Negotiating identities online: A quantitative exploration of Egyptian women's social media gratifications, challenges, and perceived portrayals

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how influential Egyptian women (social media influencers and celebrities) express themselves and how they are perceived by the public. It also investigates the social roles and traits associated with the sample, Instagram post objectives, common topics discussed in Instagram posts, tone of voice delivered through post content and accompanying captions. The current study is a descriptive study that conducted a thorough visual content analysis of posts on Instagram taken and posted by five of the most influential women on Instagram as selected by Egyptian teenagers through a questionnaire. This study uses visual, quantitative content analysis to examine how influential Egyptian women are portrayed on Instagram. The researcher used a sample of 350 Instagram posts from five female Egyptian Instagram influencers, and celebrities. The study results demonstrate that influential Egyptian women on Instagram are primarily positive and evolving. The study results confirmed the existence of a statistically significant correlation between having a modern context of identity and showing sexualized body parts. In addition, there is a correlation of statistical significance between wearing a headscarf and having a "modest" context of identity. In addition, Instagram's representation of powerful Egyptian women indicates that they are primarily self-assured models who positively appeal to their audience about beauty and fashion. Most of their Instagram posts feature veiled women who seem to be self-sufficient. Almost all their Instagram posts are images accompanied by English-language captions.

Keywords: Gratification, Identity, Self-portrayal, Social networking sites, Social role, Content analysis, Instagram, Egyptian women, Social media influencers.

1. Introduction

The media's depictions of women wield significant influence and bias over the process of interpretation regarding femininity [1]. Mobile technologies negatively impact depictions of women which may lead to more psychosocial concerns relating to gender stereotypes. Providing focus and efforts on the following issue is mandatory due to the psychological effects of gender stereotypes [2]. Examining the areas where feminism and digital technology meet is necessary to grasp the difficulties of gender operations online. Urgent discussion is needed on whether women may view social media as a place of influence. Does it promise to give women a powerful voice and usher in a new era of profound transformation? Can the divide between virtual and real life be bridged? Is the Internet which at first glance seemed to be a paradise in which gender boundaries would dissolve just an extension of the "real world"? These concerns and the context in which they are asked require rethinking, considering the Internet's status as the contemporary center of the unparalleled flow of data, debate, imagery and knowledge.

2. Research Problem

Traditional media has often portrayed women misleadingly and unequally. However, the emergence of social networking has sparked a progressive revolution significantly altering the landscape of social interactions. It enables individuals to connect, share issues, problems, interests and collaborate despite geographical, sexual, mental, and affiliation differences. These features have empowered Egyptian women to realize their full potential, assert their presence and disseminate their ideas widely.

In this context, new media platforms should play a crucial role in dispelling stereotypes and amplifying women's voices. Social media offers women a unique avenue to showcase themselves and present a balanced, unbiased image. This paper examines the portrayal of Egyptian women on social media from an Egyptian woman's perspective.

3. Research Objectives

The current study seeks to determine the following:
1. The uses and gratifications of social media as perceived by Egyptian women.
2. How do Egyptian women assess their self-esteem?
3. The challenges facing Egyptian women while using social media.
4. Ways in which Egyptian women perceive social media in terms of its impact on Egyptian women.
5. The social roles of Egyptian women on social media.
6. Topics related to Egyptian women on social media.

4. Review of Literature

4.1. Social Media in Egypt

Media continue to play a critical role in Egyptian society on various levels and in various ways. However, a comprehensive review of the literature does not support this claim. Egypt's culture is characterized by different and frequently separated gender roles for men and women [3]. Egyptians are heavy consumers of social media platforms particularly Facebook and Instagram. Facebook accounted for 55.4 million users as of May 2023 making it the most popular social media site in Egypt. This is approximately four million growth from April 2022. Facebook Messenger and Instagram came next with 49.5 million and almost 19.2 million accounts respectively [4].

4.2. Social Networking Sites as Platforms for Women to Express Themselves

Popular media has an immense impact on society. Examples include movies, music, billboards, television broadcasting companies, fashion and fitness magazines and billboards. They cause individuals to become practically preoccupied with their appearance and material belongings. As a result, the act of photographing has changed. According to Laroche [5] photography has evolved from catching others for private enjoyment to photographing oneself for public assessment. Consequently, young people who use social media frequently may be described as more egocentric and introverted compared to previous generations [6-9]. Some experts claim that many of the social media users are narcissistic because they constantly share details about themselves and exaggerate aspects of their lives to make themselves appear more fascinating and satisfied than others [10-13]. The majority of individuals use social media to gain visibility and recognition. Additionally, people market themselves to the general public [14, 15]. However, there are external and internal motivations for using SNSs [16]. Furthermore, individuals may seek self-discovery or external affirmation and appreciation from others [17]. Similarly, women can use SNSs to obtain exposure, enhance their self-esteem discover commonalities engage with others who share their interests and feel validated [18, 19]. Social networking sites (SNSs) allow users to be genuine and creative but creating an online persona requires conscious effort and may lead to self-actualization and self-promotion in the end [20, 21]. Social media has an impact on people's real images as well. When there is a discrepancy between a person's virtual and real identities, it might worsen the split personality phenomenon [22, 23]. In the same context, the issue has spread to the loss of personal identity because of people—women in particular comparing their bodies to those on Instagram which causes them to feel inadequate and less confident in their abilities [24].Further research has shown people may have two accounts on various sites such as Instagram where they can express themselves without fearing being noticed. As a result, for its users, these accounts have turned into a place of illusory emancipation [25, 26].

The review of the literature on social media in Egypt and how it affects women's expression on SNSs provides interesting observations. However, it also points out a variety of areas that require more in-depth research.

Although the media is recognized as playing a crucial role in Egyptian society, there seems to be a lack of in-depth empirical research on its influence particularly in relation to gender dynamics and social behaviors. This highlights the need for further study to fully understand the media's various impacts on Egyptian culture. Furthermore, Facebook and Instagram usage among Egyptians is well known but surprisingly little research has been done on usage patterns, trends in content consumption, and the sociocultural implications of these social media sites.

5. Theoretical Framework

5.1. Social Role Theory

The social role theory interprets gendered behavior in online and face-to-face communication. Unlike the biological concept of "sex," gender is learnt through a lifelong process of learning that involves actions, beliefs, and ideas about what it means to be male or female [27]. These constructs contribute to observable behavioral differences between genders. Men expectedly portray agentic characteristics such as task orientation, assertiveness, dominance, self-sufficiency, and emotional control. At the same time, women are supposed to display more interpersonally oriented characteristics, including empathy, sensitivity, emotional expression dependency, and vulnerability [28]. When considering gender and social media research, it is essential to investigate existing offline behavior and online communication patterns. In addition, the way these patterns influence the formation of gender identities on Social Networking Sites (SNS). However, studies have revealed a slight disparity between males and females regarding the usage of SNS [29]. However, little is known about gender disparities in virtual connectivity [30].

5.2. Uses & Gratifications Theory

Katz et al. [31] proposed the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory which centers on audiences' active role in media consumption and purposeful use of media. It argues that the audience interacts with media actively and purposefully to satisfy particular needs.

