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Cyber-Feminism and Facebook: A Comparison between the activities of Arab Women Organizations in Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia

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ABSTRACT

Not only do social media platforms provide a venue for self-expression and networking, but they also provide minorities, activists, and social/political entities with unprecedented organizational capabilities. The present study adopts a comparative approach to analyze how specific organizations of women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa use their social media platforms for the purposes of cyberfeminism. The Facebook pages of three organizations for women's rights in Tunisia, Egypt, and Lebanon were content analyzed to answer the research questions. To cross-validate the content analysis results, in-depth interviews with 12 advocates of women's rights from those countries were also conducted. The results showed that the Facebook pages of the selected organization had a similar agenda even though they function in three different countries. "Combating violence" was a recurring theme in those pages, which shows a coherent agenda of those organization that resonates with the emerging global cyberfeminism. Those pages provide a window to advocate for women's rights against violence and harassment towards women without focusing on local or national cases.

Keywords: Cyber-feminism, Cyber-Activism, Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment

Cyber-Feminism and Facebook: A Comparison between the activities of Arab Women Organizations in Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia

Over the past decade, a noticeable development in the computing power and storage space allowed internet-based communication to be more interactive. This has also allowed diverse groups to express their opinions, share experiences and become more active. Since 2010, such internet-based tools and applications have promptly transformed how information is consumed and produced (McClure, 2010).

The Internet's embedded ability to cause actual social change has been recognized by many for years since it contains diverse types of content (visual images, text, videos and audio), all on one platform (Hamdy, & Conlin, 2013). This may cause radical social

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changes that may be more intense than those caused by either radio or television (DiMaggio et al., 2001).

Not only has the Internet provided an interactive platform that facilitated dissemination and consumption of information, but also, according to Wheeler, created a venue for women's empowerment since women's independence, confidence and value are facilitated through internet (Hamdy, & Conlin, 2013).

Noticeable scholars' attention has been given to social networking services (SNS) use and utilization in the US. However, relatively scarce research has been conducted on the utilization of SNS in the Arab countries (Harden & Beayey, 2013). Hence, this study focuses on SNS employment in women's rights organizations in the Arab countries. This research focuses on women's rights organizations in post-colonial Arab countries in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, such as: Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia. The three countries have witnessed an evident magnitude of political turbulence and have experienced Arab spring revolutions allowing a "fourth wave of feminism." The study aims to investigate the diverse messages posted by women's organizations in those countries and their interactivity on Facebook—the most used SNS platform in the MENA region and to fill the literature gap in this area.

Literature Review

Facebook in the Arab Region

The significantly increasing user base of Facebook and Twitter in the MENA region has prompted the importance of using social media platforms as a communication tool. In 2018, the total number of active social media users was around 3.2 billion, representing 42% of the world's population and 80% of Internet users.

In Europe, there are 448 million social media users, or a penetration rate of 53%, while in Asia-Pacific, there are approximately 1.8 billion, with a penetration rate of 42%. In the Middle East region, where growth is highest between 2017 and 2018 (39% compared to the estimated global average of 13%), 52% of the population uses social media, or 130 million people, compared to 35% of the population in North Africa, or 82 million people (Ghorfi, T., & Hatimi, I. E., 2020). Globally, females represent 61% of Facebook users, which makes females the main users, who are worthy of more scholarly attention (Mansour, 2015).

The Internet and Contemporary Feminist Intervention

According to Susan Luckman, an Australian feminist scholar, utilizing information technology mediation towards broad-minded social ends has been trending with the turn of the 21st century. Cyberfeminism has been the most well-known avenue for such technological intervention (especially the Internet) that has mediated structures of power and facilitated the contemporary feminist intervention to environments that usually intimidate feminists' points of view (Luckman, 1999). Hence, feminists who are employed in the information technology industries have supported that the Internet is a vital social institution that requires female's attention (Luckman, 1999).

The introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) has provided a convenient platform not only for women, but also for organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well to tackle issues that have been overlooked or ignored by the mainstream media to reach a larger population that mainstream media might have been unable to access previously. It is undeniable that the Internet has successfully

brought women's views and news to the public domain, having websites that exclusively and specifically target women (Sandys, 2005).

