently there is an ongoing increase in its devotion to original local productions (Sanson & Steirer, 2019).

Jenner (2014) concluded in the study that *Netflix* represents a new phase that changed television. Building upon that would be a thesis conducted by Romil Sharma (2016), as the study argues that *Netflix* does not replace TV but "disrupts it". To clarify, *Netflix* changed the audience's habits and preferences by familiarizing the concept of binge-watching and the on-again/off-again relationship. Yet, it is fair to mention the main strategy of *Netflix*, which is to air shows that are no longer viewed on television, which will serve niche markets (Romil Sharma, 2016).

VOD & New Trends

Netflix knew how to intrigue individuals, as due to its reduced costs which helped in increased subscription and rapid penetration (Lobato & Lotz, 2020). As for *Shahid VIP* aside from being a pan Arab platform, it gathers of different demographics. *Shahid VIP* entered the market with many original productions for dramas filled by Egyptian actors and actresses, offering the most popular drama content in the region (Vadehra, 2019). In that context, the VOD is gradually growing and has high potential (Allam & Chan-Olmsted, 2020).

"Content is king", believes that Netflix's competitive edge is being a global entertainer (Allam & Chan-Olmsted, 2020). As a study conducted by Sanson and Steirer (2019), showed how streaming VOD plays the role of the dependent factor. The study also mentioned how Hulu which is an American subscription VOD that is owned by Walt Disney has created history with its original drama series "*The Handmaid's Tale*". This was because it was the first original streaming series to win at the Television Academy's 2017 Emmy Awards for Outstanding Series. They have quoted Jack Koblin from the New York Times stating that 'It was inevitable that a streaming service would win an Emmy for best drama at some point' (Sanson & Steirer, 2019). This study shows the power of streaming VOD as Sanson and Steirer (2019) have also stated that streaming is now seen as a global game.

Theoretical Framework

1. *Framing theory*

The literature review has given that framing is a key concept and usage in the mass media world, particularly in Television. The value of understanding certain issues, even understanding a representation of an issue is executed through examining specific frames; however, it is important that these specific frames are connected to the basis of framing theory. Aside from being the most research theory, Framing has a main foundation which is an issue that can have various perspectives which can be taken as having implications for many values or thoughts (Chong and Druckman, 2007).

The framing theory originated from an attribution to the sociologist Erving Goffman who argued that cultural beliefs are central elements to comprehend information (Littlejohn, 2009). He furtherly clarified the concept of "frames" in 1974 as abstractions or ideas that work for an individual to organize or structure message meaning (Wolf & Bernhart, 2006). Chong and Druckman (2007) have given another perspective of framing theory, as they stated that the main concept of framing revolves around a process by which people develop their own understanding about an issue based on specific values. They clarified how these values are results of viewing issues from different perspectives. The authors also mentioned the importance of the framing effect through communication, by stating that it influences the audiences' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Additionally, Chong & Druckman (2007) also highlighted the meaning of framing in communication, as it provides and organizes meaning to everyday reality that is given through a mixture of events, yet enhances a particular definition.

According to Stephen Littlejohn (2009), frames serve as a two-way process; help interpret and reconstruct reality. This allows the frames to reduce the complexity of information. The two-process relates with how the Egyptian and Spanish series might try to

interpret the real image of women. Studies showed that some theorists argue that framing has a macrolevel and microlevel module. To clarify, the macrolevel relates with agenda setting by which it is drawn from assumptions, and the microlevel relates to the way the audience uses information and develop attitudes toward certain issues, which overlaps with priming processes (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). Whereas priming refers to the way media offer a prior context, which an audience will take subsequent information, thus creating frames of reference for audiences (Littlejohn, 2009).

Entman (1993) refers to framing as basically involving selection and salience. He describes framing as "to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described". This study highlighted the core meaning of framing in action. Applying this theory to the prospect of this study, the communicator will be the screenwriters and directors. As they can have a powerful influence on viewer's perception of women's issues through framing women's issues in their daily routine. If the communicators believe in women's rights, they will focus on certain attributes and present them in frames that would be promoted through the television drama. However, if they do not believe, they could present them through traditional, stereotypical frames or frames that would undermine their status. The communicator conveys the frames based on their own function of schema and personal frames. Additionally, the communicator sets the tone for the content while curating messages based on his or her perspective (Entman, 1993).

There is usage of stereotypical framing, such as frames along gender lines, or even imbalances in the representation of certain social communities -such as ethnic minorities-(Littlejohn, 2009). The stereotypical picture of women through various media sources supports and encourages the myths and misconceptions regarding gender roles (Clark, 2019;

Simon, 2011). Since the content that is framed and then fed to an audience is effective and impactful, a study by Shanoiya S. Clark (2019) was done to examine the framing of leading females in a television drama called "Scandal", and particularly through the character Olivia Pope. This study used framing theory and aimed to analyze how the leading female role was framed and the potential impact of those frames. The study concluded that Olivia Pope's character was framed using themes such as power, respect, conflicted, sexualized and not having family dynamics. As the researcher Clark (2019) stated, "Olivia Pope's framing was unique, and showed a woman who was fully capable of being an effective leader". The effect of framing begins from its ability to be hidden or unclear, leaving the receiver unconscious of the true influence of their decision. As a result, people tend to turn to evidence to justify their decision or viewpoints, while being unaware to the impact of framing (Rathje, 2017).

A study by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) stated that communication is not only limited to written text, but also there is visual framing. They have clarified that visual framing allows to transfer reality from the individual's memory to its reproduction, which provides a unique way to satisfy people's fixation with realism (Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). Furtherly, the authors highlight that visual frames tops textual frames. And it was clarified by the fact that images or pictures seem more relatable and natural to reality than words. Therefore, images permit the audience to overlook the facts that would be seen as artificial construction. Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) also highlighted the importance of visual framing and where it originates, as these visual frames provide meaning which is accepted and widely shared with the audience's symbolic significance. Accordingly, visual frames create a less unwanted message that needs smallest cognitive load for its understanding and processing (Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). The authors also explained how the visual frames are a product of classifying the "visual sensations" into themes and stylistic-semiotics systems, which differs whether the presentation is straightforward

description of what is happening –connotative system– or does it hold deeper layers. Finally, Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) study visuals by looking into dominant ideas that are being served through representations and voices, and this is called "ideological representations".

As mentioned in the previous study how text-based research and studies may be more universal (Graber, 1990). However, Fahmy (2019) also supported the fact that visual frames top textual frames, as she clarified through a study by Coleman (2010) which mentioned that a text centered approach ignores the subtle and complex ways the audiences process information. And images and photographs have a way to activate cognitions, emotions and memories (Graber, 1990). This inattention to visuals grants a major gap in the communication studies (Fahmy, 2019).

In the study by Shahira Fahmy (2019), she had elaborated the visual grammar, which is one of the ways photographs communicate. She stated through a study by Monaco (2000) how a visual frame has a spatial organization which is the "mise-en-scène" which adds a particular meaning to the viewer's understanding of visual media. It includes the shot's angle, distance, and focus which are vital aspects of visual framing (Fahmy, 2019). Fahmy (2019) furtherly explained each aspect in-depth, starting with the "shot angle". As this aspect in an image generates an effect between the image and spectator. Through this logic of figuration Fahmy (2019) stated through Rose (2016) study that elements "inside" an image can be made in a way that creates a viewing position "outside" the image. And this is done through creating a sense of distance, balance or even closeness and imbalance. The positioning of the viewer plays a more important role when looking into a visual's effect, as when a subject is placed at eye level it is then perceived as neutral, while shots from above eye level are negative and from below eye level are positive (Fahmy, 2019). In other words, when a viewer is looking up at the subject matter, then the viewer is in some way inferior or substandard to it; if the viewer gazes down on the subject matter, then he or she is given some power over it.

It was also suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) that frontal angles generate stronger connection from viewers than "oblique" angles. Such that whenever a subject in a shot is looking directly at the viewer, it conveys honesty (Fahmy, 2019). The second aspect that is considered one of the visual grammar is "shot distance", which mainly refers to how much of the object is shown within a frame. As mentioned by Monaco (2000), this aspect is commonly broken down in terms of extreme long shot, long shot, medium shot, medium close shot, close-up and extreme close-up. These terms depend on the distance between the camera and the object, and not the focal length of the lens used (Monaco, 2000). Fahmy (2019) then explained that a medium shot is when the image is showing the object from waist up and it is considered neutral, whereas a close-up shot is when the image is showing the object from head and shoulders and it is identified as positive. As for the long shot, which is when the image is showing the full object, it is identified as negative (Fahmy, 2019). In this context, Monaco (2000) added that series and films are mainly shot in close-up shot and this is to serve the dramatic purpose. Which will enhance the emotions of a character but withdraws viewers of the setting, whereas when a series or film mainly uses the long shot, then it tends to highlight context over personality or drama (Monaco, 2000). Fahmy (2019) significantly highlighted the close up shot, as it creates a more intimate connection between the character and the audience; and also, this shot gives the feeling of standing closer to the characters which make them more likable than those who are shot from a distance. The third and last aspect for the visual grammar is the "shot focus" which is about how much of the scene is shown in focus –from foreground to background– (Monaco, 2000). However, Fahmy (2019) clarified that the focus also emphasizes an object's position within a scene, as it relates to the foreground or background. From a social point of view, when the placement of an object is larger in a frame, the audience often assumes power relationships (Fahmy, 2019).

Framing is a process that gives access to the messenger to tailor their message or content to a specific audience. Most framing studies assume that the communicators are elites such as politicians, the media, and other opinion leaders, and that the audience consists of members of the general public (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Gamson 1992, Walsh 2003). But the main influence does not always have to be one-way flow, the active audience nowadays have the ability to decide in a way what frame to consider. On the other hand, journalists, screen writers and other content creators use framing to deliver certain messages that influence a reaction or response (Rathje, 2017). While this study aims to analyze a character in television drama series, it will be useful to use framing theory and frame analysis. Since this thesis tends to fill the gap of Egyptian and Spanish drama series by assessing the portrayal of female leading roles from both countries, it is vital to base the study on theories that support its purpose. Framing theory is the core of this study.

2. *Stereotyping*

This thesis not only will examine the frames that are delegated to the portrayed leading women, but will also explore the stereotype that might be applied. A stereotype is a generalized opinion (Rodgers & Thorson, 2000; Edström, 2018) or a false oversimplified view about a specific subgroup in society (Gorham, 1999). Stereotype was identified by Walter Lippmann (1922) with the concept of "pictures in our heads", such that it is more of an outline that people depend on to understand the world around them. Gorham (1999) clarified stereotypes as subsets of beliefs or attitudes about our social reality, which have emerged from personal biases about a certain group in society (Edström, 2018). It is more likely to utilize stereotypes to evaluate situations when it's readily available and accessible inside an individual's mind (Stangor, 1988).

As elaborated by Gorham (1999), those "pictures" that are formulated inside people's heads are results of what is in the surrounding environment, not only based on personal experiences. One factor that plays the role from the influential surrounding environment is the media, such that it already takes charge in helping the audience understand the world around them, including events, people and places Gorham (1999). Such that most of what people think know about the real world, does not fully result out of their own personal interactions, but from what they are constantly and repeatedly seeing, hearing, and reading through the media (Gorham, 1999), consequently help in forming inaccurate "images" about the real world (Boulding, 1956).

It is fair to mention that stereotypes in the media can be the initiative to create a shared understanding among mixed groups (Rosello, 1998); however, since it is based on the perspectives of influential groups within society it can result in discrimination against the less powerful (Jin et al., 2019; Edström, 2018). Because individuals in dominant social groups have the control to identify the main understating within a culture (Gorham, 1999). Stereotypes could appear either positively or negatively (Edström, 2018), often a negative stereotype emerges against a minority group that stands out differently and can be easily defined as "the other" (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990).

2.1 Gender Stereotypes in the Media

Since this thesis aims to examine female leading roles in drama series from Egypt and Spain, it is crucial to highlight gender stereotypes. Which is more of beliefs regarding the appropriate social roles for each gender, aside from the different types of attitudes that distinguish the men from women (Tartaglia & Rollero, 2015). It is said that it is based on what each gender "should" be occupied with within a society (Eagly & Wood, 2011). Males and females are certainly different; however, there is an impact on how males and females define themselves or dealt with by others because of gender stereotypes (Ellemers, 2018).

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When the media has its way to keep placing the women in a certain frame or even conveying certain stereotypes about women, it unwarily "trivialises" them (Tuchman, 2000). According to Wood (1997), gender representation in the media impacts how the public see themselves and that is because of the media-saturated world that is currently dominating.

As mentioned earlier, this study is mainly focused on the portrayal of female leading roles in drama series across different cultural settings, it is essential to shed light on the common stereotypes about women in the media. It's often in the media, men have consistently been addressed as "dynamic, audacious, amazing, forceful, and generally uninvolved in human connections" (Wood, 1997, p. 32). Wood (1997) stated that on the contrarily women are portrayed as sex objects, with a certain appearance standards, such as often incompetent, young, thin, beautiful, passive, dependent. Additionally, the female characters across various media settings regularly devote their energy to dealing with their looks, their homes, or their families (Wood, 1997, p. 32). Also, they tend to be mentioned in soft topics related to parenting, relationship advice and lifestyle (Demarest & Garner, 1992). Ellemers (2018) stated that gender stereotypes limit the prospect of both males and females, in particular when it comes to the representation of the media. This is initially because of how stereotypes may allow individuals to come to conclusions rapidly about the behavior of large groups (Ellemers, 2018).

Norris (1997) clarified that gender stereotypes are commonly placed in the media, where women are often represented as sensitive or pitiful and men as aggressive. Nacos (2005) additionally stated that the portrayal of women as "weak" or "emotionally centered" is of the harsh and robotic. In support of that, it was stated that several scholars have contended that females are regularly depicted in the media in cliché jobs (Lester & Ross, 2003; Morris, 2006; Ali & Batool, 2015) also visual media favor focusing on the female body versus the male face (Ullah & Khan, 2014).

In conclusion, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) stated that the roles in the media that are work related are mainly given to men, while staying at home and fully dedicating being caregivers are mostly women. Furtherly, Bridge (1997) came to the conclusion that women were more likely to be portrayed as victims, and subordinate roles (Collins, 2011).

The mentioned theories and concepts would help to answer the following research questions and hypothesis;

H1: Younger female leading roles are more likely to be shown in sexual content.

H2: Younger female leading roles are more likely to be represented in an objective type of role.

RQ1 (a): How did the Spanish series visually frame the female leading roles?

RQ1 (b): How did the Egyptian series visually frame the female leading roles?

RQ2 (a): Did the Spanish series visually stereotype the female leading roles?