Later developments in U&G theory note that internet users commonly seek information acquisition and online social interaction when face-to-face communication is difficult for them [32]. U & G theory is critical for analyzing social networking sites (SNSs) because it highlights the importance of digital media in everyday lives, its varied purposes and the fact that users play an active part.

Whiting and Williams [33] conducted extensive interviews under the framework of U&G theory where they identified ten main motivations for using SNSs as follows: Socializing, information gathering, time passing phase, amusement, relaxation, communicative utility, convenience, opinion sharing or expression, information dispersal and sharing as well as knowledge acquisition. In addition, Alhabash and Ma [34] also showed different degrees of motivation on Facebook compared to Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat indicating a variance in what drives engagement by users across different SNSs [35-37]. This idea is reinforced by previous research showing how reasons behind people's usage of various social media platforms can vary widely.

5.3. Research Questions

1. What are the uses and gratifications of social media as perceived by Egyptian women?
2. How do Egyptian women perceive themselves in relation to self-esteem?
3. What are the challenges facing Egyptian women while using social media?
4. In what ways do Egyptian women perceive social media?
   a. Impact of social media on Egyptian women.
   b. Social roles of Egyptian women on social media.
   c. Topics related to Egyptian women on social media.
5. What are the demographics of Egyptian women on social media?

5.4. Research Hypothesis

H₁: There is a relationship of statistical significance among the social roles of Egyptian women and their demographic characteristics.

H₁ₐ. There is a relationship between the social role of "liberated woman" and the age of Egyptian women.

H₁ᵦ. There is a relationship of statistical significance between the social role of the "independent woman" and the age of Egyptian women.

H₁ᵧ. There is a relationship of statistical significance between the social role of the "independent woman" and the marital status of Egyptian women.

6. Research Methodology

6.1. Research Design

The current study used a quantitative approach to data collection. A convenience sample was used to align with the study's nature and purpose. This is a non-probability sampling technique and participants are selected based on their accessibility and proximity to the researcher [38]. In this method, it is vital to describe the excluded individuals during the selection process as the researcher did in this study by excluding non-social media users and all male participants [39].

6.2. Research Population

The research population consists of Egyptian women who use social media. This population was selected because it is relevant to the study's objectives and focus on understanding the experiences and perceptions of this specific demographic group.

6.3. Sampling Unit

In the current study, the sampling unit is young Egyptian women aged 18 to 40 years old and above who use Instagram. The target sample size was 300. However, the actual sample size reached 297.

6.4. Instrument

The instrument used for data collection is a survey developed by adapting scales from past scholars to formulate the items for each question. The survey was created in Arabic for the participants' convenience aligning with the cultural context of the study population.

6.5. Validity and Reliability

The overall study scales demonstrated robust reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient indicates high internal consistency and reliability for most variables as the values range between 0.692 and 0.843.

6.6. What Are the Uses and Gratifications of Social Media by Egyptian Women?

Tables 1 presents the general patterns of using social media including how many years users have been using the platform, how many days per week they access social media and how much time they spend on these platforms per week?

Table 1.
Q 2: How long have you been using social media?

Rate of social media use	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	5	1.7
From 1 – 2 years	1	0.3
From 3 – 4 years	8	2.7
More than 5 years	283	95.3
Total	297	100.0

According to Table 1, 95% indicated they started using social media more than five years ago. In comparison, eight respondents started using social media for 3-4 years.

Table 2.
Q 3: How often do you usually use social media?

Rate of social media use	Frequency	Percent
Once a month	1	0.3
Once a week	3	1.0
2 to 3 times per week	9	3.0
Several times a week	7	2.4
Daily	277	93.3
Total	297	100.0

Almost all respondents indicated using social media daily by 93.3%. In contrast, 3% of the study sample use social media 2 to 3 times per week.
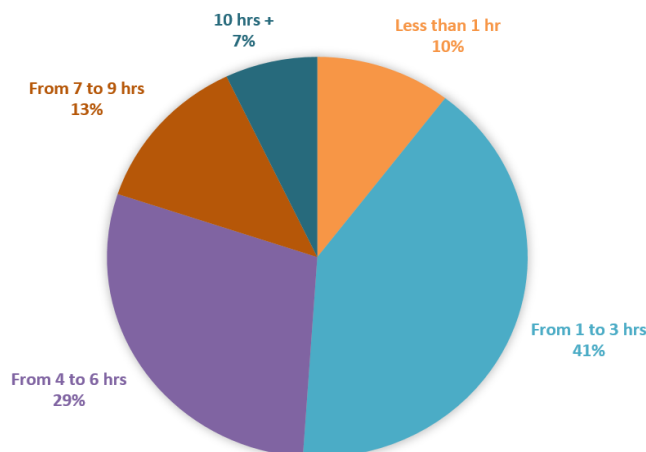
Figure 1.
Time spent on social media.

Figure 1 illustrates the time spent on social media by the study sample. The majority of respondents (41%) reported using social media for 1 to 3 hours a day which is considered typical usage. However, 29% of the sample used social media for 4 to 6 hours daily considered moderate use.

Table 3.
Q 5: What social media platform do you use at least once a week?

Social media platforms	N	Percent
Facebook	257	86.5%
Telegram	57	19.2%
Instagram	187	63.0%
Twitter	54	18.2%
Snapchat	26	8.8%
Tiktok	47	15.8%
Total	297	

Among the social media platforms, Facebook was the most used by respondents (86.5%) followed by Instagram (63%).

6.7. Motives for Sharing Personal Information on Facebook and Instagram
The most common motive was to communicate with friends then to share information about a particular problem then to keep a record of personal ideas and images and to share my information, knowledge and experience.

Table 4.
Q 7: What are your motives for sharing your information on Facebook and Instagram?

Motives for sharing information on social media	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
To express myself in a realistic way.	38	12.8	111	37.4	87	29.3	52	17.5	9	3.0	3.39	1.01
To form new relationships with others.	25	8.4	109	36.7	69	23.2	82	27.6	12	4.0	3.18	1.06
To share my information, knowledge and experience.	44	14.8	140	47.1	67	22.6	41	13.8	5	1.7	3.60	0.96
To keep a record of personal ideas and images.	59	19.9	122	41.1	61	20.5	48	16.2	7	2.4	3.60	1.05
To introduce myself in a perfect way.	6	2.0	52	17.5	50	16.8	132	44.4	57	19.2	2.39	1.05
To share information about a particular problem.	35	11.8	157	52.9	65	21.9	33	11.1	7	2.4	3.61	0.92
I enjoy when people like what I post and share and get comments on.	23	7.7	133	44.8	80	26.9	49	16.5	12	4.0	3.36	0.98
Because it feels fun.	14	4.7	102	34.3	103	34.7	63	21.2	15	5.1	3.12	0.97
To announce about my activities.	29	9.8	106	35.7	64	21.5	76	25.6	22	7.4	3.15	1.13
To communicate with friends.	94	31.6	176	59.3	18	6.1%	7	2.4	2	0.7	4.19	0.71

6.8. The Nature of Profile Picture on Social Media

According to Table 6, the majority of Egyptian women in the current study uploaded their real pictures on social media. At the same time, 16.5% of the sample used a graphic or their name as a profile picture on social media.