Fourth Wave Feminism

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

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

Lebanon experienced a year of turmoil during 2005 as the "Spring Revolution" or "Cedar Revolution" erupted in March. As for Tunisia, it was December 17, 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi, a street vendor, set himself on fire (Landorf, 2014). Last but not least, Egypt was among the countries that experienced intense turbulence, and women played a significant role through SNSs and digital media. The protests erupted in Egypt during the formerly known to be "Police Appreciation Holiday" on January the 25th, that was afterwards known to be "Day of Rage" after its mobilization and organization through "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook's page (Landorf, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Cyberfeminism

Like cyberactivism, cyberfeminism is a term used for the feminist theory that seeks to overcome the differences of power that has excluded females from the mostly masculine digital sphere. Cyberfeminism has permitted women to overcome any obstacle that may act as a controlling factor by providing cyberspace that can be easily accessed and used (Stephan, 2013). Cyberspace has been particularly made suitable for women's activism since it has limited cultural and institutional norms and nontraditional spaces (Vogt & Chen, 2001). The internet is one of the few media channels that is accessible to minorities and women's activism with Facebook users exceeding 800 million globally (Stephan, 2013).

During the early 1990s, Cyberfeminism was the target of both criticism and critical analysis from those interested in new technology and its interconnections with gender specifically in the internet realm that is emerging as "mass media" (Paasonen, 2011).

In her article "Revisiting Cyberfeminism," Paasonen (2011) argues that the definition of Cyberfeminism was problematic and was never clear nor concrete. This allowed activists, scholars and artists interested in new media technology and the related gender issues to use the term "Cyberfeminism" interchangeably with feminist studies done on new media. According to Paasonen, this makes "much lost in such a conflation."

Since there's controversial literature of the Cyberfeminism theory and its fluctuating appearance since its emergence in 1990, this study will focus on using the Cyberfeminism framework to investigate its existence on Facebook, which is the most used SNS in the Arab world.

Global Feminism

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

Cullen also pinpoints that an apparent way of global feminism is utilizing SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter to create global unification and gradually demolishing national identity, believing that it will help create a community closer to utopia.

Agenda Setting

As the political turbulence in Iraq emerged, the media fixated its coverage on the war and that was apparent through the US media outlets as the war coverage dominated the media boosting the war salience (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). This supported the notion that the media tells us what to think and draws our attention to the topics it only sheds light on. McCombs and Shaw conducted a study in 1972 to examine Lippmann's agenda-setting theory using the 1968 presidential elections and tested the correlation between public agenda and media agenda. The results showed that there was a correlation between the two elements to support agenda setting over selective perception (Bryant & Oliver, 2009). Most results have emphasized how media practitioners affect what we choose to see and how we see it. This includes social media content creators as well. In other words, agenda setting

suggests that media can direct the citizens' attention to certain issues or topics if given greater weight in media. Consequently, this can create consensus among the audience to perceive how vital these issues are (Moon, 2008). This will eventually lead to the encouragement of citizens to solve certain problems and overlook others through "civic engagement" (Moon, 2008).

Since agenda setting is directly related to the public agenda and public opinion, as well as directing and shaping the salience of topics and issues that can empower women, this makes the theory relevant to the present research. The research will examine the frequency of topics concerning women and investigate if content creators on the Facebook pages of women's rights organizations' pages are amplifying and focusing on certain topics to set an agenda and to direct the audiences' attention towards certain issues or not. This means that if a certain category of women empowering topic has been given greater weight in comparison to the other topics this will eventually mean that the public opinion has been directed in a certain way to overlook other topics that may be salient as well as crucial to empower Arab women in reality.

Based on that theoretical framework, the researcher attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. In which way are both Global Feminism and agenda setting influence the content of Facebook pages of the selected organizations in all three countries?

RQ2. Which of the three countries uses Facebook as a venue for Cyberfeminism the most?

RQ3. Which of the women's rights organizations utilize Facebook as a form of activism most effectively?