RQ2 (b): Did the Egyptian series visually stereotype the female leading roles?

RQ3 (a): What are the dominant frames used for women in the Spanish series?

RQ3 (b): What are the dominant frames used for women in the Egyptian series?

H3: Female leading roles are often portrayed passively in television drama series.

RQ4 (a): Are there any new female empowerment issues that were addressed in the Spanish series?

RQ4 (b): Are there any new female empowerment issues that were addressed in the Egyptian series?

H4: Female leading roles are often portrayed negatively in television drama series.

RQ5 (a): Does the genre of the series play a role in the framing of female leading roles in Spain?

RQ5 (b): Does the genre of the series play a role in the framing of female leading roles in Egypt?

Methodology

Content Analysis

       This comparative study employs a content analysis to analyze representation of female leading characters in drama series across different cultures, in particularly Egypt and Spain. Wimmer & Dominick (2013) stated that for researchers to explore the portrayal of characters in series the usage of quantitative research methods allows a more suitable and flexible questioning approach. Additional to content analysis is a first step prior to fixing the problem of gender stereotyping (Rodgers and Thorson, 2000). It is also fair to mention that the flexibility given by the quantitative content analysis presents a challenge of providing a summarized observation rather than description (Bengtsson, 2016). Bengtsson (2016) has defined content analysis as a technique in research that is objective and systematic, which allows to describe the obvious and clear content of communication. In this context, it is essential to have such flexibility which will serve the purpose of this study of analytically explore series from aspects that were not discussed previously in an academic context.

       In this comparative study, drama series in Egypt and Spain are analyzed. While it cannot be stated that these two countries are representative of the world at large, but what could be said that they represent different cultures from different geographic regions.

Sampling

       With female leading roles as primary focus, the researcher examined the female centered drama series aired on VOD services and from three different genres. This is based on the literature review which insights that there are three genres in drama series, which are contemporary drama, historical drama and crime drama. From each country, a series was chosen to be analyzed, while keeping the parameter of the series being aired on VOD platforms wither Netflix or *Shahid VIP*. Also, the series either should be female centered

plots or the leader roles are females. Having such criteria, whether its format that it should be aired on VOD platforms in particularly Netflix or *Shahid VIP*, or even having either full female cast or a female leading role has shortened the chancing of including various series. A sample of six series was chosen divided into three series from each country. Hence, the female protagonists are the center of diverse series narratives tackling a variety of women's issues. The chosen series are, in the historical drama genre *Grand Hotel 'Secrets of The Nile* which was produced in 2016, and *Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable'* which was produced in 2017. In the contemporary drama genre, *Valeria* which was produced in 2020, and *Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!'* which was produced also in 2020. And in the crime genre, *Locked up 'Vis a vis'* which was produced in 2015, and *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa 'Every week on Friday'* which was produced in 2020.

The unit of analysis in this study is the female character with major roles in these series. Choosing the female leading character from each series, in particularly based on the plot was important. Therefore, the sample for this content analysis was composed from 19 primary female characters portrayed in the 6 chosen series. Most of the characters chosen are played by top actresses in their country and even the context of each series shows how each actresses had her own input upon the character she played, and they are as follows;

1. *Grand Hotel* 'Secrets of The Nile: Qismat Hanim

2. *Cable Girls* 'Las Chicas Del Cable': Lidia Aguila/ Alba

3. *Valeria:* Valeria

4. *Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!'*: Alia

5. *Locked up* 'Vis a vis': Zulema Zahir

6. Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa *'Every week on Friday':* Layla/Nour

Coding Procedure

This study investigates the portrayal of women in television drama series in different cultural contexts –Egypt & Spain– by means of a quantitative content analysis. Drama series from two VOD platforms in two different countries Egypt and Spain were selected. The variables and related categories were obtained according to the literature, from film analysis codebook by Anne-Marie Smith (1999) and also television and film character demographics study by Kimberly Neuendorf (2000) both shed the light on featuring variables that are basic information for the series. In this context, this study includes four variables about the series; Series name, as each series will be numbered and the coders will code accordingly. Season number, this variable will be useful for multiple parted series, which will help identify the availability of character building of a female leading character in series that are more than one part. Episode number is another variable will support the series that are from one season, as the researcher could explore the character's development became noticeable when over the timeframe of the whole series. And the last variable that serves the series basis is the series genre, which according to the literature review, Redvall et all (2018) stated that there are three drama series genres historical drama, contemporary drama and crime drama. This last variable is also one of the criteria of choosing the series that were analyzed.

The second section of the code book is constructed from variables that are tailored to the female characters that are being analyzed. Such that the first variable is the character's name, giving the options of one name from each series; Qismat Hanim, Lidia Aguila/ Alba, Valeria, Alia, Zulema Zahir and Layla who is also known as Nour. The following variable was featured in Smith (1999), Neuendorf (2000), and even Ateya (2014) it is considered one of the root variables in quantitative research, and it is the socio-economic status or in particularly social class of woman portrayed in the series. According to the literature review,

as Allam (2008) stated that the representation of females is constantly expected, illiteracy, low socio-economic standing, and in contrast to traditions which causes financial problems are all obstacles that are expected to affect their status in society. Additional to Santorun & Orosa (2019) stating that females are enrolled in unfavorable social economic classes. Based on that, the socio-economic status was given five options that could be determined by the life style the female characters analyzed are engaged with. The operational definition of this variable was obtained from Ateya (2014). Starting with upper class, aristocrat with a luxurious life and she does not face economic problems. Secondly, upper-middle class, professional woman who belongs to political, social groups. Thirdly, middle class, which Ateya (2014) has identify it as an educated woman who may be employed or not yet does not has a luxurious life. Fourthly, middle-Lower class, as it refers to a female who is poorly paid and barely earns a living salary to support her family. And lastly, Ateya (2014) demonstrated the last option which is lower class as a woman who works in the domestic sector and is struggling with living conditions. Another root variable that falls after the socio-economic status is the age, as according to Bazzini et al (1997), they have stated how women of all ages were underrepresented, this is aside from depicting women who are older than 35 as more unfriendly, less intelligent. It was stated that the younger the female characters the more empowerment with sexual boldness she is (Gallager, 2014). This variable was grouped into seven clusters: Infant 0-2; Child 3-12; Adolescent 13-19; young adult 20-39; middle-age adult 40-54; mature adult 55-64 and senior adult 65 and over.

The next variable was based on what was stated by Wood (1997) regarding the constant portrayal of females which includes her being passive. In this context, a variable was added to this study's codebook, which is; does the female character an active or passive role in the plot? With options of active or passive. Active is when the female character is

dominant in the decision making of the series and passive such that the female is more impacted than making decisions.

According to Neuendorf (2000), indicating the role of the characters is one of the key variables to be added when analyzing series or even film characters. In such context, this study has included the variable role with two categories protagonist and supporting actress. To clarify, protagonist is when the character is central character of the series and supporting actress is when the actress is playing a role in the development of the series, yet not the main focus of the series itself. This variable was also initiated from the literature review, such that Santorun & Orosa (2019) mentioned that when a female is enrolled as a protagonists, they represented as victims of the narrated event. Another variable what added which is related to the female's role. As according to Lacalle and Castro (2017) they have mentioned that there are two types of roles, subjective and objective. To clarify, subjective is when a female tends to be like men for the purpose of domination. And Objective role is when the female is hypersexualized to appeal to men. Furthely, in the literature review Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) stated that a portrayal of characters can have two forms, thematic and semiotic. Thematic was explained by Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) as relating to a particular subject such as seeing female character shown as a housewife, professional, police, etc. And the Semiotic portrayal is having to look deeper into a given meaning, through signs and symbols, such as being a victim, rebellious, sexy, lesbian, or even good.

It was important to add a variable to examine the presents of sexual content, and according to Al- Sayed and Gunter (2012), sexual content is any representation or portrayal of conversation or behavior that involves sexuality, sexual suggestiveness and sexual actives/relations. Based on the literature review Abdelfatah (2015) stated that the female characters mostly have certain frames that they are represented in. In a content analysis

conducted by May Kamal (2019) it included a variable that examined the main frames for the female character with options of individuality, social role, and relationship with a man. These options align with the aspects mentioned in the literature review. Kamal (2019) has clarified the categories as follows; individuality, is when the character is capable of making her own decisions and seeking fulfillment for herself. Social role is when the portrayal of the female in a social role of a mother, daughter, wife is emphasized in the series' plot and narrative. And lastly, relationship with a man is simply when the female character is focused to be shown in a relationship with a man, either a heterosexual, or even her boss.

Film analysis codebook by Anne-Marie Smith (1999) and also television and film character demographics study by Kimberly Neuendorf (2000) both shed the light on featuring the marital status of the female character represented, this variable simply included the categories single, engaged, married, divorced, widow, in a relationship. They have also interpreted a variable to examine the job status of the woman portrayed. As according to the literature review, females are regularly depicted in the media in cliché jobs (Lester & Ross, 2003; Morris, 2006; Ali & Batool, 2015). For that sake, occupation was added a variable with the categories of white collar, blue collar, unemployed, no given profession, student, private business.

Exploring the framing theory and the frames earlier in this study had brought to the light visual grammar (Fahmy, 2019; Monaco, 2000). As it is the way visuals either videography or photography communicate (Fahmy, 2019). Two variables were featured as a result of this perspective which were shot size and shot angle. Shot size had three categories, close up, medium shot, and long shot. And shot angle had four categories which were low angle, equality, high angle, and oblique. Each category was described more in the codebook to prevent any confusion. It is important to mention that there is other visual grammar aside

from shot size and shot angle, but this study precisely is concentrating upon these two aspects only. Such that there might be camera movements, but all what is important while coding the series is the shot sizes the female character is shown in. And which shot angle the female character was shown from.

The availability of supporting male actors is present in the selected series in this study, and for that fact it was important to monitor their minimal presents and examine their influence on the female leading role. As according to Painter and Ferrucci (2017) stated in the literature review that there is a clear placement of women within the patriarchal system, as a result of television programs assuming that the male perspective has the greatest importance in the lives of women. The two variables were obtained from Ateya (2014) codebook. The first variable that served this point was the to examine the presence of an influencing male, with the categories none, father, brother, husband, friend, other. The second variable is to inspect the type of the male influence, with the categories agree and support, individual Choices, disagree yet support, individual choices, re-directive, controlling, and no detectable influence. Further definitions for each categories were clearly included in the codebook.

There were two variables that were placed in the codebook and they both were coded once at the end of each episode; the first variable is the overall character representation in the episode with the categories of positive or negative. Positive representation means that the portraying of the female was mainly good image from a moral and progressive perspective. And negative representation is when the portrayal is immoral and outdated thinking. As for the second and last variable in the codebook, which was coded once as the end of each episode is the character traits. Along the literature review it was shown how women are tended to be depicted with certain traits such as weak, sex objects, dependent (Abdelfatah,

2015). In this context, this study obtained from the Ateya (2014) character traits as a variable with its categories which were, weak, powerful, sex object, self-independent, active/cope, critical, passive, and progressive.

Inter-Coder Reliability

To ensure reliability of the results, it is recommended that about 10 percent -25 percent of the content be analyzed by another independent coder (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Thus, 10 percent of the sample which were total of 16 episodes out of 153 episodes, was re-coded by a second coder who is a mass communication graduate student. The coder was extensively trained by the researcher to guarantee reliable coding. Then, the researcher calculated intercoder reliability with the result with the level of agreement of 84% according to Scott's pi value.

Context of Series

This thesis investigates the portrayal of women in Egyptian and Spanish female centered and leading role series aired on VOD services.

Therefore, this study will be analyzing six series, three from Egypt and three from Spain. Which according to the literature review there are three main genres for the television drama series; contemporary drama, historical drama and crime drama. Each genre will have a series from each country.

Historical Drama Genre

Grand Hotel 'Secrets of The Nile'

It is an Egyptian series that takes place in the 1950s, in particularly the city of Aswan in Egypt (El Behary, 2018). It first aired during the holy month Ramadan back in 2016, on a satellite television network which was Capital Broadcasting Center –known as *CBC*–. But by April 2018, it was announced that *Grand Hotel* became the first Arabic series to be feature on *Netflix* (Moussa, 2018). However, it was already aired parallel to it airing time on traditional media on *Shahid VIP* (El Behary, 2018).

This series is based on a Spanish show which shares the same name, therefore Netflix changed the series name from *Grand Hotel* to *The Secret of the Nile* to feature it on Netflix (Essam, 2019). The series featured English and Greek subtitles that helped the show to reach wider audience (Ahmed, 2018). The Egyptian version was written by Tamer Habib (IMDb, 2016), who successfully altered the Spanish romantic drama into one full of Egyptian spirit (El Goarany, 2016), and the cast of the series are the Egyptian actors and actresses; Amr Youssef, Ahmed Dawoud, Anoshka, Amina Khalil, Dina El Sherbiny and Mohamed Mahmdouh (IMDb, 2016).

The plot of series has different key elements that turns the story to a more Egyptian version, which made the story more suitable to the Egyptian culture of the 1950s alternatively to the early 1900s in Spain (El Goarany, 2016). It was also stated that the series was shorten down to 30 episodes, 45 minutes each (IMDb, 2016) rather than 39 episodes which were broken down into 3 seasons (El Goarany, 2016). The Egyptian version follows a young man, Ali, who arrives at the hotel – Old Cataract Hotel– to secretly investigate the disappearance of his younger sister who works there (El Behary, 2018). He then gets himself a job in the hotel, finding himself falling in love with the daughter of the hotel owner Nazly (IMDb, 2016). Secrets and mysteries that were hidden start to uncover along as the series go (El Behary, 2018).

Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable'

The Spanish series *Cable Girls* which is originally in Spanish named "*Las Chicas Del Cable'*, is one of *Netflix* original productions, and the longest-running non-U.S *Netflix* series (Hopewell, 2020). *Cable Girls* has grown its audience since it aired on April 2017 on *Netflix*, over 42 episodes throughout five seasons, each episode goes between the range of 30 to 60 minutes. *Netflix* stated that there is a recognized ambition of the story, that is why the show had grown season on season (Hopewell, 2020). It was stated in an article that the first season ranked worldwide as the third most-binged SVOD series just over its first week of release, according to TV Time (Hopewell, 2020).

Cable Girls took place over 1929-32 (Hopewell, 2020), and its cast is led by four main women, Blanca Suárez as Lidia, Ana Fernández as Carlota, Nadia de Santiago as Marga, and Ana Polvorosa as Oscar (Rodríguez & Bravo, 2019). The story of this series in centered upon these four women with their different backgrounds, as they were hired to work as operators of switchboard for a telephone company in Spain (Moore, 2019). Those four

main female characters have come to work at a place which represents progress and modernity, as it is the forefront of communication revolution of Madrid (O'Keefe, 2020). Furthermore, the series conveys various frame works, such as betrayal, jealousy, envy and friendships with love, but, above all, with dreams (Moore, 2019).