Table 5.
Survey question 10: What is the nature of your profile picture on social media?

Nature of profile picture	Frequency	Percent
No picture	4	1.3
Unreal picture	19	6.4
Graphic or name	49	16.5
Real picture	225	75.8
Total	297	100.0
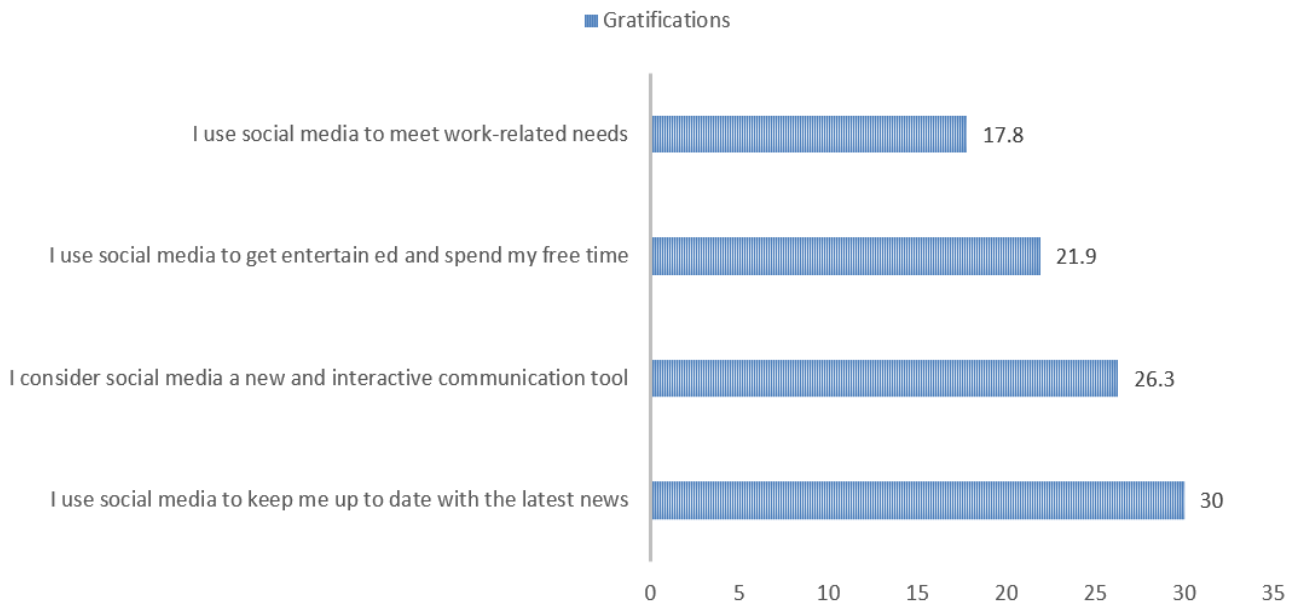
Figure 2.
Motivations of social media use by study sample.

Figure 2 illustrates the motivations of Egyptian women for using social media. As shown in the figure, the primary motivation is to keep themselves updated with the latest news by 30%. Second, Egyptian women consider social media a new and interactive communication tool by 26.3%. Third, 21.9% of the sample used social media to get entertained and spend their free time. Finally, Egyptian women used social media to meet work-related needs by 17.8%.

Table 6.
Q 13: To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your gratifications from social media use?

Gratifications	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I consider social media a new and interactive communication tool.	78	26.3	185	62.3	29	9.8	5	1.7	0	0	4.13	0.64
A new way to make it easier to meet new people.	38	12.8	144	48.5	55	18.5	47	15.8	13	4.4	3.49	1.04
I use social media to get entertain ed and spend my free time.	65	21.9	179	60.3	38	12.8	12	4.0	3	1	3.98	0.78
For social appearance purposes.	21	7.1	64	21.5	77	25.9	122	41.1	13	4.4	2.86	1.03
I use social media to meet work-related needs.	53	17.8	137	46.1	65	21.9	39	13.1	3	1	3.67	0.95
I use social media to keep me updated with the latest news.	89	30.0	180	60.6	20	6.7	7	2.4	1	0.3	4.18	0.68
I use social media to engage in conversations about different issues.	28	9.4	116	39.1	87	29.3	63	21.2	3	1	3.35	0.95
I use social media to express myself freely.	18	6.1	99	33.3	98	33.0	70	23.6	12	4	3.14	0.98

6.9. How Do Egyptian Women Perceive Themselves Concerning Self-Esteem?

The self-esteem of Egyptian women was assessed through two questions asking respondents to what extent they agree with statements concerned with self-esteem.
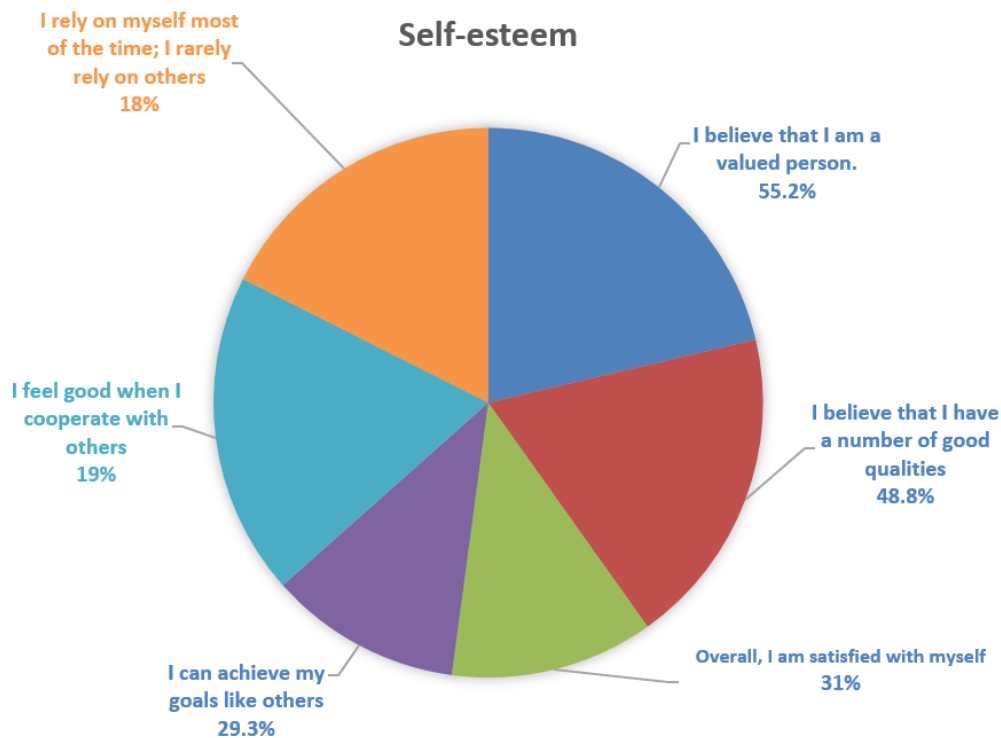

Figure 3.
Egyptian women's self-esteem.