Method

This exploratory study analyzes the Facebook pages of the organizations of women's rights in Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon. and examine Cyberfeminism on these platforms by using content analysis and in-depth interviews.

Content analysis was employed to investigate three main realms of the posts on those selected pages: i- the purpose of the post or the topic it tackles, ii- the users' interactivity with the posts, and iii- the use of interactive features such as photos, videos, hashtags, mentions and links present or absent.

On the other hand, qualitative in-depth interviews were used as a supplementary to the content analysis to give more insight on the research questions. This was done through interviewing 12 advocates of women's rights.

Sample

Facebook is the main communicating outlet to be studied since it played a prominent role in the Arab Spring, which led to the fourth wave of feminism. This eventually made Cyberfeminism and global feminism on Facebook worth investigating. More precisely, three official Facebook pages will be chosen, each one represents a women's organization in each country studied. The content analysis begins as of the first post in each page published by the administrators in the year 2015 and ends with the last post in the same year. It has been stated that ever since the "Arab Spring" in 2011, thousands of women throughout the region have played a noticeable role in combating traditional gender roles and ending dictatorships. This has helped to revive Cyberfeminism, especially during the year 2015, which is considered crucial for online feminist activism and Cyberfeminism (Matos, 2017).

The posts are examined through content analysis according to these elements: comments, replies, likes, tags, special features used (videos, pictures, and GIFs). A total of 193 posts have been selected as a sample through using systematic random sampling. The three Facebook pages that are investigated and which belong to Arab women's organizations are: "The National Council for Women in Egypt" (NCW) a page for Egyptian women's organization; "KAFA (Enough) Violence and Exploitation," a page for Lebanese women's organization; and "Gameyat Nesa Tunisyat (in Arabic), or "Femmes Tunisiennes," Association of Tunisian Women" a page for Tunisian women's organization. It is worth noting that the Tunisian Facebook page has less posts and will generate less results in comparison to the Egyptian and the Lebanese pages since the internet penetration and number of internet users were less than Lebanon and Egypt during the year 2000. The pages were selected based on the fact that they were the verified Facebook pages with the highest number of likers and followers in each country.

As for the interviews, they were conducted with intellectuals such as the scholars who have authored gender studies, recent or previous practitioners, and activists who have experience or knowledge of the realm of women's rights and may be members of women's rights organizations.

Unit of Analysis and Operationalization

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

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

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

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

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

Like. “Like” is a blue button that was introduced to Facebook in 2009. It has become a part of Facebook users’ daily routine to express engagement. There are six different types of likes: emotional liking, socially responsible liking, social performative liking, informational liking, routine liking, and low-cost liking. Most users believe that such likes

help in promoting causes and for that, it may be considered a form of humanitarian support and civic engagement (Brandtzaeg & Haugstveit, 2014).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Socio-economic Empowerment. Dr. Marianne Azer the assistant professor and the director of the Information Center at the National Telecommunication Institute, assistant professor at Nile University and a former assistant minister of communications for strategic initiatives, has indicated that socio-economic empowerment may be simply explained in working on changing the existing stereotype of women and adjusting the mindset of the culture to accept women in more dominant positions, situations and jobs (personal communication, October 24, 2017).

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

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

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

Findings and Discussion

All three selected organizations come from post-colonial countries. which creates a relatively similar political environment. Finally, all of them have had the usage of Facebook precisely by women boosted during the year 2015. Ever since the “Arab Spring” in 2011, thousands of women through the region have played a substantial role in combating traditional gender roles and battling dictatorship. This helped to revive