The producer of *Cable Girls* Teresa Fernandez-Valdes stated that the story or the series in mainly directed to women, in particularly strong women who are the protagonists of the series (Roxborough, 2017). It was also mentioned that the creative team behind *Cable Girls 'Las Chicas del cable'*, are a high number of female creators working in the show, such as the art director which was Raquel Benavides and the costume design which was Helena Sanchís (Rodríguez & Bravo, 2019). However, the original idea of the series belongs to Ramón Campos and Gema R. Neira (Rodríguez & Bravo, 2019).

A study by Rodríguez & Bravo (2019) took *Cable Girls* as a case study as it was said that the show is debatable because of its unclear treatment of feminism. The authors mentioned at first that the show seemed to become a relevant feminist show, which will sort out the social debates about gender inequality in contemporary Spain. But, the study stated that *Cable Girls* is a mainstream production that sells the wrong idea of fighting for women's rights. Additionally, this series is reinforcing muscularity and is unfolding behaviors and attitudes that are based on inequality (Rodríguez & Bravo, 2019).

To conclude, race, gender, gender identity, and sexuality are the top topics at the moment across the borders, not just for *Netflix* but across all SVOD and *Cable Girls* got in just relative to what is currently popular (Hopewell, 2020).

Valeria

Madrid-set version of Sex and The City (Keller, 2020), a 35 to 50-minute series that revolves around Valeria herself, who ends up in a love triangle between her husband and her crush (Romero, 2020). *Valeria* is a Spanish series that is based on the novel series '*En los zapatos de Valeria'* by Elísabet Benavent (Hart, 2020), and adapted for TV by María López Castaño (Keller, 2020). This series was described as a witty and romantic female-led series, which is one season and only eight episodes (Hart, 2020).

The cast of the series has four leading female friends, Diana Gómez as Valeria, Silma López as Lola, Paula Malia as Carmen and Teresa Riott as Nerea. With two main male characters Ibrahim Al Shami as Adrián who is Valeria's husband and Maxi Iglesias, who plays the role of Víctor who is Valeria's lover (Buxeres, 2020). *Valeria* is not a show that's trying to convey anything hidden, it is said that its story is simply about a young woman who seeks a deeper connection with her life aspects (Keller, 2020) even with her a career and marital crisis (Hart, 2020).

The main character is Valeria who is a writer suffering from writer's block (Keller, 2020), she is also a character who is certain about what she wanted in life and even married the man she loved (Sharma, 2020). Sided by her husband who is a photographer who is also struggling to stay employed, which led to Valeria to shift her focus on searching for jobs rather than fixing her writer's block (Sharma, 2020). Valeria has strong connection with her friends, yet wanted to reinforce such connection with her husband and her work (Keller, 2020). With the help of her friends, she came to the conclusion of switching her writing from the thriller genre to an erotic genre, which gradually took over her personal life (Sharma, 2020). Yet, later it is discovered that the erotic storytelling was established from excitement from a new man who remains on her mind (Hart, 2020). To clarify, Valeria starts to struggle

with mixed emotions towards her crush Victor, and this uncertainty of her built affairs, distanced husband, affairs, and career mismanagement (Hart, 2020).

The main narrative of this show focuses on Valeria and her relationship with her husband. But every now and then, the series it shifts to the secondary stories of Nerea, Lola, and Carmen, which complements the storyline of the series (Sharma, 2020). Where Lola is sexually bold and does not mind being a homewrecker, stating that if she was the reason for breaking up a marriage, then "that's their problem" (Keller, 2020). Carmen is the awkward one, who is not confident in herself, despite being high-powered job and having a great sense of humor (Keller, 2020). And finally, Nerea is loyal one, yet struggles with her sexuality (Keller, 2020) additionally struggles with forming meaning relationships and accepting herself (Sharma, 2020).

To conclude, *Netflix's Valeria* relative from the start, which attacked the audience with the interesting group of women who seek to discover themselves within a world of wit and humor (Hart, 2020). Aside from the dynamic night life and colorful characters of the series, there is also a bit of fantasy conveyed in the show; for example, it does not make sense that the struggling characters, Valeria and Adrián, who are unable to settle with their career to afford the apartment they are in, even if it is in an old building (Keller, 2020).

Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!'

An Egyptian series that sparked a lot of debates, about the nature of the issue that is portrayed through the series (Gamal, 2020). As it revolves around Alia –a thirty-year-old– who comes out of the control of her restricted family, in particularly her mother who regulated all Alia's life aspects when she was younger (Gamal, 2020). Therefore, the main character then takes the lead of her own life, while facing various confrontations with her

mother (Gamal, 2020). *Leh Laa* deals with various issues, but the most noticeable one is the diversity of thinking among generations through ethics, technology. Additionally, considering societal and traditional issues that young Egyptian girls go through and parent obey with (Mahmoud, 2020).

Leh Laa is staring Amina Khalil as Alia, with the support of other empowering female cast members, Sherine Reda as her aunt Hala, Hala Sedqy as mother Sohair, and Mariam El Khosht as Radwa. As for the male characters; Hany Adel as Sherif, Mohamed Al Sharnuby as Hussein, and many more (Independent, 2020). This television series consists of 15 episodes, each range from 40 to 50 minutes (Sameh, 2020). It was written by a narrative workshop, which was supervised by the scriptwriter Mariam Naoum (Sameh, 2020), which records as her return to directing after her absence for three years since '*Wahat Alghurub*' (which translates to sunset Oasis in English) (Mahmoud, 2020), and directed by Mariam Abou Ouf (Sameh, 2020). It launched June 2020 on *Shahid VIP* the VOD platform, it was expected to originally air during the last 15 days of Ramadan 2020, yet was postponed due to shooting difficulties (Independent, 2020). The series was initially entitled '*Al Etegah Al Mouaakes*' which translates to Reverse Direction in English, but after that it was decided to change the name to *Leh Laa* (Mahmoud, 2020)

For the series to be available only on the *Shahid VIP* platform, had made the audience urging to search for the episodes to follow. Additional to that, the series was only shown over a period of three days only, which were Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays every week at 1 am (Mahmoud, 2020). But by February 2021, it was announced that *Leh Laa* will be aired on traditional media, on the MBC channels since it had achieved a remarkable success throughout its airing time on *Shahid* platform (Al-Shorouk, 2021).

An Article written by Marwa Gamal (2020), focused on the fact that *Leh Laa* showed five different models of women. Starting with the main character which is "Alia", who is not

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well aware of her own life and lack life experiences because of the over control and restricted life under her mother. Secondly, the character "Hala", which is her aunt who is 45 years old and has never been married before. But she has a love affair with a man who is 10 years younger, which brought up conflicts with the young man's family. Hala is the type of character who relies on herself, and is against marriage unit she fell for this young man. Additionally, she was keen to support Alia to make up for the lack of freedom she had already went through. Thirdly, is the character "Radwa", she is a vailed close friend of Alia. She is weak in character and obeys the orders of her husband, to the extent that he prevented her from seeing Alia and even from attending her wedding. Fourthly, is the character "Nancy" who is played by the actress Passant Shawky, the girl who lives with the European lifestyle which does not apply well with her currently living in Egypt, and she lived with her fiancé. And lastly, is Alia sister "Engy" who is a duplicate of their mother. She is married and has restricted household over her children (Gamal, 2020)

The controversy this series holds is because of the how it disputes with the Egyptian tradition. Through an interview conducted by Al Shariq Al-Awsat newspaper, the actress Amina Khalil who plays the main role Alia was questioned about such matter (Farouk, 2020). Khalil stated that although the series dealt with "Alia" who decided to break out of the restrictions and traditions that are imposed by society. That does not mean that the series encourage girls to leave the family home. She clarified by examples such as presenting the character of a "gang leader", does not mean pushing the society to steal, and when Khalil presents a character that is a "drug addict", it does not mean that she encourages this (Farouk, 2020). Khalil furtherly added that the controversy that is revolving around the *Leh Laa* series is not only related to the girl's independence from the family home, but it extends to the escape scene on her wedding day. As some see what she did as a scandal and a mistake (Farouk, 2020). The main message of the series seeks to delve deeper than just judging the

girl who ran away, but rather think about what got her to that point. Furtherly explained by Khalil, that the character of the mother "Sohair", did not hear her daughter Alia at all, rather she suppressed her freedom until she was forced to leave the house, and thus the main message of the series is that parents should hear their children, especially girls (Farouk, 2020).

In conclusion, Khalil quoted "Controversy exists and is an indication of success" and highlighted the fact that *Leh Laa* is not exclusively for women, although it revolves around women (Farouk, 2020). Khalil believes that the story is relatively connected to each person, but with different perspectives, either directly or indirectly related. Such that any girl in the Arab world, one day felt a side of Alia's feelings towards her household, and the case is not necessarily identical (Farouk, 2020).

Crime Drama Genre

Locked up 'Vis a vis'

This is an original Atresmedia (A Spanish media group) series that was premiered in 2015 (N.p, 2017), that is considered a record-breaking Spanish drama (Howse, 2019), and which was then brought by *Netflix* for global streaming rights after it got cancelled on *Antena 3* (N.p, 2017). *Locked Up* was initially made by Globo media for Antena 3, it is bold in challenging racist and homophobic attitudes (Lawson, 2017). Since foreign television is often less limited by politicians, regulators and the fear of negative newspaper coverage, therefore this prison drama gives out the feeling of luxuriating in creative freedom (Lawson, 2017). It is a higher-octane prison drama-thriller laced with dark humor, it is a 4-season series with an extension season entitled "*Vis a vis: El Oasis*" that was premiered in 2020, 48 episodes, each episode is from 50 to 75 minutes each (Mayorga, 2016).

Locked up has given an encouragement to produce more Spain originated series. Additionally, it is the perfect choice to meet the standers of the international content because of its high quality (N.p, 2017). It is a women's prison drama, and has its own creation and uniqueness (DeBolt, 2020). The characters of the series covered various types that might be found in a prison among both the prisoners and the guards (DeBolt, 2020). The cast of this series are Maggie Civantos as "Macarena Ferreiro", Najwa Nimri as "Zulema Zahir", Berta Vázquez as "Curly", Alba Flores as "Saray", Cristina Plazas as "Miranda", Inma Cuevas as "Anabel", and María Isabel Díaz Lago as "Sole" (N.p, 2017). Other cast members were added in the extension "Oasis" season, yet *Locked Up* focused mainly on the characters of Macarena and Zulema (Dowling, 2016).

Locked Up narrates the complicated living of a heterogeneous group of women inside a prison (N.p, 2017). The plot had a lot of unbelievable twists and surprises, which kept the

audience hooked on to find out what would happen next (DeBolt, 2020). Additionally, the series had moments of danger, violence, love and friendship, and abuse (DeBolt, 2020). The main character of *Locked Up* is Macarena Ferreiro "Maggie Civantos", the series starts with her in a high-rise apartment, sets a bright yellow canary free from the window (Dowling, 2016). Then in the voiceover Macarena is informing her mother on the phone that she is going away on a sailing trip. However, she is going to jail (Dowling, 2016). Macarena finds herself in high-security jail at Cruz Del Sur, after being deceived by a lover into financial fraud (Lawson, 2017). The first season follows her seeking a retrial, she is considered to be the relative goodie in comparison with the series' villain, Zulema (Najwa Nimri), who has established business out of her imprisonment (Lawson, 2017).

Furtherly, the plot of the Spanish show started with a murder in jail, which generated a storyline about the destiny of 9 million euros that were stolen, while providing various suspects, by which anyone of them could have been involved. Parallel to that, Macarena's family became filled with guilt and blood as they tried to help her (Lawson, 2017). Along as the series goes, there are some placement for flashbacks to Macarena's pampered former life, which shows how her boss/boyfriend is the reason for her imprisonment. *Locked Up* has shown that when a story is set in a prison, everything that happens outside it seems incidental (Dowling, 2016). It was mentioned that the language that was used throughout the series was down and dirty (DeBolt, 2020), yet the most threatening thing about it was that the series is in Spanish. Which made the swearing sounds much worse than the words that appear in the subtitles (Dowling, 2016). This is of course beside the abundance of nudity scenes (DeBolt, 2020).

Lawson (2017) stated that there are two elements that could be considered as a drawback for *Locked Up* and are vital for a hit drama series. Since stories set in prison, they automatically struggle to include an understanding central characters, and another character

within the community whom viewers would never suspect of being a criminal (Lawson, 2017). It was furtherly added that *Locked Up*'s major popularity is because of the encouragement for female sexuality in the absence of men; even the title of the Spanish version, "*Vis-à-Vis*", refers to a term for "conjugal visit" (Lawson, 2017).

Because of the all-female cast members, *Locked Up* was always at risk for the accusation –from the critics– that it is theft from the American series "*Orange is the New Black*", especially in sexual tension and the tactics of imprisonment (Lawson, 2017). However, *Locked Up* reflects an older sexual politics, whereas "*Orange is the New Black*" has a generally feminist ethic (Lawson, 2017).

An article by Wade (2020), has tackled three aspects which clarify that *Locked Up* in unlike *Orange is The New Black*. Starting with the tone of the series, *Locked Up* has a much more series tone, yet on the other hand, *Orange is The New Black* was enrolled as comedy at the Emmys –which is television academy awards– since the series was not clear what it wanted to be. In contrast, the Spanish series did not seem to have such issue, as from the very beginning of the it was seen as thriller with Macarena getting into jail where she should not have been. Secondly, *Locked Up* had a clear protagonist and villain, which are Macarena and Zulema. This show gives the audience the drama and crime that should come out of a show about prison, additional to making it clear to who they should be rooting for. And lastly, the drama does not wait to start, whereas in the first episode there was a murder in jail and from that moment on the show refuses to slow down. Even when the drama starts to be a bit slow inside prison, the show turns to the Ferreiro family –Macarena's family– who are trying to get the bail money for their daughter. Unfortunately, Macarena's family gets in contact with Zulema's outside business.

In conclusion, *Locked Up* has a multiple thread storyline, which require to follow on from previous seasons, yet a viewer does not have to see earlier episodes to fully enjoy the

show. That is because of the fast pace of the script along with the strong acting throughout, the characters (Howse, 2019). This series takes the audience into the raw savagery of prison life with the its plot that is surprising thrilling and harsh (Delaney, 2017). It is one of the Spanish series that went beyond the small screen and has grown on social networks the passion of fans for the series (N.p, 2018). Such that the fans have been clamoring on social media platforms for more (Lang, 2019). As Javier Méndez, head of content of the Media Pro Group, once stated that *Locked Up* has exceeded the objectives and it has an affect across the borders of Spain with greater projection (Lang, 2019).

Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa 'Every week on Friday'

One of the topped Egyptian series in the search list *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* – which translates in English *'Every week on Friday'* – has gotten the attention after its episodes were released in 2020 on the VOD platform *Shahid VIP* and it is a *Shahid* original (Farouk, 2020). It was shown within the new map of the *Shahid VIP* platform that MBC revealed at the beginning of year 2020 (Farouk, 2020).

This Egyptian series shares the same name of a novel by the great writer Ibrahim Abdel-Majid (Taha, 2020). Which has many editions from the Egyptian Lebanese House and it was translated for many languages, the novel is about a hypothetical group through a social networking site through which it follows some mysterious crimes, which reveals interesting human and social details for all protagonists (Safwat, 2020). The details of the novel, attracted work screenwriter Iyad Ibrahim, who tells Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper in an interview that since 2009 he got attached to the idea, and 3 years later he thought about turning it into a TV series (Farouk, 2020). Additionally, Mahmoud Al Sabaa was the producer (Farouk, 2020), and Mohamed Hefzy, has also participated in the production and writing of the script, as he is one of the most prominent Egyptian authors, producers and president of the "Cairo" International Film Festival (N.p, 2020). It was mentioned that the plan initially was to present *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* in 30 episodes, but after signing with the *Shahid VIP* platform, the scriptwriters have written a new treatment to be present in 10 episodes only, to suit the nature of the digital platforms (Farouk, 2020).

This series which consists of only ten episodes as mentioned previously, each episode is in the range between 35 and 40 minutes, which plays as a shift in Egyptian and Arab drama, whereas this is shortening the time of the series by about two thirds of the usual 30 episodes form for the Arabic series (N.p, 2020). Additional to that, it has better production, and removes the story fillers which creates boredom (N.p, 2020). The art critic Andrew

Mohsen shared in an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper that presenting the series in 10 episodes is suitable for an online series, even it is more suitable for a series that belongs to crime and suspense (Farouk, 2020). Mohsen then added that the series is not only crime but also adventures unlike the series in the Arab world (Farouk, 2020).

The cast members of *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* are starring Menna Shalaby as "Nour Riad" & "Layla Abd-Elbary", Asir Yassin as "Emad Gaber", Sawsan Badr as "Sawsan" and Ahmed Khaled Saleh "Karim" (Taha, 2020). This Egyptian series revolves around a girl named "Nour", who lives with her family, With the start of the first episode (Taha, 2020), Nour Riad pays the price for a mistake she did not commit. After her secret marriage to a famous writer, a video recording of them was leaked in the bedroom, which makes the family claim her death (N.p, 2020). During the funeral prayer, the people of the neighborhood gossiping about her, and call not to pray on the body (Taha, 2020). The thriller of the series begins when Nour wakes up from her forged death, and begins to get off the carriage of the dead (Farouk, 2020). Then Nour enters an old house where Emad lives, who is a young man suffering from autism, and lives with his mother Sawsan. The mother then begins to explain the rituals of the house and how to deal with Emad (Taha, 2020).

Critics believed that the choices of the actors to the characters they have played were successful (Safwat, 2020). Layla which was played Menna Shalaby, was a character who transformed from a passive woman to a strong protagonist this transformation did not happen sharply and suddenly, but it was developing gradually. As for the male role, Emad who was played by Asir Yassin, he was assigned with a challenging character, as he was required to play the role for a male that suffers with autism (Farouk, 2020).

There was some accusation that were thrown at the series for insulting autism patients, but the author replied to clarify the misunderstanding (Farouk, 2020). He stated that Emad does not represent autistic patients in the series, as he represents himself, so he is a

personality who has a past that led him to what he is in, and therefore he does not kill because he is a patient with autism (Farouk, 2020). The director also pointed out that both Nour/Layla and Imad are victims of others' mistakes (N.p, 2020). Furthermore, this misunderstand usually happens every time a social or professional character is presented on the television screen (Farouk, 2020). The pioneers of social networking sites praised the role of Menna Shalaby and Asir Yassin, after the end of the events, especially the role of Menna Shalaby, who won the approval of the audience, describing her as an "acting phantom" (Taha, 2020).

The actress, Menna Shalaby stated that the series *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* is a distinct and different experience, especially that thriller is a new genre for her. However, she had concerns since the series is aired only on a digital platform (Safwat, 2020). Such that the success or fail of this work depending on the content provided by the actor (Safwat, 2020).

To conclude, this series far away from usual Arab series, that are related to values, principles, and the struggle of good and evil (N.p, 2020). on the contrary, *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* dealt with the storyline simply without complication; whether on the level of characters, the story, or the artistic elements in montage, narration, colors and decoration (N.p, 2020). Yet, the series illustrated a deeper meaning of reality for humanity, and raised question such as does a person adapt to circumstances and adapt to them, however harsh they are? Or does a person sacrifice himself in order to live in a clear way in front of society? (Safwat, 2020).

Findings

Content Analysis Findings

The usage of content analysis primarily focused on examining the six characters in six Egyptian and Spanish female-centered series. This study compared between two countries to inspect the specific perceptions regarding Egyptian women and Spanish women in television drama series. For the purpose of this analysis, a total of 153 episodes from six different series were selected from each of the two countries, with three different drama series genres from each country. The six series that were selected for this study included total of 19 female leading roles, yet only one female leading role was chosen to be analyzed from each series. Qismat Hanim, Lidia Aguila (AKA Alba), Valeria, Alia, Zulema Zahir and Layla (AKA Nour). The following the data collection, the analysis was carried out using SPSS 26.

There was an overall common presentation of the social economic status among the female leading roles that were analyzed, as they were mostly portrayed in middle-lower class. With *n=5883*, middle-lower class resulted with 40% such that it refers to a woman who is poorly paid and barely earns a living salary to support her family. This result was followed by middle class with 36%, as for upper-class and upper-middle class both resulted with 12% each. And since the characters were chosen because of being the leading role or the plot is simply centered on her, the results with the role of the female character came out 98% protagonist, with only 2% shown as a supporting actress; which means that the female was supporting in the development of the series but she is not the central point of the series itself, with *n=5883*. The age of the female leading roles was another tested variable which brought noteworthy findings. As 63% (*n=3717*) of the female leading roles portrayed in both Spanish and Egyptian series were young adults with the age range of 20 to 39 years old. Followed by 28% (*n=1658*) were middle age adults with the age range of 40 to 54 years old, and only 9% (*n=508*) for senior adults with the age range of 65 and over. Results of a chi-square test

revealed significant differences between sexual content and age of female leading character in the series where they were more likely to be mentioned *(χ = 34.93, p < 0.01)*. Thus, **H1**, which predicted that a younger in age a female leading role is the more likely to be represented in sexual content, **was supported**. Such that the young adults; Lidia from *Cable Girls*, Valeria from *Valeria* and Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* were shown with the age range of 20 to 39 years old. Their sexual content resulted with 4% *(n=137)*. Middle age adults, Zulema from *Locked Up* with the age range of 40 to 54 years old, her sexual content resulted with 2% (n=26). As for the senior adults, which was Qismat Hanim from *Grand Hotel* with the age range of 65 and over, it resulted with no presence of any sexual content which included any kind of portrayal of talk or behavior that contains sexual implications.

Table 1: *Younger female leading roles are more likely to be shown in sexual content (n= 5883).*

	The presence of sexual content % (n)	The absence of sexual content % (n)
Young Adults 20 to 39 years old	4% (137)	96% (3580)
Middle Age Adults 40 to 54 years old	2% (26)	98% (1632)
Senior Adults 65 years old and over	0% (0)	100% (508)

Chi Square 34.93, p < 0.01.

The findings of the age variable were also seen against the type of role that was represented to the female characters. Results of a chi-square test revealed significant differences between the type of role and the age of female leading character in the series *(χ =*

216.66, *p < 0.01)*. Thus, **H2**, which predicted that a younger in age a female leading role is the more likely to be represented in an objective type of role, **was supported**. Such that the young adults; Lidia, Valeria, and Layla. They were depicted as objective with total of 11% *(n=416).* Middle age adults, Zulema, her objective portrayal resulted with 2% (n=21). As for the senior adults, which was Qismat Hanim, it resulted with no presence of any objective portrayal; which included the representation of a female who is hyper-sexualized to appeal to men.

Table 2: *Younger female leading roles are more likely to be represented in an objective type of role (n=5883).*

	Subjective role % (n)	Objective role % (n)
Young Adults 20 to 39 years old	89% (3301)	11% (416)
Middle Age Adults 40 to 54 years old	98% (1637)	2% (21)
Senior Adults 65 years old and over	100% (508)	0% (0)

Chi Square 216.66, p < 0.01

   RQ1 inquired about in what way the drama series visually frame the female leading role in both countries Egypt and Spain. Through the shot size and shot angle variable, a total of *n= 5883* were analyzed. The overall results from the six series showed 45% medium shot, 30% long shot, and 25% closeup shot. And as for the overall findings for the shot angle, resulted with 86% eye level angle, 7% low angle, and 6% high angle. **RQ1** was divided into **RQ1 (a)** for the Spanish series and **RQ1 (b)** for the Egyptian series. For the Spanish series, starting with *Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable'* with *n=1561*. The shot angle resulted with

48% medium shot, 28% long shot, and 23% closeup shot. Additional to 90% eye level angle, 6% low angle, and 4% high angle. *Valeria* with *n=463* shot shots resulted with 49% medium shot, 28% long shot, and 23% close up shot. Additionally, with the results of 94% eye level angle, 4% high angle, and only 2% low angle. Lastly, *Locked up 'Vis a vis'* with *n=1658*, the shot sizes resulted with 46% medium shot, 32% closeup shot and 23% long shot. And 83% eye level angle, 11% low angle and 9% high angle.

As for the Egyptian series, firstly, *Grand Hotel 'Secrets of The Nile*, with *n= 603* the shot angles resulted with 46% medium shot, 34% long shot, and 21% closeup shot. And resulted with 82% eye level angle, 9% for both low angle and high angle. Secondly, *Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!'* with *n=915* the shot angles resulted with 41% medium shot, 38% long shot, and 22% closeup shot. And resulted with 87% eye level angle, 6% low angle, and 5% high angle. And lastly, *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa 'Every week on Friday'* with *n=683* has the closest percentage among used the shot angles, with the outcome of 41% medium shot, 31% long shot, and 28% closeup shot. As for the outcome of the shot angles, 86% eye level, 9% high angle, and 5% low angle.

RQ2 (a): Did the Spanish series visually stereotype the female leading roles?

RQ2 (b): Did the Egyptian series visually stereotype the female leading roles?

RQ2 was mainly about the stereotype that was visually represented for the female leading roles in the drama series. This research question was answered through three variables; Type of portrayal, marital status, and main frame that female character was shown in. With n=5883, the overall outcome from the six series of the type of portrayal was 56% thematic, such that the female character was being related to subjects or a particular subject. Such as seeing her as a Housewife, professional, mother, etc. And 44% semiotic, such that the female character's portrayal had deeper meaning than what is shown. **RQ2** divided into **RQ2 (a)** for the Spanish

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series and **RQ2 (b)** for the Egyptian series. Starting with the Spanish series *Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable'* with *n=1561,* 91% of the portrayal was thematic, and only 9% was semiotic. *Valeria* with *n=463,* there was a full agreement with that the female character analyzed "Valeria" was only portrayed throughout the series as thematic. On the contrarily, *Locked up* 'Vis a vis' with *n=1658,* resulted with full agreement that the female character analyzed "Zulema Zahir" was only shown through semiotic portrayal. As for the Egyptian series they shared same as the Spanish series full agreement. firstly, *Grand Hotel* 'Secrets of The Nile, with *n= 603* resulted that *"Qismat Hanim"* the female character analyzed was portrayed only in a thematic manner. In the same context would be *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa 'Every week on Friday'* with *n=683,* resulted with full agreement that *"Layla"* was only portrayed in semiotic manner throughout the series. And lastly, *Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!'* with *n=915* resulted with 89% thematic and 11% semiotic portrayal. The second variable that contributed to **RQ2 (a)** and **(b)** was marital status. This variable has a significant aspect, that although has an outcome which states the dominant marital status is being in an informal relationship -not married or engaged, however has a boyfriend or even an affair- with 39%, yet it was not the main focus which have resulted in the main frame of the female character variable with only 4% of being in a relationship with a man, either a heterosexual, father-daughter, or with a boss. In the Spanish series, *Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable',* Lidia (aka Alba) although she was shown 43% of the series single, but also was shown in different martial statues along the seasons of the series. Such that 13% of the series she was engaged, 31% in an informal relationship, and 13% of the series it was unclear to identify where she stands with her marital status. In *Valeria*, Valeria it was clear that she was married which resulted with 89%, yet 7% she was in an informal relationship and 3% was when she became single. As in *Locked up* 'Vis a vis', Zulema has the most unclear marital status of all characters in the Spanish series, such that after her marital status was shown in later episodes,

not in the very begging. This resulted with 98% being in an informal relationship and only 2% unable to identify her status.

The Egyptian series shared the various statues such the Spanish ones. Starting with *Grand Hotel* 'Secrets of The Nile, Qismat Hanim resulted with 81% as a widow. Her marital status was shown by the very end of first episode which came *n=113* out of *n=603* to result with 19% unable to identify the marital status of the character. However, in *Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!,* Alia was shown in various statues, such as 77% single, 17% in an informal relationship, 4% engaged and 2% is when it was unclear to identify her marital status. As for Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa 'Every week on Friday',* 86% she was married and 14% was when it was unclear to identify the marital status.

The third and last variable that contributed to this research question **(RQ2)** was the main frame that female character was shown in. Both Spanish and Egyptian series were highly portraying the individuality frame, with total of 87% of the six series context depicted the female character as an individual who is seeking personal fulfillment and capable of making her own decisions. Breaking it furtherly down, the Spanish *Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable'* has shown 85% individuality, 12% social role, and 4% showing that the focus of the female character is a relationship with a man. In *Valeria,* resulted with 71% individuality, 1% social role, and 28% Valeria was focusing a relationship with a man. As for *Locked up* 'Vis a vis', It was almost a full agreement that Zulema in mainly portrayed in individuality with 98% and only 2% a social role which was being a mother.

The Egyptian series *Grand Hotel* has shown Qismat Hanim as 92% individuality and 7% social role (mother). *Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!,* showed Alia as 91% individuality and 9% as social role being a daughter and emphasizing the basis of the plot on such matter. Lastly, Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa 'Every week on Friday'* was shown as 70% individuality, 28% as social role and 2% focusing on a relationship with the police man.