Regarding their self-esteem, Table 7 presents the extent to which Egyptian women agree with the following statements regarding their self-esteem. The majority of the study sample indicated that they believe themselves to be valued people with 55.2% expressing this sentiment. Additionally, 48.8% of the participants believe they possess a number of good qualities. In comparison, 29.3% indicated confidence in their ability to achieve similar goals. Finally, 31% of Egyptian women in the current study reported being satisfied with themselves overall.

Figure 3 provides further insights into the self-esteem dimensions among these women. It highlights that 19% of the respondents feel particularly positive when cooperating with others suggesting collaboration may boost their self-esteem. Conversely, 18% of the women tend to rely primarily on themselves and rarely depend on others indicating a sense of independence in managing their lives and decisions. This self-reliance could reflect their confidence in their abilities, although it also points to a potential reluctance to seek support from others.

Table 7.
Q 6: To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your self-esteem?

Self-esteem	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I believe that I am a valued person.	164	55.2	103	34.7	24	8.1	5	1.7	1	0.3	4.43	0.74
I believe that I have a number of good qualities.	145	48.8	135	45.5	16	5.4	1	0.3	0	0.	4.43	0.61
Overall, I feel I am a loser.	4	1.3	16	5.4	53	17.8	156	52.5	68	22.9	2.10	0.86
I can achieve my goals like others.	87	29.3	132	44.4	57	19.2	20	6.7	1	0.3	3.96	0.89
I feel like I don't have many things to be proud of.	21	7.1	41	13.8	40	13.5	126	42.4	69	23.2	2.39	1.19
Overall, I am satisfied with myself.	92	31	151	50.8	41	13.8	11	3.7	2	0.7	4.08	0.81
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	59	19.9	101	34.0	57	19.2	54	18.2	26	8.8	3.38	1.24
I feel insignificant sometimes.	12	4	56	18.9	55	18.5	125	42.1	49	16.5	2.52	1.10
Sometimes I think I'm not good at all.	18	6.1	75	25.3	65	21.9	102	34.3	37	12.5	2.78	1.14

Table 8.
Q 9: To what extent do these statements apply to you?

Self-esteem	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	135	45.5	130	43.8%	23	7.7	9	3.0	0	0	4.32	0.74
I feel proud if a co-worker or friend has achieved any achievement.	119	40.1	150	50.5	26	8.8	2	0.7	0	0	4.30	0.65
My pleasure is spending time with others.	40	13.5	127	42.8	100	33.7	29	9.8	1	0.3	3.59	0.85
My independent personality is very important to me.	124	41.8	151	50.8	16	5.4	5	1.7	1	0.3	4.32	0.68
I feel good when I cooperate with others.	146	49.2	141	47.5	8	2.7	2	0.7	0	0	4.45	0.59
I believe competition is normal.	116	39.1	161	54.2	13	4.4	7	2.4	0	0	4.30	0.66
I always spend time with my family no matter how busy I am.	123	41.4	135	45.5	35	11.8	4	1.3	0	0	4.27	0.72
I feel nervous and jealous when someone else does a better job than me.	9	3.0	52	17.5	66	22.2	123	41.4	47	15.8	2.51	1.05
I always seek out what sets me apart from others.	63	21.2	137	46.1	67	22.6	28	9.4	2	0.7	3.78	0.91
It is important for me to respect what those close to me decide (Such as family and friends etc.).	78	26.3	165	55.6	41	13.8	12	4.0	1	0.3	4.03	0.77

Table 8 presents to what extent Egyptian women agree with statements concerned with self-esteem. The majority of the study sample indicated that 49.2% feel good when cooperating with others. In addition, 45.5% said they believe they rely on themselves most of the time. They rarely rely on others. Another 40.1% indicated that their independent personality is essential to them. Finally, 40.1% of Egyptian women in the current study feel proud if a co-worker or friend has achieved anything.

6.10. What are the Challenges Facing Egyptian Women While Using Social Media? (Q8, Q17)

Table 9 provides Egyptian women's challenges when using social media. The first question asked respondents what may happen if they disclose their information on Facebook and Instagram. The second question asked respondents to what extent they agree with the following statements regarding the challenges they face when discussing women's issues on social media.

Table 9.

Q 8: Please provide your opinion on what may happen if you disclose your information on Facebook and Instagram.?

Challenges	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I may face unethical, unwanted harassment.	73	24.6	119	40.1	45	15.2	46	15.5	14	4.7	3.64	1.15
I might face harmful rumors.	51	17.2	116	39.1	58	19.5	57	19.2	15	5.1	3.44	1.13
My personal data can be stolen or misused by other users.	82	27.6	144	48.5	40	13.5	19	6.4	12	4.0	3.89	1.01

27.6% of Egyptian women indicated that they were concerned about their data being stolen or used inappropriately by other users on Facebook and Instagram. In addition, 24.6% indicated they might face unethical, unwanted harassment when using social media. Finally, 17.2% think they might face harmful rumors.

Table 10.

Q 17: To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the challenges they face when they discuss women's issues on social media?

Challenges	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Getting judged	68	22.9	125	42.1	55	18.5	40	13.5	9	3.0	3.68	1.06
I am too shy to express myself.	11	3.7	35	11.8	94	31.6	133	44.8	24	8.1	2.58	0.93
I lack confidence.	7	2.4	27	9.1	51	17.2	154	51.9	58	19.5	2.23	0.95
I have no opinion on this.	6	2.0	33	11.1	105	35.4	126	42.4	27	9.1	2.55	0.88
I am reluctant to share my opinions with others.	7	2.4	58	19.5	87	29.3	117	39.4	28	9.4	2.66	0.97

Figure 4 illustrates the various challenges Egyptian women perceive when engaging in online interactions on social media. The largest concern representing 27.6% of the responses is the potential for personal data to be stolen indicating that data privacy is a primary worry. This is followed by a concern over facing unethical or unwanted harassment, accounting for 24.6% of the responses. The fear of being judged by others is also significant comprising 22.9% of the responses.