Cyberfeminism, especially during the year 2015 which is considered crucial for online feminist activism and Cyberfeminism (Matos, 2017). The three Facebook pages investigated included: 42 posts from “The National Council for Women in Egypt” (<https://www.facebook.com/ncwegyptpage>), a page for an Egyptian women organization; 128 posts from “KAFAs (Enough) Violence and Exploitation” (<https://www.facebook.com/KAFALebanon>), a page for a Lebanese women organization; and 23 posts from “Gameyat Nesa Tunisyat, Association of Tunisian Women, or Femmes Tunisienne” (<https://www.facebook.com/femmes.tunisiennes/>), a page for a Tunisian women organization. The three pages have been selected according to their engaged fan base, that is measured by the number of page likes, in comparison to other women rights organizations’ pages of the same country. The list of organizations was compiled through contacting professors and activists in the three countries. The Egyptian National Council for Women in Egypt has around 781,000 likes on its page, the Lebanese KAFAs has around 129,100 likes on its page and the Association of Tunisian Women page has around 10,300 likes. The content analysis investigated the posts selected according to systematic random sampling throughout the study period that included every third post out of all posts published by the administrators of the page in the year 2015. Each post has been examined to know the purpose of the post in order to know the topic tackled and reach a conclusion whether the topics tackled by the pages’ administrators are impacted by global feminism or not and to examine if each page separately focused on a specific category of topics which might suggest that there is agenda setting. The post is further investigated through its users’ likes, shares, and comments to measure their interactivity on the page and reach a conclusion regarding which users have utilized Facebook as a venue for Cyberfeminism

the most. Finally, the post comments, replies, and special features posted by the administrators will be examined to identify which page is the most efficient at encouraging the usage of Facebook as a tool for fruitful exploitation regarding the Cyberfeminism aspect.

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

The results show that the topics tackled in the three Facebook pages from the three different countries are to a great extent globalized or unified. This means that the pages have tackled a similar, unified or globalized category of topics the most. The study has categorized the topics tackled in posts into seven categories: the economic empowerment category, the political empowerment category, health awareness, the socio-economic empowerment category, combating violence, the educational empowerment and others. Most posts (75.6%) on the three pages have tackled the "Socio-Economic Empowerment"

category. The globalized pattern that has also been noticed across all three Facebook pages pertains to the “Health” category that has been tackled minimally with a total of 4.1% of posts belonging to that category. The outcome that the most and least tackled topics has been similar across all three Facebook pages suggests that all three pages are impacted and influenced by a wave of globalization supports the theory of Global Feminism which suggests that the effects and impact of globalization influence women’s issues (Cullen, 2013). The total category of topics tackled in a descending order across all three pages were as following; “Socio-economic empowerment” with a total of 75.6% posts, “Combating Violence” with a total of 44%, “Political Empowerment” with a total of 28%, “Educational Empowerment” with a total of 20.7% posts, “Economical Empowerment” with a total of 18.7%, “Other” with a total of 6.7% and finally “Health” with the least percentage of 4.1% posts.

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

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

In the third page, “Association of Tunisian Women,” the highest percentage of posts signifying 82.6% belong to the “Socio-economic Empowerment” category of topics, followed by the “Political Empowerment” posts with 47.8%, “Combating Violence” with 30.4%. The percentage of posts belonging to the remaining category of topics then drop drastically to 8.7% representing “Economic Empowerment” and 8.7% representing “Educational Empowerment.” Unlike the the other two Facebook pages, the “Health” and “Other” category of topics had 0% of the posts. These results support that agenda-setting was higher and more intense than the other two pages since distribution of posts among all categories were diminished. In fact, two categories have been completely overlooked on the Tunisian page.

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

This question aims at investigating the level of users’ interactivity across all three countries’ Facebook pages. This will be implemented through measuring the users’ sharing, engagement, and promotion of the page posts. More precisely, the question

outcome and results will emanate from the content analysis that measured each post's number of "likes," "shares," "replies among users" to determine if they are dialoguing, and "comments by users," and finally dissecting these comments into three categories: "Users Pro-Feminism," "Users Anti-Feminism," and "Neutral Users."

The number of users' "Likes" and "Shares" has been used as an indicator of sharing and promoting the page as a venue for Cyberfeminism. The like button during the study period was an indicator of solely promoting the post since the reactions button has been reinvented only during February 2016 to express other opposing reactions to the post such as anger and astonishment (Pool, & Nissim, 2016).