RQ3 (a): What are the dominant frames used for women in the Spanish series?

RQ3 (b): What are the dominant frames used for women in the Egyptian series?

RQ3 incorporated layered aspects in this study, as it inquired the dominant frames used for female leading roles in Spanish and Egyptian series. The importance of this research question is significant by the variables that helped ascent it. The variables are character's activity, character's type of role, character's job status; which was a variable that was coded once at the end of each episode of each series. The overall findings of the character's activity based on *n=5883*, came out with 87% as an active character and only 13% as a passive character in the series. As for the character's type of role, the female characters were mostly shown as a character who seeks dominations which was referred to in the code book as subjective and resulted with 93%, followed by 4% with unclear determination for the type of role. Only 3% of the overall finding the female characters were shown as objective, which is defined as a female who is hyper-sexualized to appeal to men. When it came to the character's job status, two categories came out with alike results, which were blue collar and unable to determine their job status with 29%. White collar jobs came after them with 27%, the findings also showed 16% of the female characters that were analyzed owning their own businesses. 2% as no given profession and lastly only 1% unemployed women.

RQ3 was divided into two **RQ3 (a)** for the Spanish series and **RQ3 (b)** for the Egyptian series. The type of roles that were shown through the Spanish series has significant findings, such that Lidia (aka Alba) from *Cable Girls* resulted with 98% as active role and only 2% as passive. On the contrary of Valeria from *Valeria* who resulted with 91% as passive role and only 9% with an active role which was shown by the very end of the series. However, Zulema from *Locked Up* resulted with 86% as an active role and 14% as passive.

Moving on to the Egyptian series, the type of roles that were featured were as follows; Qismat Hanim from *Grand Hotel* was mostly the central to make the decisions of the series narrative which resulted with 94% as an active role, and only 6% as passive. Alia from *Leh Laa?!* Followed the same footsteps, as she resulted with 91% as being an active role and only 9% as being passive. However, Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* was shown as 85% active and 15% as a passive character who is impacted by the decision making in the series narrative. Results of a chi-square test revealed significant differences between activity of the female leading role and drama series *(χ = 2816.32, p < 0.01)*. Thus, **H3**, which predicted that female leading roles are often portrayed passively, **was supported**. Although there is a significance between the series and wither the female character is active or passive in the scenes, the results show 87% *(n=5131)* of the female representation as active and only 13% *(n=752)* passively.

Table 3: *Female leading roles are often portrayed passively in television drama series.*

		Active % (n)	Passive % (n)
Grand Hotel Qismat Hanim	*(n=603)*	94% (564)	6% (39)
Cable Girls Lidia	*(n=1561)*	98% (1536)	2% (25)
Valeria Valeria	*(n=463)*	9% (43)	91% (420)
Leh Laa?! Alia	*(n=915)*	91% (834)	9% (81)
Locked Up Zulema	*(n=1658)*	94% (1570)	5% (88)

Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa Layla	(n=683)	85% (583)	15 (100)

Chi Square 2816.32, p < 0.01.

The results for the character's activity were also outstanding, such that Lidia (aka Alba) from *Cable Girls* resulted with 92% as a subjective female who seeks dominancy, 8% as objective. As for Valeria from *Valeria*, there was a full agreement that she was mainly subjective and was pursuing dominancy. Zulema was also about to reach the full agreement, yet ended with 99% being subjective and only 1% as a character who hyper-sexualized to appeal to men. The type of role for the Egyptian female characters almost had the same outcomes, such the Qismat Hanim resulted with full agreement as a subjective character who of dominance. Alia's character almost has the same results, such that the outcome was 98% subjective and only 2% shown as objective. However, Layla's character was the odd one out, as she resulted with 67% shown subjective, 27% unable to determine and 6% portrayed as objective.

The job status of each character in the Spanish series was a bit challenging, yet came out with clear results for each. As Lidia from *Cable Girls* resulted with 97% as a white collar as she worked in the cable company, and only 3% of her representation was shown with a non-given profession. *Valeria* and *Locked Up* female character had a like with the full agreement outcome. Such that Valeria was a struggling author who worked as a part time museum security, resulted with full agreement on blue collar jobs. Which falls in place of performing manual tasks. And Zulema was a prisoner, yet was an illegal dealer while she was jailed. Which made her result with full agreement of white-collar jobs, which fall under performing managerial or administrative work. The Egyptian series had varied more than the

Spanish series in regards to the job status that was given to their female characters. As Qismat Hanim from *Grand Hotel* resulted with 82% as a owning her own business, 16% as white collar and performing managerial work, and 2% as no given profession. The mix of job statuses was given more to Alia from *Leh Laa?!* As she was presented 64% as blue collar - performing manual tasks- 24% as a owning her own business, 5% for both unemployed and no given profession, and only 3% it was unclear to identify her job status. As for Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* there was almost a full agreement on her job status, as she was portrayed 98% of the series as a nanny for her autistic husband, which fall under blue collar jobs and only 2% was unclear to identify her job status.

RQ4 (a): Are there any new female empowerment issues that were addressed in the Spanish series?

RQ4 (b): Are there any new female empowerment issues that were addressed in the Egyptian series?

   RQ4 consecrated more upon the aspect of empowering women. This research question inquired about any chance of revealing the innovative female empowerment issue that are portrayed by or through the female leading roles. This was shown through the presence of male influence in each series and the type of the influence that occurred. The inclusive results for the six series for the presence of the male influence was as follows; 58% no presence of male influence, 26% were influence from higher power such as officers, boss, counselors, or even governors. 9% was influence of a male friend and 6% was influence from the character's husbands. However, when the male influence is present, the outcome was 21% ($n=1216$ out of $n=5883$) supporting decisions taken by the female character in agreement. 8% ($n=476$ out of $n=5883$) Constantly redirecting the choices of the female

character and only 6% (*n=378* out of *n=5883*) disagreement with the choices of the female character.

This research question **(RQ4)** was also segmented into RQ4 (a) for Spanish series and RQ4 (b) for Egyptian series. *Cable Girls* was more deviated for women empowerment as a plot, which was reflected in the results with 53% of the series excluded the presence of the male influence, with 26% influence from others -which were the counselors and the policemen in this series- 15% influence from friends and only 6% influence from Lidia's husband. *Valeria* shared almost the same outcomes, such that it resulted with 55% of the series excluding male influence, 24% influence from others -which were random men and her crush-, 15% from friends -which applies for her crush when he turned to be her lover- and 6% only from Valeria's husband. *Locked Up* topped all of the mentioned findings, as the results imply 73% of the series eliminated the influence of males, while 28% was the influence of other -which in this series was mostly from the prison officers and counselors. When it came to looking into the type of influence of male when it was present the outcomes for each Spanish series varied. Such that *Cable Girls* has 25% agree and support for Lidia's choices, 9% disagreement, 8% redirecting Lidia's choices, and 5% males showing control over Lidia's decisions. *Valeria* shared similar findings as *Cable Girls*, such that the results imply 25% support and agreement with Valeria's choices, 14% disagreement with her decisions, and 4% male in control of her choices. Since it was mentioned earlier how *Locked Up* topped the Spanish series with the findings of the presents of the male influence on Zulema, it was also implied in the results of the type of male influence. Such that the findings showed only 8% each for both controlling or disagreeing with Zulema's decisions, 7% agreement, and only 5% redirecting her decisions.

The Egyptian series took another a more mixed technique in introducing the male influence in the series which was reflected through the results. As *Grand Hotel* included 61%

absence of the male influence, yet 39% there was other influence which was the inspector. *Leh Laa?!* Eliminated the male influence on Alia with 57%, and 26% the influence was from a friend, and 17% was from others -which was for her uncle and ex-fiancé, her friend's husband-. Lastly, *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* had given Layla presence of male influence from various sources. Such that the results imply that 41% were eliminated moments for the male influence, 28% was from others -which was the inspector which later turned to her lover- 22% was from Layla's husband, 6% was from male friends, 2% each was for both father and brother influence. As for the particular type of male influence when its present in the Egyptian series, it is almost common among all three series. As *Grand Hotel*'s findings implied 29% male showed support and agreement with Qismat Hanim's decisions, 9% redirecting her decisions, and only 1% males with in control of her choices. *Leh Laa?!* Had the outcome of 28% male showed support and agreement with Alia's decisions within the narrative of the plot, 10% male redirecting influence on her choices, 4% male controlling her decisions and 3% male disagreeing with Alia's choices. And lastly, *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* the male influence findings were also similar two the previous two Egyptian series. Such that 29% male showed support and agreement with Layla's decisions, 17% the male influence was redirecting Layla's choices, and 7% the presences of male controlling over her decisions.

Additionally, RQ4 was also answered by overall character representation variable which was coded once in each episode from each series. The general findings for representation of the female characters were a bit expected, based on the literature review. As the outcome implied that 57% of the female leading character's overall representation was negative representation and 43% positive representation (*n=5883)*. For the Spanish series, Lidia from *Cable Girls* resulted with 90% shown in a positive portrayal, and 10% shown in a negative portrayal. There was a close tie for Valeria from *Valeria*, as she was portrayed

positively 56% (*n=463)*, and 44% shown negatively. However, Zulema resulted with full agreement that she had an overall negative portrayal throughout her series. As regards to the representation of female leading roles in the Egyptian series was mostly devious. Such that Qismat Hanim from *Grand Hotel* was 96% negatively portrayed and only 4% positively. On the contrary, Alia from *Leh Laa?!* was portrayed 94% positively and only 6% negatively although she was breaking Egyptian taboos along the series. As for Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa*, there was a full agreement that she was portrayed negatively, which is fair to mention as a common finding with the Spanish series with the portrayal of Zulema. Results of a chi-square test revealed significant differences between the overall character representation and the television drama series *(χ = 4533.96, p < 0.01)*. Thus, **H4**, which predicted that female leading roles are often portrayed negatively, **was supported**. As the results show 57% *(n=3330)* the females were negatively portrayed, and 43% *(n=2553)* positively represented.

Table 4: *Female leading roles are often portrayed negatively in television drama series.*

		Positive Representation % (n)	**Negative Representation % (n)**
Grand Hotel Qismat Hanim	*(n=603)*	4% (27)	96% (576)
Cable Girls Lidia	*(n=1561)*	90% (1410)	10% (151)
Valeria Valeria	*(n=463)*	56% (260)	44% (203)
Leh Laa?! Alia	*(n=915)*	94% (856)	6% (59)
Locked Up	*(n=1658)*	0% (0)	100% (1658)

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Zulema			
Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa Layla	*(n=683)*	0% (0)	100% (683)

Chi Square 4533.96, p < 0.01

RQ5 (a): Does the genre of the series play a role in the framing of female leading roles in Spain?

RQ5 (b): Does the genre of the series play a role in the framing of female leading roles in Egypt?

Since the six series were from three different genres, **RQ5** inquired the role of the series genre in the framing of the female leading roles. This study initially has chosen six series that are from three genres; crime/thriller drama, contemporary drama, and historical drama. The answer for this research question is shown through the character traits of female leading role portrayed. The general findings for the character traits were 41% the female characters were shown powerful, 33% the female characters were shown active and capable of coping with difficulties. 12% the females leading roles were shown progressive and trying to implement social reform ideas, 11% portrayed as weak and vulnerable, and 2% each for the female leading roles to be viewed as a sex object, and as self-independent women.

RQ5 was also broken down as the previous research questions into **RQ5 (a)** for Spanish series and **RQ5 (b)** for Egyptian series. This section will report the results for the traits in comparison to the series to cover **RQ5 (a)** and **RQ5 (b)**, then in comparison to the genres since the Spanish and Egyptian series will be combined together.

The Spanish series mostly had a variety in the character traits they have given to their female leading roles. *Cable Girls* has given Lidia 41% the trait of coping with difficulties,

33% the trait of being powerful, 8% of being weak and self-independent, 5% for being a progressive, and lastly 4% for being seen as a sex object. *Valeria* on the other hand has given fewer traits for Valeria throughout the series. Starting with 61% as being progressive female who is trying to implement social reform ideas, 15% as powerful, 14% as being capable to cope with difficulties. Zulema from *Locked Up* also did not share a lot of traits, as her finding were 61% as being powerful, 32% as being actively capable of dealing with the difficulties, and only 7% as given the trait of being weak. The Egyptian series was about to end with similar findings to the Spanish series. Such that Qismat Hanim from *Grand Hotel* was given the highest percentage among both countries in the powerful trait, resulting with 65%. Qismat Hanim was also given 24% the trait of being progressive, and 5% as being able to cope with the barriers she has faced along the series. *Leh Laa?!* has distributed out the traits for Alia's character, as she was shown 44% powerful, 30% capable of coping with the difficulties, 20% as a progressive female who is forward, and only 6% shown with the weak trait. Concluding with Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa*, there was almost a tie being two opposing traits, which were being weak and capable to cope with any difficulties. The findings came as follows; 50% shown as capable to handle any barriers she faces thought the plot narrative, 46% shown with the weak trait, and only 4% shown with the trait of being powerful.

After breaking down the traits that were given in each series to each female leading character, it is fair to look into the findings of the genre in compression to the traits. Which will give a clearer insight for **RQ5**. Staring with crime/thriller genre *(n=2,341)* which included *Locked Up* from Spain and *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* from Egypt. The dominant trait in this genre was being powerful with 44% *(n=1035)*, followed by being able to deal with any difficulties with 37% *(n=869)* and 19% *(n=437)* the females for this genre were given the weak trait. As for the contemporary genre *(n=1378)* which included *Valeria* from Spain and *Leh Laa?!* from Egypt applied more traits than the previous genre. Two

relevant traits were about to have the same findings, such as the trait of being powerful resulted with 35% *(n=477)* and 34% *(n=462)* for the trait of being advocated to implement reformed social ideas. These two traits were followed by the trait of being capable of copping with the difficulties resulted with 24% *(n=334)*. And 4% *(n=59)* for portraying the females of this genre with weak traits. However, this genre had a significant trait which was higher than the other genres and was giving the trait of being shown as a sex object to the female leading characters. It resulted with 3% *(n=46)*. As for the historical genre *(n=2,164)* it includes a more distributed technique with the application of traits on the female characters of this genre. The findings were as follows; 43% *(n=927)* as powerful, 33% *(n=712)* as an active females who are capable of copping with the difficulties with the plot narrative. As for the progressive trait it resulted with 10% *(n=218)* in the historical genre, 6% *(n=125)* for being females who stands alone without a man's aid, and 6% as well *(n=127)* for being shown with the weak trait. Lastly, only 2% *(n=55)* for the females of this genre are viewed as objects towards sexual gratification.