Table 10 presents the personal and psychological obstacles that Egyptian women experience when talking about women's issues on social media. More precisely, 3.7% women feel too bashful to let their thoughts out while 2.4% lack faith in their ability to participate in such discussions.
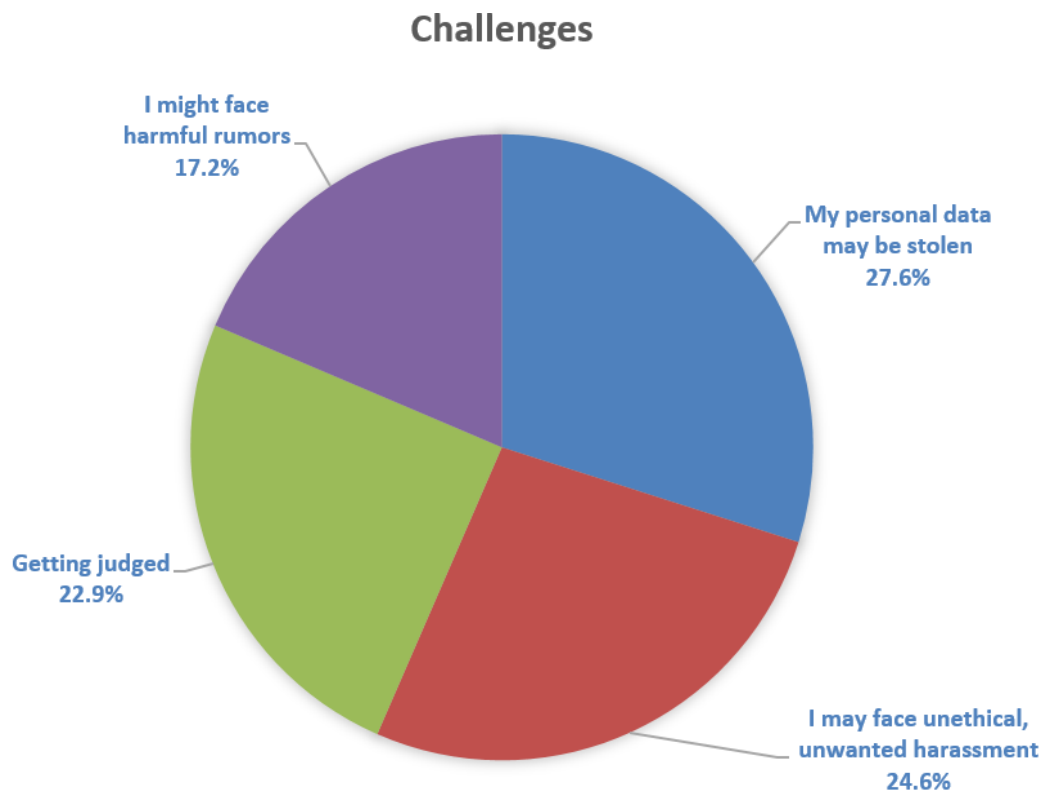
Challenges

Figure 4.
Challenges facing Egyptian women when they use social media.

6.11. In What Ways do Egyptian Women Perceive Social Media?
6.11.1. Impact of Social Media on Egyptian Women

The impact of social media on Egyptian women was assessed through two questions asking respondents to what extent they agreed with the following statements:
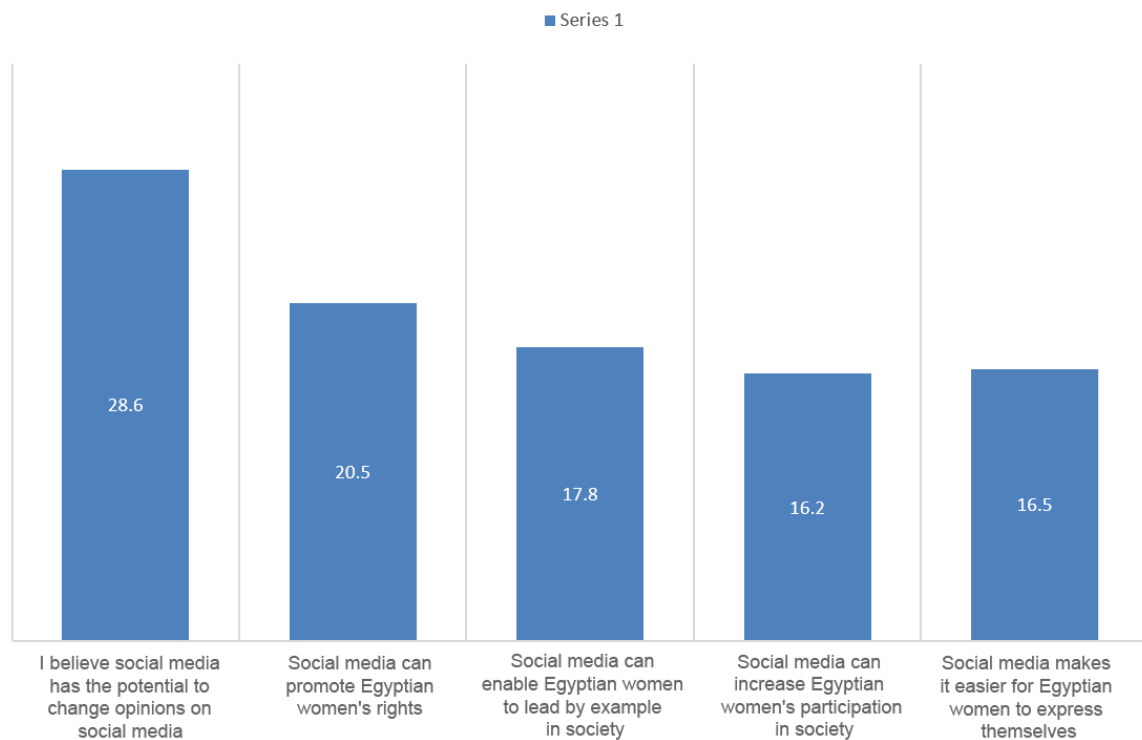

Figure 5.
The way Egyptian women perceive the impact of social media.

Figure 5 shows that 28.6% of respondents indicated that social media could shape opinions while 27% believe it reflects positively on women across all platforms. Meanwhile, Table 11 presents Egyptian women's perception of the issues represented on social media in which 11.8% feel that social media offers different points of view about women's issues. On the other hand, the majority (80.8%) perceive it as being effective in showing different sides required for decision-making processes regarding any subject matter including those affecting females' rights. However, when asked if they agree with this statement or not, many people were neutral rather than agreeing with what was said thus showing that there might be some truth behind their belief but still having doubts themselves about whether there is any good aspect at all when considering everything else too. In addition, online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter effectively presented numerous perspectives on female gender among others.

Table 11.

Q 12: To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the way Egyptian women perceive social media?

The way Egyptian women perceive social media	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I believe social media has the potential to change opinions on social media.	85	28.6	155	52.2	39	13.1	18	6.1	0	0.0	4.03	0.81
Social media provides a generally positive image on all its platforms.	8	2.7	40	13.5	120	40.4	110	37	19	6.4	2.69	0.88
Social media provides different opinions regarding Egyptian women's issues.	35	11.8	194	65.3	51	17.2	16	5.4	1	0.3	3.83	0.71

Table 12.

Q 14: To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the way Egyptian women perceive social media?

The way Egyptian women perceive social media	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Std. deviation
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Social media makes it easier for Egyptian women to express themselves.	48	16.2	144	48.5	69	23.2	32	10.8	4	1.3	3.67	0.92
Social media can increase Egyptian women's participation in society.	49	16.5	172	57.9	63	21.2	10	3.4	3	1	3.86	0.76
Social media can enable Egyptian women to lead by example in society.	53	17.8	177	59.6	54	18.2	13	4.4	0	0	3.91	0.73
Social media can promote Egyptian women's rights (Women's rights).	61	20.5	179	60.3	49	16.5	7	2.4	1	0.3	3.98	0.70
Social media provides economic opportunities for Egyptian women (Economic empowerment).	39	13.1	166	55.9	77	25.9	15	5.1	0	0	3.77	0.74
Social media supports gender equality in Egyptian political life (Political empowerment).	33	11.1	101	34	122	41.1	39	13.1	2	0.7	3.42	0.88

Table 12 presents the way Egyptian women perceive social media. Most Egyptian women in the current study provided that social media can promote Egyptian women's rights by 20.5%. In comparison, 17.8% indicated that social media could enable Egyptian women to lead by example in society. In addition, 16.5% provided that social media can increase Egyptian women's participation in society. Finally, 16.2% indicated that social media makes it easier for Egyptian women to express themselves.