The Tunisian page "Association of Tunisian Women" has reported the lowest number of users' likes. The like button has showed the Tunisian users to have the lowest percentage of interactivity and promoting Cyberfeminism through liking the feminist posts on the Facebook page. 17.4% of the posts on the Tunisian page receive no likes at all and 82.6% of the rest of the posts received (1-499) likes only.

As for the number of "Shares" that has been used as an indicator and a measuring tool of using Facebook to promote Cyberfeminism, the Egyptian "NCW's" users have come second in place in utilizing Cyberfeminism through sharing. 52.4% of the page posts received no shares at all and 47.6% of the remaining posts received (1-49) shares. As for the Lebanese "KAFA" page, it has been ranked as the highest page to have users promote Cyberfeminism through sharing posts. 17.2% of that page posts received no shares, 59.3% of the posts received (1-49) shares, 21.9% of the posts received (50-499) shares and finally 1.6% of the posts received the highest number of shares among the three pages (500-3000) shares. Finally, the Tunisian page has the lowest figures representing the user's utilization

of the page to promote Cyberfeminism. 87% of the posts received no shares at all and only 13% of the posts received up to (1-49) shares only.

Another segment of the findings to answer this research question and help give more comprehensive findings and insight is using the number of comments and replies by users as a measurement tool for the users' interactivity on the women's organizations Facebook page. This will consequently indicate that they have or have not used Facebook as a venue for Cyberfeminism. "KAFA" the Lebanese page has, like the prior findings, been ranked as the highest page with the most interactive users giving the highest number of comments. 84.4% of KAFA's posts has received comments by users. The Egyptian "National Council for Women in Egypt's" page was ranked as the second page with the most interactive users utilizing the page as a venue for Cyberfeminism. 47.6% of the NCW's posts received comments from users. Finally, the least page with interactivity of comments has been the Tunisian page "Association of Tunisian Women," which had users' comments on 8.7% of its posts only. The total percentage of posts for all three pages together that received users' comments was 67.4% and only 32.6% of posts for all three pages did not have any comments. This percentage suggests that users of the three pages have the tendency and the will to be interactive. This can be boosted through the initiatives of the page's administrators. Hence, the last research question will be answering how the three pages exert effort to utilize their Facebook page for fruitful exploitation.

Findings of comments by users have been made more reliable through measuring the spam comments and excluding them. The spam comments are comments made by users to advertise for a certain product, irrelevant comments or posted links to irrelevant pages or websites. The spam comments have also been insignificant in comparison to the users'

interactive comments' figures. "NCW" page has a total of 4.8% spam comments, "KAFA" has a total of 9.4% spam comments, and finally the "Association of Tunisian Women" had a total of 0% spam comments.

The comments on each page have been categorized to either "comments promoting feminism," or "comments opposing feminism;" these are users' comments that oppose or dispute feminism, and "neutral comments," which neither supported nor opposed the cause. The comments were categorized to compare between the three pages on how opinionated the users were and how they disputed feminist topics. The results show that "KAFA's" users are the most opinionated among the three pages with 78.9% of its posts have users' comments that promote the page's feminist tackled topics and support them and 35.2% of the pages' post have users' comments that dispute, oppose or counter-argue the feminist topics tackled by the page. This suggests that "KAFA" has been a platform for users to voice their opinions and use the page freely as a venue for Cyberfeminism. Similarly, "NCW's" page has come second to "KAFA" in having opinionated users as 38.1% of the posts have users' comments that are supportive and 7.1% of the other posts have comments that oppose the topics tackled by the page. The Tunisian page, however, has emanated 0% of promoting and disputing comments. This has stressed the diminished findings to support that Tunisian users are opinionated and have voiced opinions on the Facebook page.