Discussion

Using quantitative content analysis, this comparative study examined the portrayal of the leading female role in television drama series on VOD platforms across two countries, Spain and Egypt, to highlight how drama series view females across different cultural settings. Initially, the literature review gave a rough patch to this study, but specifying the sample from video-on-demand services, *Netflix* and *Shahid VIP*, added to the study's significance. Accordingly, the researcher conducted the research questions and hypothesis. The content analysis of the six female-driven series narratives from three different genres served as tools to answer these questions and test the hypothesis.

The traditional television drama was thought to promote various models for women and give out the luxury of expressing their personalities (Abdelfattah, 2015). However, this study shows how VOD services have followed in the footsteps of traditional media in the portrayal of female leading characters. But although Egypt and Spain have different cultural settings, the findings hint that there might be a minor change for the better in the representation of females from both countries.

The literature review claimed that most female characters are portrayed in the Egyptian media industry in the middle class (Ateya, 2014). In addition to the preceptive, the Spanish study by Santorun & Orosa (2019) stated that women are mainly shown to have an unfavorable socioeconomic status. With 40% of the leading female roles shown in the middle-lower class and 36% in the middle class, this study reveals that there is still a particular social-economic class that females are cornered in.

In the Spanish series Cable Girls, this social differentiation was noticeable throughout the series. For example, Lidia Aguila was a working woman at the cable company. Still,

when she interacted with her finance mother, they tended to repeat the use of specific classicism-related terminologies. Other times the social class representation was stated bluntly, such as "people like you." So, it was more transparent in *Valeria* with the social class, as Valeria's husband tended to weigh on the importance of enrolling in any job for the sake of "financial support." However, in Locked up, Zulema was mainly shown inside prison, which was not a reference to her social class. Still, Zulema's social status was represented through her lover, Hannibal, and the outside world she had connections with.

Compared to the Egyptian series, only one of the three Egyptian series have a leading female role in the middle-lower class, which was Layla from *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa*. Although the plot narrative revolves around improving the scandalized social life of Layla, referring to her original social status was mentioned many times in the series. Whether through flashbacks or even within conversations like the ones that Lidia from *Cable Girls* went through. Although women were limited a certain social class, that didn't affect the positive aspects that were tackled in the series. The study places into light the fact that there is a change in female representations and that this change will certainly be positive.

When it comes to exploring the nature of women's portrayals, studies always find a sort of standard respect for the age of the leading female role portrayed (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). But what is worth discussing is that studies managed to implement a relationship between the age of the female character and to be part of sexual content. The discovery was unexpected, with only 3% of the six series included sexual content. But when looking deeper into where that percentage came from, it was sourced from the younger female leading character analyzed in this study. The findings did not just support that but also reflected upon what was stated by Gallager (2014) and Bazzini et al. (1997). Both studies highlighted how younger female characters are portrayed as empowered with their sexual boldness. On the

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other hand, older women were depicted as more unfriendly, less intelligent, and less physically attractive than younger ones.

The Spanish series was expected to contain more sexual content than the Egyptian ones. According to Lacalle and Castro (2017), Spanish television stereotypes females as hypersexualized to appeal to men. Lidia from *Cable Girls* was shown the most among Spanish and Egyptians in sexual content. With 5% of the series throughout, she was either part of a sexual conversation or even using her seduction to deal with barriers she faces. The affection that implies potential intimacy (Farrar et al., 2003) was the most noticeable sexual content in *Valeria*. The sexual content in *Valeria* was based upon the fact that Valeria was searching for a muse to write her new erotic novel. Valeria and her crush Victor had a lot of sexual ramifications. Whether with the intense eye contact they shared or how driven she was into sexual conversations whenever they meet and even through texts. The Spanish study by Smith (2018) previously mentioned in the literature review how the Catalan series has a range of plots that reflect social debates. Among other social topics, the series discussed homosexuality among women a lot. And this was highly featured in *Locked Up*. Although Zulema was not introduced to sexual content as Lidia and Valeria did since she was older than them, it was in homosexual content when it did happen. That was unexpected since she was portrayed as an Arab Muslim harsh female. Homosexuality among women was also highly given the spotlight in Valeria. One of Valeria's friends was shown struggling with her sexuality and could not state that to her parents and even to herself.

The Egyptian series, on the other hand, almost did not include any sexual content. However, it mainly included sexual assaults; like Layla being sexually assaulted several times by Emad, her autistic husband. Or Alia about to be kissed by a younger man, under the pretext that he thought she liked him. On the other hand, Qismat Hanim was not portrayed in

any sexual content, not even a single sexual implication. In other words, this study revealed there is a strong relationship between the age of the leading female role and her being a part of any sexual content. Despite the negative image that Egyptians seem to think is true about the portrayal of women in series, the study revealed that this reputation is false. In fact, the analysis of the three series proved that Egyptian series gave a very realistic image.

Regarding the theoretical framework, Littlejohn (2009) stated Erving Goffman's words about how cultural beliefs are central elements to comprehending information. And this is demonstrated by the disparities in representations of sexual content between Spain and Egypt as it is not customary in Egyptian culture to feature a high dose of sexual content (Bourdaa, 2014) with nudity. However, it is primarily sexual implications that initiate a debate in Egyptian society. On the other hand, European culture is more open in featuring nudity and precise sexual contexts, which was shown throughout the series whether by the characters analyzed or by the supporting characters. Sexualizing women in the media is a tailored stereotype, as Coyne et al. (2016) stated.

Wood (1997) stated that in contrast, women are portrayed as sex objects, with specific appearance standards, for instance; being young, thin, and beautiful. As studies stated that, most representations of women tend to highlight their charm, along with some scenes that arouse sexual urge (Abdelfatah, 2015). In addition to the viewpoint of portraying females as an object (Lacalle & Castro, 2017), which corresponds to the point of marginalizing females in drama series and dealing with her in the manner of "It's just a body" (Abdelfatah, 2015). The objectivation of women in drama series deeply affects how society precise women. As the study revealed that the younger the leading female roles were, the more involved in sexual content she becomes and the more she is portrayed as an object who is used by multiple men and dehumanizing her. As with Lidia, she was shown as an object when her ex-

fiancé tricked her into getting back with him and ended up with him with her in bed and stealing her telephone booth invention proposal. This scene then showed the fiancé stating, "I used your body to get what I want." This same statement was used by Lidia herself several times in different forms in the series.

Valeria resulted in 7% of the whole series portraying Valeria as an object, the highest percentage among the six series. Valeria was shown as an object or a body when it came to her relationship with her husband. Their love life was lifeless, as evidenced by their conversations and, to a lesser extent, their sexual life. Texts between Valeria and her crush always contained a form of sexual content that objectified her.

In contrast, were Qismat Hanim and Zulema. Both characters were not even seen in any objectified form, and that is because of their older age. Zulema stated this bluntly, stating how her boyfriend Hannibal could easily walk out on her because he is 28 and she is 40. Again, the series reflects the plight of men and that a woman will not be of value if she is not young, beautiful, or sexy. Additionally, the nudity scenes featured more youthful female characters, but she was modest when it came to Zulema's representation whenever there was a nude scene. Additional to the beach scenes, Zulema was shown in long loose clothes. Ullah & Khan (2014) stated that visual media favors focusing on the female body rather than the male face.

Even if the findings showed a relation between the age of the female character and objectifying her, it was stated in the literature review how there is a solid precise placement of women within the patriarchal system (Painter & Ferrucci, 2017). The study also revealed the similarities between both countries and both cultures.

Chong and Druckman (2007) have given a perspective of framing theory. They stated that the central concept of framing revolves around how people develop their understanding of specific values. The Egyptian series demonstrated this aspect through the relation of the female character to her age, such that the older they are, they were shown more devious than the younger ones. As a result, Qismat Hanim showed harshness and control from the start. *Grand Hotel* as a series has that braided technique in storytelling, but it all ends with the complete control and deliberate manipulation of Qismat Hanim.

Along with her was Zulema. *Locked Up* initially intended to have Zulema as a supporting actor, but she also ended up being the main manipulator. To simplify, the older female leading roles were, the harsher and cold-hearted they are shown. Yet, Lidia and Layla were given a push that had turned them more devious or revenge-oriented. This shows how the plight of men affects the character development of women over the ages explaining that they don't get to choose who they're going to become and that by default being hurt by men is extrinsic factor that determines their identity.

As mentioned in the literature review, visual frames create a less unwanted message that needs a minor cognitive load to understand and process (Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011). And this is illustrated through the "mise-en-scène," which Monaco (2000) explained as visual frames with a spatial organization and added a particular meaning to the viewer's understanding of visual media. The dominant usage of medium shot with 45% of the six series, which according to Shahira Fahmy's (2019) elaboration for visual grammar, the usage of medium shot is considered neutral typically used for the confront of the eye.

In the six series, it was discovered that, while the use of medium shots was relatively high compared to long and closeup shots, the use of composition technique was even higher. For example, Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) explained how visual frames are a result of

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Fig.1 Cable Girls Frame Symmetry

categorizing "visual sensations" into themes and stylistic-semiotics systems, which differ depending on whether the presentation is a concise description of what is happening or whether it contains deeper layers. And this is what has been shown through the Spanish and Egyptian series. In addition, the composition technique requests symmetry or balance in the image shown (Wolf and Bernhart, 2006). *Cable Girls* used that technique, as most of the scenes were horizontal symmetry, such as having equal distribution of subjects within the frame range, as shown in fig.1. This technique was also used in the of Lidia and one other person (two-person shot). This series also mainly used medium shots with 48% and long shots with 28%. When the image shows the entire object (long shot), it is identified as negative (Fahmy, 2019), which is related to what Lidia had been part of throughout the series, all the obstacles of being blackmailed or manipulated. The series noticeably applied the usage of the long shot. The usage of the shot angles was not incorporated a lot, as primarily used the eye-level angle, which is perceived as neutral (Fahmy, 2019).

In contrast, *Locked Up* used the shot angles in handy. However, as Zulema was shown 11% of her appearance with a low angle which indicates power, or Fahmy (2019), it is considered negative, as when a viewer is looking up at the subject matter, the viewer is in some way inferior or substandard to it.

Fig.2 Zulema closeup shot with a low angle.

The usage of the close-up shot was almost as close as the medium shot in *Locked Up*, with 46% medium shot, 32% close-up shot. What was noticed was the usage of the low angle with the close-up shots for Zulema. This angle has Zulema a more threatening feel than she already presented, as shown in fig.2. According to Fahmy (2019), the close-up shot creates a more intimate connection between the character and the audience; additionally, this shot gives the impression of standing closer to the characters, making them more likable than those shot from a distance. The placement of the low angle was always tagged in the *Locked-Up* series with the moments she is in complete control of the plot narrative.

Qismat Hanim also shared the same visual frames as Zulema with the usage of the shot angles. Low angles were also placed whenever Qismat Hanim is the puppeteer of the plot. Although most of the shot sizes were medium shot (46%), there was a precise image composition technique for Qismat Hanim. She mainly was centered on the scene, as shown in fig.3. It was also noticeable the high usage of long shots with Qismat Hanim, as Fahmy (2019) stated earlier that long shots are considered "negative." Monaco (2000) also noted how the long shot, when used in drama series, highlights context over personality or drama. Through *Grand Hotel*, it was clear how the connection of the audience to Qismat Hanim's

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character was not as close to other characters involved in the series. However, despite the viewer's superficial relationship with Qismat Hanim, her powerful character echoed throughout all the scenes, even those in which she was not present.
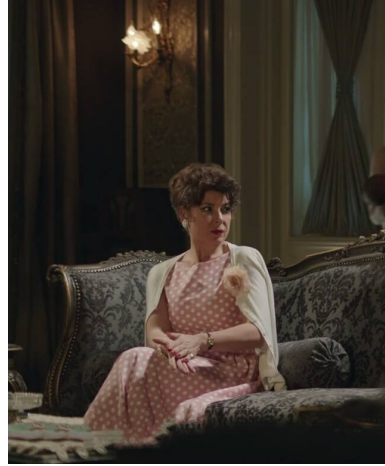

Fig.3 Qismat Hanim Centered in Frame

There was a common purpose when it came to the usage of the high angle for both series *Leh Laa?!* 'Why Not?!' and *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* 'Every week on Friday.' The placement of the high angles in both series accompanies any controversial Alia or Layla behavior in their series. To clarify, Alia was shown at a high angle when she was looking for an apartment to move out of her family's house. These plot situations are considered controversial, but regarding the Egyptian culture, women do not move out of their parents' houses unless they are getting married.

Although currently in Egypt, people have become more open-minded about that, that does not eliminate the fact that it is considered taboo. Layla, her character, was videotaped having an affair with a famous author. The series has a flashback method that shows what her family had done with her before she was banished to live with her autistic husband, Emad. In some of these flashback shots, the researcher noticed the high angle accompanied taboo, which was the videotape of her affair. The high angles were also used when Layla was shown preparing for her subsequent murder or even cleaning out her already committed a crime.

Fahmy (2019) has pointed out that the usage of high angles is considered a positive thing, such that if the viewer gazes down on the subject matter, he or she is given some power over it. Consequently, giving the right to the audience to judge the character portrayed however he or she wants. Some of Layla's medium shots featured a vast headroom. Headroom is the space between the object's top and the top end of the frame shown. This technique was used when Layla is subordinate; offering her a bit drowned in the frame has indicated her psychological state.

The usage of visual frames in both the Spanish and Egyptian series was deliberate. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, visual frames top textual frames (Fahmy, 2019). Such that images and photographs have a way to activate cognitions, emotions, and memories (Graber, 1990). With the findings and the literature review interpretations, this study revealed that shot size and shot angles were interpreted in the series differently among both countries. As a result, while the Egyptian series used visual grammars to convey deeper meanings, the Spanish series used them primarily in artistic compositions.

As Coyne et al. (2014) noted that the various media outlets such as movies, magazines, videos, musicals, or television present gender stereotypes which are noticeable. Rojas-Lamorena et al. (2018) support that such stereotypes are tailored more to women, portraying specific roles associated with women. Abdelfattah (2015) stated how television drama still struggles with developing the status of a woman from her traditional role, between serving her husband rather than sharing her life with him.

The series showed the "motherhood" stereotype through Lidia, Qismat Hanim, and even Zulema. The series showed all three characters capable of overcoming any obstacle they face and even solving any severe problems that the male characters cannot solve. They were even portrayed as negation queens and even manipulative in other situations. But, with how

harsh and criminal-minded Zulema was, the moment the plot introduced her daughter, it was like a switch was flipped for the character. There was a visible struggle with maintaining her coldblooded self or helping her daughter to adapt to prison life. But this stereotype did not last long. *Locked Up* tended to show her as the main mastermind behind the plot mostly. Zulema even quoted, "There is an instinct stronger than being a mother, and that is survival."