6.11.2. Social Roles of Egyptian Women on Social Media

The social roles of Egyptian women on social media were assessed through two questions asking respondents to what extent they agree with the following statements.
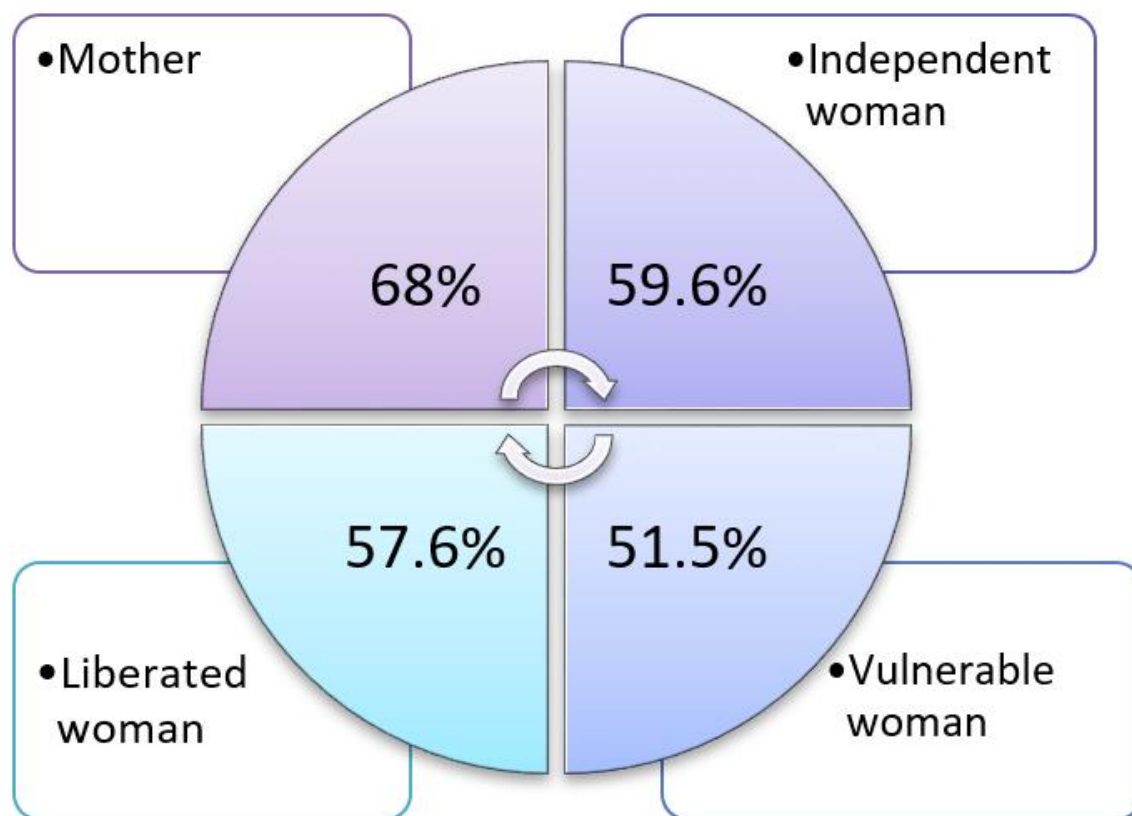
Figure 6.
Social roles of Egyptian women on social media.

Figure 6 illustrates the top four social roles in which Egyptian women appear on social media. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one social role. The first social role indicated by 68% of respondents is the role of mother followed by the social role of an independent woman by 59.6%. Third, the social role of liberated women by 57.6%. Finally, the social role of vulnerable women is 51.5%.

6.12. Social Status of Egyptian Women on Social Media

Table 13 presents the social status that Egyptian women occupy on social media. The majority of respondents (64.3%) indicated that Egyptian women occupy a primary status on social media. Moreover, 16.8% provided that Egyptian women occupy a secondary status. Finally, 16.2% of respondents believe Egyptian women occupy peripheral status on social media.

Table 13.
Q 16: In your opinion, what's the social status the Egyptian woman occupies on social media?

Social status	Frequency	Percent
Peripheral status	48	18.8
secondary status	50	16.8
Primary status	191	64.3
Total	297	100.0

6.12.1. Topics Related to Egyptian Women on Social Media

The topics in which Egyptian women are interested in social media were assessed through two questions asking respondents, what topics are they interested in on social media?

Table 14.
Q 11: What topics are you interested in on social media?

Topics	N	Percent
Scientific topics	118	39.7%
Cultural topics	159	53.5%
Sports topics	38	12.8%
Political topics	107	36.0%
Economical topics	56	18.9%
Social topics	237	79.8%
Religious topics	171	57.6%
Emotional topics	106	35.7%

Topics	N	Percent
Topics related to arts	142	47.8%
Other topics	55	18.5%
Total	297	

Table 14 presents the top four topics Egyptian women care about the most on social media. They are social topics (79.8%), religious topics (57.6%), and cultural topics (53.5%). Finally, topics related to the arts were indicated by 47.8%.

6.13. What are the Demographics of Egyptian Women on Social Media?

Table 15 presents the demographic profile of Egyptian women on social media. According to Table 15, the majority of the study sample is over 40 years old representing 33.3% of the sample followed by women aged 31 to 35 comprising 20.2%. Regarding educational attainment, Table 16 shows that 58.6% of the women possess a bachelor's degree, 40.4% hold a postgraduate degree, and only 1% have qualifications below a bachelor's degree. Table 17 indicates that 69.7% of the participants are employed reflecting a notable proportion of working women on social media whereas 30.3% are not. Finally, Table 18 indicates that 61.3 of the study sample are married followed by single (30.3%) and the minority is divorced (5.4%) or widowed (3%).

Table 15.
Age.

Age	Frequency	Percent
Less than 25	29	9.8
25- 30	53	17.8
31 – 35	60	20.2
36 – 40	56	18.9
More than 40	99	33.3
Total	297	100.0

Table 16.
Level of education.

Level of education	Frequency	Percent
Less than bachelor's degree	3	1
Bachelor's degree	174	58.6
Postgraduate degree	120	40.4
Total	297	100.0

Table 17.
Occupational status.

Occupational status	Frequency	Percent
Does not work	90	30.3
Working woman	207	69.7
Total	297	100.0

Table 18.
The social status.

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Single	90	30.3
Divorced	16	5.4
Widowed	9	3.0
Married	182	61.3
Total	297	100.0

6.14. Testing the Hypothesis

H_1: There is a relationship among the social roles of Egyptian women and their demographic characteristics (age groups, educational level, occupation and marital status).

Table 19.
Hypothesis 1.