One final finding that has been used to further help measuring the user's level of interactivity and utilization of Facebook as a Cyberfeminism venue is the count of replies on other user's comments among the users. These findings suggest that all three Facebook pages still have to work on boosting dialoguing among its users. As shown in table one,

Table 1*Number of Replies to Comments Among Users*

Facebook Page replies on comments by users		The National Council for Women	KAFA (Enough) Violence & Exploitation	Femmes Tunisiennes	Total
None	F	42	70	23	135
	%	100%	54.7%	100%	69.9%
1: 49	F	-	54	-	54
	%	-	42.2%	-	28%
50: 99	F	-	3	-	3
	%	-	2.3%	-	1.6%
100: 150	F	-	1	-	1
	%	-	0.8%	-	0.5%
Total	F	42	128	23	193
	%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The table illustrates that The National Council for Women page had no replies by users on the comments left by other users and this emanated from 42 posts, the KAFA page showed that there were 70 posts with no replies to comments at all presenting 54.7% of the total posts studied, 3 posts had 1-49 replies to comments by users and that presents 42.2% of the total posts studied through content analysis, and only 1 post had 100-150 replies to comments by users which is 0.8% of the total posts studied, The Femmes Tunisiennes page had 23 posts with 100 to 150 replies to comments by users and that is a 100% of the total posts studied through content analysis for this page.

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

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

The second fragment of findings for this research question investigated the number of “comments” and “replies” and “special features” used by the administrators. This is to measure if they are not only triggering interactivity but are also trying to sustain it with the users.

Findings of special features in posts have shown that “KAFAs” administrators have used almost all special features the most except for “links” and “events” that have been used the most by the Egyptian page “NCWE” and then comes “KAFAs.” The Tunisian page “Association of Tunisian Women” has obtained the second ranking in using all special features in its posts except for “links” and “events” where it was the least among the three Facebook pages to use them. The Egyptian “NCWE” Facebook page has used all special features the least in comparison to the other two pages. However, pioneered by using “links” and “events” the most. Accordingly, “KAFAs” figures indicate that it is the page that demonstrated the highest findings for factors triggering the user’s interactivity

explaining why the users have the highest level of interactivity in the previous research question. Pertaining to the Tunisian page the administrators exert more effort than the Egyptian page's administrators to trigger interactivity. Yet the level of users' interactivity in the Egyptian page surpassed the Tunisian users. This, also, suggests that there is a possibility for the Egyptian page's users' interactivity to surpass the Lebanese page if more indicators and special features have been used to boost and enhance interactivity.

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

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

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

However, the number of replies on comments by the administrators have contradicted the above finding. The Lebanese page has the highest number of replies by

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

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

Interviews' Analysis and Discussion

This study depends on the triangulation methodology and 12 in-depth interviews have been conducted, in addition to the content analysis to get a deeper insight on how university professors and researchers in the realm of gender studies, activists, members and employees of women's rights organizations perceive Cyberfeminism on women's rights organizations' Facebook pages.

Prominence of SNSs' Role to Empower Arab Women:

An interviewee who was a professor at AUC in gender studies and preferred to stay anonymous for their safety, has clarified that SNSs have a lot of potential to empower women especially economically, since Facebook facilitated small businesses for women

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

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

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

Special Features' Effectiveness:

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

Where Egyptian Women's Organizations' Stand Virtually

The majority of interviewees have supported the notion that Egyptian women's organizations need to optimize utilizing Facebook as a tool for empowering women, which goes along with the content analysis's outcome. Hence, according to the content analysis's and the interviews' findings, the Egyptian Organizations need to use more features, techniques and enrich the content in order to provide an efficiently empowering platform for the Egyptian women.

SNSs Versus Traditional Media Channels

The 12 interviewees were divided into half when asked about their insight on where SNSs stand in comparison to other media channels. five interviewees have not been completely pro the notion that SNSs as the ultimate platform and channel for empowering the Egyptian women. “Television and radio still conquer the media landscape in Egypt due to the fact that they are attractive, ubiquitous, and easy to access” (University professor and employee in the media sector of foreign affairs department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018).