This statement was one of the other visible hints of showing how there is an inner struggle regarding being a mother or surviving prison and staying as the alpha. Lidia, on the other hand, was shown to be the most manipulative and untrustworthy. Still, when it came to her pregnancy and her daughter, she shifted from being career-oriented to being motherlike. Lidia even quoted it in the series stating, "There is no power such as the power of a mother who wants to see her children again."

As for the Egyptian Series, Qismat Hanim was shown was fully shown in a thematic perspective. And thematic means that a character is related to a particular subject, such that she was mostly seen as a professional hotel owner. She wanted to plan most of the plot narrative for everyone around her, including her daughters.

In the series, women with unfavorable situations succeed, which promotes a traditional female role and stereotype (Santorun & Orosa, 2019). And, as Ateya (2014) stated, women are frequently stereotyped as being the artful devil who seeks nothing but pleasure, marital or extra-marital, and being shown as devious as Qismat Hanim was a stereotype. Santorun & Orosa (2019) stated that the gender stereotypes in the European media are visible. This was shown through the female leading role, Valeria, as she was the second character to be shown with the thematic type of portrayal. This was given to her stereotypically because she is related to the fact that she is married. As Valeria was constantly reminded by her family, her friends and even by her crush that "you are married".

The constant reminding was initiated whenever the conversations with her crush deviated to more sexual talks, but it stopped once she went along with the affair. And it came from her close friends, of the fact that they have seen her act out of place with her crush. This brings us to the second stereotype that was applied to *Valeria*, and it was that (28%) of Valeria's focus was on being in a relationship with a man. Such as Signorielli and Bacue (1999) stated, research has consistently found the stereotyped representation of women, such as being emotional, weak, romantic. Valeria was shown as a hopeless romantic who was seeking a muse for writing in a love affair.

These findings deliberately relate to the theoretical framework. Chong & Druckman (2007) highlighted that framing provides and organizes meaning to everyday reality. The reality is the fact that they are women and being a mother is a natural role, or even being driven by emotion. These elements were supported by the given mixture of events of the series. Tuchman (2000) stated in the theoretical framework, the media has its way of keeping placing women in a certain frame or even conveying certain stereotypes about women, which unwarily "trivialises" them. That was shown through Layla, who was portrayed mainly in semiotics. This means that a viewer must delve deeper into the meaning of the given portrayal, which is conveyed through signs and symbols (visual and linguistic) (Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Such as being good, bad, victim, sexy, lesbian, foreign, rebellious, friend. Layla was shown at the beginning as the victim of society as she had to faced unexpected consequences. Yet, that was turned into seeing Layla as a bad person who is revenge oriented. However, Alia was the one out of all that her findings turned out to be a mix of both portrayals, with 89% thematic and 11% semiotic portrayal. That was due to Alia's portrayal as a naive female who was placed in the stigma of "what will the people say?" by her mother.

Although it's said that drama may affect the viewer's perception of reality in a bad way, on the contrary, showing women as mothers or caregiver may place them under the category of being emotionally driven, this in fact, is not a degrading thing. It is one of the best qualities of woman that a man doesn't possess which is being able to give unconditional love, take decisions using both her heart and her mind, and become a role model to society proving that women can be emotionally intelligent.

Fahmy (2004) stated in the literature review that the composition of photographs can reinforce or subvert stereotypes about social groups—and particularly Muslim women. This came by surprise when it resulted out of *Locked Up*, such that there was a typical stereotype against Arab Muslims which was Zulema. Also, to state that she is an Egyptian terrorist. This section covered all forms of the typical stereotype represented through the six series from both countries, such as Abdelfattah (2015) claimed that women are portrayed as the devoted mother, then the devilish woman, then the authoritarian woman, then the housewife, then a competition for a man or an immoral, then naive, then without power, then the pure, then the woman Comrade.

In the theoretical framework, Wood (1997) stated that women are portrayed with a certain appearance standard, such as often incompetent or passive, in contrast to how men have consistently addressed as dynamic or audacious. Similar wordings were brought up by various recent sources while overlooking previous studies. This has given the impression that even in the 21st century, the same old representation of a weak or passive female will remain. However, this study aimed to challenge such ideologies, and investigated the new female leading roles are shown through VOD services. With the more modified content (Cascajosa 2009) that is given on *Netflix* and *Shahid VIP*, the more triggering series are produced.

Triggering in a controversial way or even introducing new lifestyles or ideologies to their audiences.

This study's findings revealed one of the unexpected results regarding the representation of female leading characters. The interpretation of Ateya (2014) statement regarding active male and passive female did not apply in this study. Results showed 87% in total of the six series, the female leading character were shown active. When delving deeper into the character development of each female in her series, the presence of being passive was minimal and unimportant. For example, Zulema from *Locked Up* was shown 14% of her appearance as passive in her scenes. However, the scene that involved her passively was accompanied by a massive devilish plan right around the corner, more of the calm before the storm. Zulema's character evolved over the seasons into a more terrifying and mastermind of more complex escape plans and showing her as a passive character for fewer moments has helped viewers become attached to her. It was stated that Arab women in the media are "present, but not heard" (Rahbai, 2010), but this in fact was proven in the opposite.

The findings for the Egyptian series were also driven more to portrayal the females as active characters. With Qismat Hanim, 94% as active, and 6% were as passive. And even though, the moments she was shown passively were the times the situations were going down a road that she does not desire. Alia was also shown minimally as passive (9%). And those moments were at the very beginning of the series, in regards to communicating with her mother. However, as the plot narratives of the series developed, it was noticeable how such matters had also changed. Layla had the highest percentage of being passive (15%) among the two countries. But that was more related to the character development of the plot. As she was a young woman who had her life restructured and was given the life choice of living only under certain circumstances. It took Layla a lot of time to adapt to taking care of her autistic

husband, Emad, and the fact that she had to live in the shadows. Nonetheless, that has gradually changed since her first planned murder. It seems that the newer generations of production have started to change how they view the passiveness of a female character in drama series, or in other words, as Santorun and Orosa (2019) stated that the representation of decorative women is "timid decline".

A related concept that was also revealed in this study is how subjective the female leading characters were shown. Being subjective in this study referred to a female who wants to be like a man for the sake of domination. The findings were mostly in the range of 90% among all series, except for *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa*. And this was expected since Layla was shown as a very passive character. These were the moments when it was hard to determine if she was subjective or even objective. The activity and subjectivity of the female characters has given direction to the dominancy of the role model types of female leading characters. As Lacalle & Castro (2017) identifies in their study, two types of young women in the 21st century are the "can-do girls" and "at-risk girls". The author simply clarified by mentioning that one represents the role model type and the other represents failure. Although according to Egyptian culture, what Alia from *Leh Laa?!* was doing throughout the series was considered a taboo, yet it was not shown from a negative perspective. This is the opposite to what Abdel Raouf (2004) stated about how women are presented in a negative manner, although she was depicted violating taboos and traditions.

Nonetheless, there was still sort of a typical dominant frame that was applied in the series, as several scholars have contended that females are regularly depicted in the media in cliché jobs (Lester & Ross, 2003; Morris, 2006; Ali & Batool, 2015) And additionally, Abdel Raouf (2004) stated how women are presented in a negative manner, such that they are depicted as being actively part of criminal or illegal activities such as prostitutes, drug addicts

or dealers. This was shown in both Spanish and Egyptian series. Such that Lidia, although she was a cable girl in the telephone company, also was portrayed in the early seasons as a thief. Zulema was a prisoner, actively part of criminal activities. And lastly, Layla was shown as a master mind for criminal activities. It was said that on the television screen, the audience can find a serious woman and a struggling woman. As for an educated woman, a university professor, a nuclear scientist, and other positive examples, but we did not find them (Abdelfattah, 2015). That was also shown in the other three series. As Valeria was shown as an unsuccessful author. Qismat Hanim, as a hotel owner, was the one behind ruining the hotel's reputation and structure. Yet, she tended to turn her manageable mistakes successfully on her daughter's husband, Murad. However, Alia was the one given the chance to work jobs that are a bit out of the context of the Egyptian culture. Alia was from the middle upper class, so seeing her as a driver or a waitress was surprising. The framing theory interpreted the fact of including macrolevel and microlevel module (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009), which was demonstrated through both series whether the one that took place in Spain or in Egypt. As they tended to convey women empowerment. Whether through the leading characters that were analyzed or through the supporting actors and they are relevant to the current public agenda.

Topics of women's empowerment were interpreted through macrolevel frames such that they are drawn from assumptions which observed behaviors have a potential cause. For the fact that the series conveyed topics such as standing up for domestic violence-conveyed through *Leh Laa?!* and *Cable Girls*-and even sexual assaults which were conveyed through *Cable Girls, Valeria, Locked Up, Leh Laa?!* and *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa*. These topics are currently being brought up for discussion worldwide, and for the series to interpret them is a form of support. It was stated that European protagonist females are represented as victims of the narrated event (Santorun & Orosa, 2019), but what was shown throughout the

series was bolder than that. As a result, it is more recent trending social topics that are commonly portrayed in various genres and countries. The microlevel frames take place here, as it refers to that aspect that there are individual judgments depending upon an individual's perception. Although the series gives the same message of showing bolder female leading roles, the individual judgement is whether or not the audience will consider this representation as an aspect of female empowerment. However, for this study, which is supported by Cvitanovich (2013)'s statement in the literature review, the characters are more real and current, by emphasizing the modernization of role models or reproduction, through more current characteristics.

With 58% male influence absent in the six series, this contradicted what Ateya (2014) and Ramzi (2004) mentioned in the literature review. As they state that all that a female wants is to catch a man, any man, since this is every woman's highest goal (Ateya, 2014; Ramzi, 2004). It was clear that there were trials of introducing the male influence on the female characters, but it varied among the series. Given that Lidia had 47% male influence, it is fair to say that the majority of her supporters (25% were men). But what is worth discussing was the tendency to control her emotionally. It was noticeable through the seasons how it started by emotionally controlling the character of an old lover, then taking that aspect back and forth.

This emotional aspect brought up the prospective that portraying a female should always have an emotional side no matter how intellectual she was depicted. As Nacos (2005) stated in the theoretical framework that the portrayal of women as "weak" or "emotionally centered" is of the harsh and robotic. On the contrary was Zulema, she topped the results among both countries with 73% elimination for male's influence. And when there was, it was mostly redirection from the police, yet her character always had a harder come back to

overcome the barriers. Valeria's character was a bit unstable along the series in regards of allowing male influence. She had an unsupportive husband, who tended to push her to what was good for himself and not for what she was passionate about. Valeria on the other hand, sometimes was shown going along with what he pushes her to do, and other times as a result of the influence of her lover towards Victor she gradually along the series knew what was best for her.

It was stated that Arab women are using media as a weapon their empowerment, and as a tool to advance their progress and development in their communities (Rahbani, 2010). And positive media exposure is the key to unlocking the route to women's empowerment (Sakr, 2004). Alia's character throughout the series displays such matter. As although she was shown favoring other male characters, yet there was still more focus in the series on the fact that she is goal oriented and not keen to easily settle down with a man. Qismat Hanim also had minimal male influence, although looking at the findings it might seem the quit opposite. The main male influence throughout *Grand Hotel* was mostly supporting her decisions, and what negatively impacted and redirected her was the hotel inspector. As for Layla, it could be simply said that she was the man of the plot narrative. As most of the male influence was supportive whether it was from her autistic husband, brother or even the officer she was manipulating.

The presence of male characters in the six series whether with influence or not is basic rule and was expected in any form. Such that the literature review assumed that male perspective has the greatest importance in the lives of women (Painter & Ferrucci, 2017). However, based on this study and analysis, it is no longer an assumption. Such that the male perspective could be shown through minimal acts, that does not refer to full interference of male point of view. In that context, the theoretical framework stated that there are

stereotypical frames along gender lines (Littlejohn, 2009). However, the boldness and empowered women that were analyzed in this study have shown that there is a chance to thinner the line of the distinguish attitudes that expected to differ men from women. It was expected as mentioned in the theoretical framework to view how each gender "should" be occupied with within a society (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

Spanish research by Rojas-Lamorena et al (2018) the evolution and empowerment of female characters have become noticeable with the development of the television series. However, Abdelfattah (2015) directly stated that the media industry begins the portrayal of the female roles always deviant and abnormal, and only gives a small part for the positive side; therefore, an incomplete, distorted image of women is drawn. It was shown through the findings such that 57% of the female leading character's overall representation was negative representation, and 43% positive representation. For the Spanish series, Valeria was shown unfaithful to her husband and Zulema was simply a prisoner with a total mind set of a criminal. As for Qismat Hanim, she was also shown mostly negatively for the fact that she manipulated each and every character that was in the series with her power. Layla had nothing positive about her portrayal, the fact that she was banished from her family and looked down upon, then turning her to a character with a total mind set of a criminal and a murder such as Zulema.

This study intended to explore the female leading role representation through a different lens. Investigating the depict of women through three different genres, contemporary drama, historical drama and crime/thriller drama was one of the significance of this study. However, the findings have shown that the genre does not play much influence in showing a female leading character with a certain character trait. As the dominant trait that was given to all the female character was being powerful (41%), such that they were mostly shown goal oriented, show courage in standing up to her beliefs and maintains self-respect.

Even if their goal was opposing, such as escaping jail as Zulema, stealing a blueprint of an upcoming project as Lidia, even revenge-oriented such as Layla, or even contently urging to stay in control and power Qismat Hanim. Or even a positive goal as writing and publishing a novel as Valeria, keeping life's new priorities straight as Alia. In that context, the trait of being able to be actively capable of dealing with difficulties also dominated the qualities in all three genres (33%).

The six females analyzed had different obstacles that were unplanned. Such as an old lover and an evil mother-in-law for Lidia, unclear career for Valeria, outside enemies and police officers for Zulema, an inspector, and family members for Qismat Hanim, an unsupportive mother, and judgmental friend for Alia, and lastly, an officer who she knew how to manipulate for Layla. Based on Signorielli and Bacue (1999), the researcher expected that when you look at the nature of women's portrayals, research has consistently found the stereotyped representation of women with various aspects, and being weak is one of them. However, the results only showed a total of 11% weakness through the female characters. It was highly noticeable through Zulema. Whenever it was the right situation for her to show her fault, they tended to show how capable she was in controlling showing any emotion other than being cold-hearted.