Social role		A. age	B. education	D. occupation	E. marital
Social role (Liberated woman)	Pearson correlation	-0.182-**	0.048	0.012	-0.151-**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.413	0.835	0.009
	N	297	297	297	297
Social role (Independent woman)	Pearson correlation	-0.132-*	-0.025	0.010	-0.176-**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.023	0.666	0.870	0.002
	N	297	297	297	297

Note: *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

H_{1d}: There is a strong negative relationship (r=-0.15) between the social role of liberated woman and the demographic of marital status ((r <0.10). There is statistical evidence that the relationship between the two variables is significant (P=0, P<0.05).

H_{1f}: There is a strong negative relationship (r=-0.13) between the social role of an independent woman and the demographic of age ((r <0.10). There is statistical evidence that the relationship between the two variables is significant (P=0.02, P>0.05).

H_{1g}: There is a strong negative relationship (r=-0.17) between the social role of an independent woman , and the demographic of social status ((r <0.10). There is statistical evidence that the correlation between the two variables is significant (P=0, P>0.05).

Table 19 presents the results of the correlation analysis between various demographic variables i.e., age, education, occupation, and marital status and the social roles of "liberated woman" and "independent woman". The study results indicate a significant negative relationship between age and the social role of a liberated woman (r = -0.182, p = 0.002). Similarly, being single has negative correlations with both liberated women (r = -0.151, p = 0.009) and independent women roles (r = -0.176, p < 001). Therefore, these findings point out negative relationships that are meaningful between demographic factors and social roles especially it should be noted that this relationship is significant for two categories: "liberated woman " (r = −0151; p=0009) as well as "independent woman" (r=−0176; p<0001). Specifically, marital status shows significant negative relationships with both the "liberated woman" (r = -0.151, p = 0.009) and "independent woman" (r = -0.176, p = 0.002) roles. In contrast, education and occupation do not correlate strongly with these social roles due to their p-values exceeding 0.05 suggesting that these factors may not significantly influence the roles. The results confirm that years of schooling or types of employment variables do not have a substantial effect on social roles. The higher-than-expected p-values further support the lack of significance particularly in the context of the "independent woman" role. Consequently, the data suggests that demographic factors especially age and marital status influence more prominently perceptions of these social roles.

7. Discussion
7.1. Social Media Use
When questioned about the frequency of their social media use, the majority of participants, the highest proportion, used for five years or more and spent between one- and three-hours daily recording individual ideas and images to talk with friends. The evidence obtained corroborates [40] work which established that many respondents were frequent Facebook users with 82% logging in several times daily. In addition, investigations done in the past year and 2016 have shown that most people would access all these platforms at least once daily. Similarly, the current research also finds that 36% of respondents used such platforms for sociable purposes involving communication with others (friends or family members), maintaining relationships, and sharing intimate information [41, 42].

7.2. Gratifications
The social presence, enjoyment, information seeking, self-presentation and social interaction scales were adapted from Zhou et al. [43], Li et al. [44] and Ozanne et al. [45]. The concept of surveillance is derived from Kaye and Johnson [46]. The concept of measuring personal utility is adapted from Palmgreen and Rayburn [47] and Taha [48]. According to the current study, Egyptian women's motivations for social media use are to keep themselves updated with the latest news (information seeking) by 30%. Second, Egyptian women consider social media as a new and interactive communication tool (social interaction) by 26.3%. Third, 21.9% of the sample used social media to get entertained and spend their free time (enjoyment). Finally, Egyptian women used social media to meet work-related needs (information seeking) by 17.8%.

7.3. Self-Esteem
In 2021, the American Psychological Association defined *self-esteem* as the extent to which an individual places a positive value on his characteristics and qualities, including an individual's self-concept, self-appraisal of competencies and achievements, values, how successful they are in keeping those values and how others perceive them and react to them. Increased levels of self-esteem imply greater overall perceptions of these attributes and qualities. On the other hand, low self-esteem and feelings of uselessness are common symptoms among depressed people. At the same time, a reasonably high level is an essential part of mental health.

The majority of Egyptian females felt that they were valued individuals regarding self-esteem (55.2%) are good when they work with others (49.2%), use themselves as their most relied-upon resource and seldom make use of others (35.5%), and think they have some excellent points (48.8%). Prior research shows that social media can improve women's self-esteem. In the words of Loiseau and Nowacka, social media raises awareness about women's rights and challenges gender inequality. For instance, Turkish women express their disagreement with the anti-abortion policy through social networks [43].

Moreover, social media is a platform that can be used to propagate feminism and express how women feel. Feminist bloggers on Facebook strengthen feminist networks and create online feminist communities [44]. Additionally, body-positive content on social media influences body satisfaction among all females regardless of their initial perceptions of beauty. [45, 49]. Females who observed positive messages about their bodies were more content with them appreciated their unique qualities, and felt healthier than at other times. Conversely, those who saw idealized pictures on Instagram had a negative body perception and a bad mood [50].

7.4. Challenges

Regarding the challenges Egyptian women face when using social media, the majority indicated that their data might be stolen (27.6%), they may face unethical, unwanted harassment (24.6%) and they fear getting judged (22.9%). They might face harmful rumors (17.2%). These findings coincide with previous studies that present the threats women face in the physical world and are finding their reflection in the online space. Many studies have indicated the harassment women face through social media Walulya and Selnes [51], Nelson [52] and Dhawan [53]. Valenzuela-García et al. [54] present the findings of two studies: an online ethnography and a self-reported online victimization survey among Spanish influencers. According to the findings, over 70% of influencers have experienced negative online feedback and abuse. The impacts and responses to cyber victimization differ depending on the influencers' profiles and sociodemographic traits. By silencing or excluding women from online spaces, online violence can impact the economic outcomes of individuals who rely on these platforms for a living [54]. However, no standard definition for online gender-based violence on social media has developed during the past decade. While the legislation on some platforms does encompass online harassment, significant worldwide social media sites have failed to reach an agreement on the specific criteria of harassment and who should be defined as a victim. Greater responsibility and representation of women in the tech industry could be a positive first step.

7.5. Perception of Social Media

In terms of how Egyptian women perceive the impact of social media on their portrayal, the   majority of the respondents believed social media has the potential to change opinions, can promote Egyptian women's rights increase Egyptian women's participation in society and make it easier for Egyptian women to express themselves.

7.6. Perception of Egyptian Women's Portrayal

Among the 12 social roles studied, the top 4 roles that Egyptian women believe represent them on social media are mother, independent woman, liberated woman and vulnerable woman. Moreover, they believed they occupied a primary status on social media.

Egyptian women's demographics are connected with their social roles in social media which is a major finding of this study. There is a moderate positive relationship between educational level and the social role of women in holding positions of power. Besides, there is also a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between educational level and the social role of single mothers. These findings coincide with earlier studies assert that widened avenues to higher education undeniably translate into elevated global standing and authority for women. Furthermore, empirical research shows that university education increases the earnings and marketability of women; therefore, they should be encouraged to pursue tertiary education [1]. Working means getting employment or self-employment which requires at least some form of professional education or training after secondary education such as a diploma or bachelor's degree attainment [2]. High school graduates face numerous difficulties in accessing decent jobs due to a lack of formal employment skills that would make them earn a living [3]. Higher learning improves motivation and the ability for females to seek employment by producing requisite qualifications and substantial earning capacity prospects as well as changing stereotypical beliefs about femininity at home and in the workplace [4-6]. However, this is not true across all societies because some people do not value formal education [7-9].