Another group of five interviewees has unanimously agreed that SNSs are the unsurpassed media channel to empower women. “SNSs retain the greatest unexplored potential and are on the rise.” (Professor at AUC in gender studies, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

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

Egyptian Women Organization’s Content on Facebook

The majority of interviewees have in fact supported the content analysis’s outcome which suggested that both agenda setting and global feminism have shaped and influenced the topics tackled in the organization’s Facebook pages. “All topics tackled usually focus on violence or harassment only. Other issues that are worthy of attention need to have light shed on it like “marital rape,” “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender” (LGBT), and emotional violence that has never been mentioned on the Egyptian Facebook pages.” (Gender studies, master’s holder from the university of LEEDS, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

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

There has been an unanimous response among interviewees that obstacles existed and needed combating. "Illiteracy, poverty, and not giving younger generations a proper chance to utilize the platform and make it more dynamic" (University professor and employee in the media sector of Foreign Affairs Department in NCW, personal communication, February 6, 2018). "Cyberbullying, Electronic gatekeeping, and illiteracy are major hindrances facing organization's SNSs." (Activist, blogger and journalist, personal communication, March 19, 2018). "Sustaining funds for any project and the negative social norms and customs have stalled the SNSs potential benefits" (External relations specialist at the International Cooperation Department in NCW, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

Social Networking Sites in Tunisia and Lebanon

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

Also, an Egyptian member of the elected supreme council and chief officer of international relations in the Free Egyptians Party and activist has stated the following

when asked about the SNSs role in Tunisia in a personal interview on April 18, 2018, “SNSs have a main role in empowering women in Tunisia given that its ubiquitous, cost-free, and have provided a platform to openly discuss Tunisian women’s issues, especially on the political and economic level. Tunisian population is literate to a great extent. Hence, SNSs have been an efficient platform for the Tunisian women and men to call for gender equity. The organizations have globally utilized the cost-free platform to diffuse their notions including Tunisian organizations. However, Tunisian organizations still have a long way to go for full utilization. In Tunisia, challenges are less than others since the internet penetration and access to Facebook is growing, but the language may still be a barrier since they use many languages that not all of them may be aware of.”

Conclusion

Overall, three core findings could be abstracted from this research. First, that global feminism does apply to all three Facebook pages in the three countries. In other words, the most tackled topics and the least tackled topics across all three Facebook pages belong to the same category of topics. This means that all three pages have been influenced by the same globalization wave that influenced the women’s issues on their Facebook pages. Furthermore, the same content analysis results that emanated from the investigation of topics tackled and the measurement of their distribution on these pages have supported that the agenda setting theory applies to all three pages and has been the most intense in the Tunisian Facebook page.

The second finding, shed light on the user’s activity on all three Facebook pages and has compared the level of interactivity which consequently reflected the level of user’s utilization of the platform as an avenue for Cyberfeminism. All three pages have shown

that the users are interactive and have a great tendency to practicing, sharing and expressing feminism on Facebook. However, the Lebanese page demonstrated the highest level of users' interactivity, Egypt has come second, and then the Tunisian page.

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

The Interviews conducted have added insight into the results, focusing exceptionally on the Egyptian Cyberfeminism and its potential on SNSs. The majority of interviews have supported the prominence of Egyptian SNSs and its noticeable unexplored potential to empower Egyptian women.

Limitations

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

This study has used content analysis as its core research methodology to provide descriptive results of the existence of Cyberfeminism. The study aims at being a launching point for future build-up studies to be conducted and to investigate Cyberfeminism deeply. The present study has investigated Facebook only, future studies should target examining other dynamic SNSs.

This study has faced a number of limitations. The first limitation has been the difficulty of compiling a comprehensive list of women's rights organizations in the MENA region since most organizations are not officially registered in the government, in ministries such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

Another limitation was that the in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals of expertise from Egypt only which may be considered prejudiced. Interviews should have been conducted with more individuals from Lebanon and Tunisia as well. This was not achieved due to the limited time and resources that could have facilitated access to the interviewees in different geographical areas if available.

Another challenge was periodicity of posts since systematic random sampling has been used to carry out the sampling. Some posts also required the coders to go back in order to comprehend the purpose of the post because numerous posts have been built upon previous ones that have not been included in the sample. Another limitation is getting a translator in order to translate the French posts in the Tunisian page. One final limitation that could have provided a clearer insight on the user's activity if it did exist, was that in 2015 the study period of the research had features that were not yet applied to Facebook, such as, the specific time of post and the reaction button instead of the like button only.

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