Based on the theoretical framework stated above, there was an interpretation and reconstruction of reality through the frames (Littlejohn, 2009) that the female leading character were place within. The high usage of the positive traits such as being powerful or even being capable of dealing with difficulties show the potential of changing the typical frames that women are placed within. Additionally, this also reflects upon Rojas-Lamorena et al (2018) statement in the literature review, that the evolution and empowerment of female characters have become noticeable with the development of television series.

Earlier in the introduction section, it was mentioned how there were embedded female-empowering topics; the findings reflected it, with the percentage of 12% as progressive. In this study, "progressive" means when a female is forward, advocative that she is trying to implement social reform ideas. The series showed this by breaking the taboo of female independence in Egypt by Alia, pushing the concept of writing an erotic novel from a female's preceptive by Valeria, and urging maintaining and even establishing a particular lifestyle and living image Qismat Hanim. Unfortunately, the Egyptian television drama had its time where it only reflected Egypt as a conservative society, politically inactive, and religiously (Parolin, 2019). In that context, seeing the Egyptian series trying to pave the way to new ideologies is insightful, even though the dependent roles reflecting the so-called 'ideal Arab or Muslim woman' (Kharroub, 2016; Matar, 2007).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was expected as Painter and Ferrucci (2017) stated that the clear placement of women within the patriarchal system is a result of television programs assuming that the male perspective has the greatest importance in the lives of women. However, the study revealed significant findings in regard to the representation of female leading roles between Spain and Egypt. Although these two countries might seem unrelated, the findings of this study showed that there are various interlocking insights and perspectives for how they view females in their culture and society.

Contrary to expectations, there were expected results out of the representation of the female leading roles in both Spain and Egypt, which were not aligned with the modernized approaches that were being incorporated. As concluded from this thesis, this is primarily due to the use of confining themes in the depiction of female lead series. The focus of this thesis is the investigation of patriarchal frames in female representation in drama series from Spain and Egypt.

For instance, the Spanish series mostly framed their females with empowerment, yet tended to integrate problems with their sexuality in one way or another. Aside from that, they were mostly framed within lower income and social classes. Therefore, another constraining frame of economic need and allied limitations of a low social class are added to the female representation. Consequently, the issues depicted in the series cannot be generalized on the wider Spanish female population. However, the female leading characters were mostly encouraged from an individual motivation. This overthrows the typical framing for the females which involves a male superior.

It is worth mentioning that even the placement of other female roles by supporting actresses had an impact on the empowerment or the actions of the female leading roles that were analyzed for this study. This is apparent in *Cable Girls*, where Lidia had three friends;

one conveyed the domestic violence issue, another struggled with her sexuality, and the third one was viewed as the developing character all along the seasons from the countryside woman to the blossomed city woman. Lidia gained another friend along the seasons, which portrayed the transgenders. *Cable Girls'* plot had a hidden female puppeteer, which was Lidia's mother in-law. She was an old lady yet held a lot of power and control over the plot narratives. She became more influential in the later seasons. *Valeria* also followed the steps of having sub stories which incorporate different female related subjects such as the struggle between love life and career, the identity crisis and sexuality, and even the fact that one of Valeria's friend was shown as a mistress and did not reject staying as one. These three focuses might seem not related; however, they convey realistic female challenges. As for *Locked Up,* the power that was shown through the other prisoners aside from Zulema was unpredicted. The character development was noticeable along the seasons, through viewing the alignments or deals that were made back and forth among them. Macarena Ferrero was one of the top characters in the series that has grown drastically. From being framed with a crime she did not commit, to handling prison hierarchy with the quickest and most devious way possible. The placement of empowered females was also shown by the prison governor, as she was mostly shown as a figure who knew how to be in charge of a prison.

Furthermore, in the Egyptian series the limitation of women within their social roles as wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters still prevails in current series. However, when a female protagonist is portrayed as an independent individual, the narrative reduces her journey to a social role by featuring motherhood or giving the motive of breaking a social taboo.

Male dominated ideology looks to doubt the mother and daughter relationship. This was obvious through the Egyptian series with the constant representation of conflicting relationships between mother and daughters. Where the mother and daughter are constantly

portrayed in drama series as having conflicting opinions, especially with regards to modernity. This was shown throughout *Grand Hotel;* Qismat Hanim with her two daughters, *Leh Laa?!*; Alia with her mother and *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa;* Layla with her real mother and Sawsan who was the one in charge of her new living condition.

The Egyptian series also tended to incorporate powerful females other than those who were analyzed in this study same as the Spanish series. In *Grand Hotel*, Qismat Hanim's two daughters have character growth along the series narrative, from being passive and under control of Qismat Hanim's directions to more active characters. Even the servants who had a part in the series plot (needs continuation of sentence. Ward was one of the female characters who displayed devious acts, however had huge dominance under her control which she was aware of. Even the head butler was a female and in the first half of the series, she was shown powerful and even controlling in some situations. *Leh Laa?!* featured the typical strict Egyptian mother. This series displayed the modernized conflicted relationship that is between a mother and her daughter. *Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa* featured a female dominance rather than male dominance -same goes among the six series- such that Sawsan's presence in any scene with Layla was always viewed as subordinating for Layla.

Consequently, it can be claimed that the Egyptian drama series is a portrayal of the Egyptian society and its development progression. It accurately portrays and document the modern-day society, with its positive side and negative side. The Egyptian drama series productions need to incorporate more stories from various aspects about Egyptian women in order to reflect the comprehensive experiences of Egyptian women living in Egypt.

Recommendation & Limitations

The purpose of this thesis was to examine female representation in Spanish and Egyptian drama series through three genres. The results obtained are of an exploratory nature given the limited academic research available on the topic. Content analysis is a qualitative research tool that supported this study with coders' interpretations of the characters depicted. The outcome of the content analysis can be further used to formulate quantitative only studies that can decode the frames of women representations.

Future research should focus on or add to the body of research observing the composition of the VOD drama series over time and what impacts that they may have on people's social constructions.

This study focused on female characters from a female point of view on female centered series plots. While this focus was essential for the examining nature of this research, the all-female coders may be considered another limitation for the study. This may have given the chance of overlooking additional social, economic, and cultural conditions that needed to be considered as part of the framing structure for women representations.

The language was one of the main limitations for this study, as some of the literature review sources were in Spanish. Which made the researcher refer to a translating engine whether to understand a research paper, or to search with certain keywords.

Another limitation would be the small sample size of the content analysis. The small number of drama series had an impact on the possible statistical analysis done on the data retrieved to obtain conclusive quantitative information. However, the diversity of the genres and age groups of the female leading character were essential to ensure that the final results can be reliable if applied to larger group of audience.

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Unit of Analysis: Female character.

A new row is added when the scenery –Décor or location– changes or a major change in in the shot size.

| #	Variables	Options	Operational Definition
1	Series Name	1- Grand Hotel 2- Cable Girls 3- Valarie 4- Leh Laa 5- Locked Up 6- Every week has a Friday	Series Commercial Name
2	Season Number		
3	Episode Number		
4	Scene Number		
5	Series Genre	1- Crime/Thriller 2- Contemporary Drama 3- Historical	Redvall et al (2018) clarified as following; 1- breakage of basic rules and standers upon which societies are built. Taking the viewer out of his/her comfort zone by showing the base of a peaceful reality.

			2- Revolves mainly around the structural elements of contemporary society. Everyday life.
			3- The ability of fiction by making the past concrete in terms of both its recreations of historical locations and human characters. Establish a connection for the viewer's own memories and lives with those of the past.
6	Character Name	1- Qismat Hanim 2- Lidia Aguila/ Alba 3- Valeria 4- Alia 5- Zulema Zahir 6- Layla/Nour	Name of the female character in the series. One lead female character from each series.
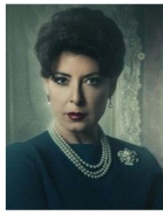
Qismat Hanim
Grand Hotel 'Secrets of The Nile'

Valeria
Valeria
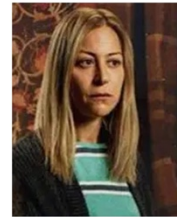
Nour/Layla
Fe Koul Osboua Youm Gomaa
'Every week on Friday'

Blanca Suárez
Cable Girls 'Las Chicas Del Cable'

Alya
Leh Laa?! 'Why Not?!'

Zulema Zahir
Locked up 'Vis a vis'

| 7 | Social class of woman portrayed | 1- Upper class
2- Upper-middle class
3- Middle class
4- Middle-lower class
5- Lower class | The social category of the woman featured in series. It could be determined through the lifestyle they are engaging.

1- **Upper class:** aristocrat who are living a luxurious life. Her income exceeds her needs; she enjoys spending her time in clubs and parties. She does not face economic problems.

2- **Upper-middle class:** Intellectual and professional woman who belongs to political, social or civil groups. |

			3- **Middle class:** educated woman who may be employed or not. She does not live a luxurious life.
			4- **Middle-Lower class:** refers to a woman who is poorly paid and barely earns a living salary to support her family, but there is still a distinction between this class and the lower class.
			5- **Lower class:** woman who works in the domestic sector, in factories, in lands. She is depicted as struggling with poor living conditions and earning income that barely satisfies her basic needs.
8	Age	1- Infant, 0-2 years old 2- Child, 3-12 years old 3- Adolescent, 13-19 years old 4- Young Adult, 20-39 years old 5- Middle-Age Adult, 40-54 years old	According to Film Analysis Codebook by Anne-Marie Smith (1999), write in the number corresponding with the apparent age of the character.

		6- Mature Adult, 55-64 years old 7- Senior Adult, > 65 years old 8- Does not apply 9- Cannot tell	
9	Is the female character an active or passive role in the scene?	1- Active 2- Passive	Based on coder interpretation of the summarized plot: - Active female character is central to decision making in the series narrative, she makes the decisions. - Passive female character is a character impacted by the decision making in the series narrative
10	Role	1- Protagonist 2- Supporting Actress	What role does the female character play in the series: - **Protagonist:** the leading and central character of the series - **Supporting actress:** Character is playing a supporting role in the development of the series but she is not the central point of the series itself
11	Type of Role	1- Subjective 2- Objective 3- NA	According to Lacalle & Castro (2017)

			1- A female who wants to be like men for the sake of domination or
			2- A females who is hyper-sexualized to appeal to men.
12	Type of Portrayal	1- Thematic 2- Semiotic	According Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) 1- **Thematic:** is having or relating to subjects or a particular subject. Such as seeing the female character as a Housewife, professional, police, etc. 2- **Semiotic:** is having to look into a deeper meaning of the given portrayal which giver a deeper meaning, through signs and symbols (visual and linguistic). Such as being good, bad, victim, sexy, lesbian, foreign, rebellious, friend.
13	Sexual content	1- Yes 2- No	According to Al- Sayed and Gunter (2012); Any depiction or portrayal of talk/behavior that involves sexuality,

			sexual suggestiveness and sexual activities/relationships
14	What's the main frame for the woman's character?	1- Individuality 2- Social Role 3- Relationship with a man	After watching the series, what can be deduced about the female character role: • **Individuality:** The character is playing a role seeking personal fulfillment for herself, therefore, she's clearly named and is portrayed as capable of making her own decisions • **Social Role:** The character social role of a mother, daughter, wife is emphasized in the series narrative and is the basis for the series' plot • **Relationship with a man:** the focus of the female character is a relationship with a man, either a heterosexual, father-daughter, boss
15	Marital Status of woman portrayed	1- Single 2- Engaged 3- Married 4- Divorced 5- Widow 6- In a relationship	**Single:** woman is depicted as not married **Engaged:** woman depicted as engaged or in the stages of getting married **Married:** woman is depicted as married

			7- N/A	Divorced: woman is depicted as divorced
				Widow: woman is depicted as widowed
				In a relationship: woman depicted as having an informal relationship
16	Job status of woman Portrayed		1- Employed/white collar	1- Refers to employed woman who perform managerial, administrative or professional work such as lawyers, doctors.
			2- Employed/blue collar	2- Refers to employed woman performing manual tasks such as factory and land labor.
			3- Unemployed	3- Woman who is staying at home
			4- No given profession	4- Woman is depicted as just a female with no specific profession or job
			5- Student	5- Woman is depicted as pursuing an educational degree
			6- Private business	6- woman is depicted as having a private business whether on a small scale or a big one such as a tailor versus owner of a private company
			7- N/A	
17	The Shot Sizes that the Female character appears in		1- Close up	According to Fahmy (2019) & (Monaco, 2000);
			2- Medium shot	1- head and shoulders or less
			3- Long shot	2- from waist up

			3- showing the full figure
18	Shot Angle	1- Low angle 2- Equality 3- High angle 4- oblique	According to Fahmy (2019) & Kress and van Leeuwen (2006); 1- Above eye Level 2- Eye level 3- Below eye level 4- subject in a shot is looking directly at the viewer
19	Presence of an Influencing Male	1- None 2- Father 3- Brother 4- Husband 5- Friend 6- Other	If there is presence of a special guiding male in the life of the female character
20	Type of Male Influence	1- Agree and support Individual Choices 2- Disagree yet support individual choices 3- Re-directive 4- Controlling 5- No detectable influence	What type of influence does this male character have in her life: **1- Agree & Support of Individual Choices:** Supports decisions taken by the female character in agreement **2- Disagree yet support individual decisions:** Despite disagreement with the choices, there's constant support from the male character **3- Re-directive:** Constantly redirecting the choices of the female character

			4- **Controlling:** Disagreement with decisions and forcing his own 5- No detectable influence
21	Overall Character Representation in Episode (This will be coded once at the end of each episode)	1- Positive 2- Negative	1- **Positive Representation:** portraying a good image of the women from a moral, progressive point of view 2- **Negative Representation:** Portraying a negative image of the character: immoral, backward thinker
22	Character traits of woman portrayed in coded episode This will be coded once at the end of each episode)	1- Weak 2- Powerful 3- Sex object 4- Self-independent 5- Active/cope 6- Critical 7- Passive 8- Progressive	1- **Weak:** woman who is depicted as being vulnerable and cannot decide on her own. 2- **Powerful:** woman who is goal oriented, able to make good judgments, show courage in standing up to her beliefs and maintains self-respect. 3- **Sex object:** woman is only viewed as an object towards sexual gratification 4- **Self-independent:** woman who stands alone without a man's aid

			(this can be financial or psychological)
			5- **Active/cope with difficulties:** woman who stands up for her rights, and who is able to solve any difficulties that she may face
			6- **Critical:** woman who is aware of her rights and refuses to be discriminated against in any field.
			7- **Passive:** woman who does not defend her rights or stand against unjust circumstances and accept the status quo without active response or resistance
			8- **Progressive:** woman who is forward; advocating or trying to implement social reform ideas.