 Given that education levels are directly related to working opportunities, the current study further indicates a correlation of statistical significance between the educational level of Egyptian women and being single mothers. This finding correlates with previous studies concerning family structure. The rising divorce rate in recent decades is linked to women's growing economic independence [55]. The causal relationship operates in both directions and is as follows: as divorce becomes more widespread, more women may return to the job market or become the primary pay earner instead of the secondary wage earner [56]. In addition, when divorce rates are high, women may hesitate to abandon paid employment for full-time homemaking [57].

7.7. Topics

Concerning the topics, social topics ranked the top among the majority of respondents (79.8%) followed by religious topics (57.6%) and cultural topics (53.5%). The top topics on social media in the current study coincide with some studies that indicated that the majority of topics women post on Facebook groups are related to marriage, the mother's status in the family, emotional relationships between men and women, and the significance of women to men emphasizing the family aspect of society, which is fundamentally composed of men, women, and children [19].

7.8. Demographics

The study employs various theories from previous studies with some measurement tools modified to fit well in the study context. Age, marital status, education, and occupation are examples of demographic variables. The results indicate that the majority of females in the sample are aged above 40, have a degree, hold employment, and are married.

8. Conclusion

The study results indicated that the participants utilized social media, Facebook and Instagram, as a new way to stay updated with the latest news as a new and interactive communication tool. Information seeking and social interaction were the two primary gratifications expressed by Egyptian women in the current study. Thus, these two constructs contributed to their overall sense of identity as women by examining their experiences regarding the challenges they face when using

social media. They mainly negotiated that their data may be stolen and face unethical, unwanted harassment. In addition, they fear getting judged. SNSs are tools for women to gain exposure, enhance self-confidence, find commonalities, be in common with like-minded individuals, and feel affirmed [13, 58]. This statement aligns with the current study's findings, indicating that sampled women believe they are valued and have several good qualities.

Moreover, the current study indicated interesting findings that most Egyptian women perceive their social status on social media as primary. Other significant positive results are related to their social role on social media as perceived by Egyptian women. Drifting from the usual victim passive scenario of women on social media, more than % of the study sample, 59.6% indicated their social role on social media as independent women followed by their social role as liberated women (57.6%). In a nutshell, the image of women is changing from passive onlookers and recipients to positive doers and achievers.

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Appendices:

Questionnaire

Egyptian women survey

1. Do you use social media?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

2. How long have you been using social media?
   - ☐ Less than 1 year
   - ☐ From 1 – 2 years
   - ☐ From 3 – 4 years
   - ☐ More than 5 years

3. How often do you usually use social media?
   - ☐ Once a month
   - ☐ Once a week
   - ☐ 2 to 3 times per week
   - ☐ Several times a week
   - ☐ Daily

4. How many hours do you spend a day on social media?
   - ☐ Less than 1 hour
   - ☐ From 1 to 3 hours
   - ☐ From 4 to 6 hours
   - ☐   From 7 to 9 hours
   - ☐ 10 hours+

5. What social media platform do you use at least once a week?
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Telegram
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐   Snapchat
   - ☐ Tiktok

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your gratifications from social media use?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I consider social media a new and interactive communication tool					
A new way to make it easier to meet new people					
A new way to make it easier to meet new people					
For social appearance					

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
purposes					
For social appearance purposes					
I use social media to keep me up to date with the latest news					
I use social media to engage in conversations about different issues					
I use social media to express myself freely					

7. What are your motives for sharing personal information on social media?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
To express myself in a realistic way					
To form new relationships with others					
To share my information, knowledge and experience					
To keep a record of personal ideas and images					
To show that I'm famous					
To introduce myself in a perfect way					
To feel sympathy for the people around me by sharing response, comment, participation, etc					
To share information about a particular problem					
Because I enjoy when people like what I post and share and get comments on					
Because everyone does it.					
Because it feels fun					
To announce about my activities					
To communicate with friends					

8. What is the nature of your profile picture on social media?
    - ☐ No picture
    - ☐ Unreal picture
    - ☐ Graphic or name
    - ☐ Real picture

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your self-esteem?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe that I am a valued person.					
I feel good when I cooperate with others					
I believe that I have a number of good qualities					
I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on other					
My independent personality is very important to me.					
I always spend time with my family no matter how busy I am					
I feel proud if a co-worker or friend has achieved any achievement.					
I believe competition is normal					
Overall, I am satisfied with myself					
I can achieve my goals like others					
It is important for me to respect what those close to me decide (Such as family and friends... etc.)					
I always seek out what sets me apart from others .					
I wish I could have more respect for myself					
My pleasure is spending time with others.					
Sometimes I think I'm not good at all.					
I feel insignificant sometimes.					
I feel nervous and jealous when someone else does a better job than me					
Overall, I feel I am a loser					

10. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the challenges they face when they discuss women's issues on social media?

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My personal data can be stolen or misused by other users					
I may face unethical, unwanted harassment					
Getting judged					

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I might face harmful rumors					
am too shy to express myself					
I lack confidence.					
I am reluctant to share my opinions with others					
I have no opinion on this.					

11. "To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding the way Egyptian women perceive social media?"

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe social media has the potential to change opinions on social media .					
Social media can promote Egyptian women's rights (Women's rights)					
Social media can enable Egyptian women to lead by example in society					
Social media can increase Egyptian women's participation in society					
Social media makes it easier for Egyptian women to express themselves					
Social media provides economic opportunities for Egyptian women (Economic empowerment)					
social media provides different opinions regarding Egyptian women's issues					
Social media supports gender equality egyptian political life (Political empowerment)					
Social media provides a generally positive image on all its platforms					

12. What roles do Egyptian women appear in on social media?
    ☐   Woman in power
    ☐   Vulnerable woman
    ☐   Subordinate wife
    ☐   Competitive woman
    ☐   Romantic woman

- ☐ Leading woman
- ☐ Liberated woman
- ☐ Single mother
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Religious woman
- ☐ Independent woman
- ☐ Sexy woman

13. What topics are you interested in, on social media?
    - ☐ Social topics
    - ☐ Religious topics
    - ☐ Cultural topics
    - ☐ Topics related to arts
    - ☐ Scientific topics
    - ☐ Political topics
    - ☐ Emotional topics
    - ☐ Economical topics
    - ☐ Sports topics
    - ☐ Others

14. "In your opinion, what's the social status does the Egyptian woman occupy on social media?
    - ☐ Primary status
    - ☐ Peripheral status
    - ☐ Secondary status

<u>Demographics</u>

15. Age
    - ☐ Less than 25
    - ☐ 25- 30
    - ☐ 31 – 35
    - ☐ 36 – 40
    - ☐ More than 40

16. Level of Education
    - ☐ Less than bachelor's degree
    - ☐ Bachelor's degree
    - ☐ Post-graduate degree

17. Occupational Status
    - ☐ Doesn't work
    - ☐ Working woman

18. Marital Status
    - ☐ Single
    - ☐ Divorced
    - ☐ Widowed
    - ☐ Married