Egyptian Youth Exposure to SMIs' Content after the 2023 War on Gaza and Their Awareness of the Palestinian Issue

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Abstract:

The Palestinian Issue is a crucial one for at least two reasons. First, because of the religious and spiritual importance of the land of Palestine, especially Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and Al-Aqsa Mosque, to Arabs and Muslims. Second, because it is the longest occupation in modern history. Considering this long period of conflict and the recent 2023 War on Gaza (WoG 2023), it is mandatory to investigate public awareness of the Palestinian Issue. This research aims to examine the role of new media players, i.e., social media influencers (SMIs henceforward) in building public awareness and shaping their opinion towards this issue, especially among new generations, i.e., Generation Z (Gen-Z henceforth) in Egypt. This research used a quantitative research design. An online survey was distributed among Egyptian youth aged (18-40) years old for a month-long from 14th December to 14th January 2023. Convenience sampling was used to collect research data utilising Google Form, in which the snowball-sampling technique was used. The total sample size is 419. The statically analysed data revealed that 49.4% of respondents follow SMIs' on a daily basis, while 37% follow them intermittently more than once a week. Furthermore, the results yielded a positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) between respondents' exposure to SMIs content and their awareness of the Palestinian Issue post the 2023 WoG. Regression analysis revealed a model fit that explains 31.2% of respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue. A longitudinal study may reveal how this awareness is shaped in a time of no conflict.

Keywords: The Palestinian Issue, Social Media Influencers, Media Dependency Theory, Source Credibility

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تعرض الشباب المصري لمحتوى المؤثرين عبر الشبكات الاجتماعية بعد الحرب على غزة عام 2023 ومدى وعيهم بالقضية الفلسطينية

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ملخص الدراسة:

تعد القضية الفلسطينية قضية محورية نظراً لأهمية مدينة القدس والمسجد الأقصى الدينية والروحية عند العرب والمسلمين. كما يعد الاحتلال الإسرائيلي لفلسطين هو الأطول في التاريخ الحديث، وهو ما دعا لأهمية دراسة مدى وعي الجمهور المصري بهذه القضية، ولا سيما من الشباب. وتحديداً إثر الحرب الأخيرة التي شنتها إسرائيل على غزة عقب أحداث طوفان الأقصى لعام 2023. ويهدف البحث لدراسة دور المؤثرين عبر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي في بناء وعي الشباب المصري بالقضية الفلسطينية. وتنتمي الدراسة إلى الدراسات الوصفية، واعتمدت على منهج المسح الإعلامي، وتم مسح عينة من الشباب المصري قوامها 419 مفردة، باستخدام الاستبيان الإلكترونية عبر نماذج جوجل، من العينة المتاحة من الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين (18-40) عاما، وذلك لمدة شهر من 14 ديسمبر إلى 14 يناير 2023، وذلك باستخدام أسلوب كرة الثلج المتكاثرة. وكشف التحليل الإحصائي للبيانات أن 49.4% من المبحوثين يستخدمون مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي بشكل يومي، بينما يستخدمها 37% من العينة بشكل متقطع أكثر من مرة في الأسبوع. كما أوضحت الدراسة وجود علاقة ارتباطية دالة إحصائيا عند مستوى معنوية 0.05% بين تعرض المبحوثين لمحتوى المؤثرين عبر مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي ومدى وعيهم بالقضية الفلسطينية بعد الحرب على غزة لعام 2023. كما توصلت الدراسة إلى نموذج يفسر مدى وعي المبحوثين بالقضية الفلسطينية، والعوامل المؤثرة عليه بنسبة 31.2%. وتوصي الدراسة بإجراء دراسة تتبعية للكشف عن كيفية تشكيل وعي الجمهور بالقضية الفلسطينية بعد انتهاء الحرب على غزة.

الكلمات الدالة: القضية الفلسطينية، المؤثرين عبر الشبكات الاجتماعية، الاعتماد على وسائل الإعلام، مصداقية المصدر

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Introduction

The Palestinian Issue is a crucial one for at least two reasons. First, because of the religious and spiritual importance of the land of Palestine, especially Al-Quds (Jerusalem) and Al-Aqsa Mosque, to Arabs and Muslims. Second, because it is the longest occupation in modern history. Given the long occupation that has been extending since the declaration of the Jewish State in 1948. In addition, the subsequent fighting in the same year between the Arab States and Israel, which resulted in the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinians (Lakhani & Khan, 2023, p. 3), which is known as 'The Nakba' in Arabic or catastrophe in English (United Nations, n.d.).

Recently, on October 7th, 2023, the Palestinian resistance groups released 'Tophan Al-Aqsa' or 'Al Aqsa Flood', a military manoeuvre on the Israeli settlements or kibbutzim across Gaza borders, which is seen as a response to the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Holy Al Aqsa Mosque (Ahram Online, 2024; Asharq Al Awsat, 2024; Düz & Çınkara, 2023). This surprise attack has resulted in the death of over 1200 Israelis and the abduction of more than 200 others, but the Israeli aggression on Gaza in response has yielded the death toll of more than 37,877 Palestinians and more than 86,969 wounded (Ahram Online, 2024; Asharq Al Awsat, 2024), and the fight is still continuing.

Considering this long period of conflict and the recent 2023 War on Gaza (WoG 2023), it is mandatory to investigate public awareness of this occupation or the Palestinian Issue. In this regard, this research aims to examine the role of new media players, i.e., social media influencers (SMIs henceforward) in building public awareness and shaping their opinion towards this issue, especially among new generations, i.e., Generation Z (Gen-Z henceforth) in Egypt.

Previous research highlighted the significant role SMIs play in guiding the public decision-making process, especially regarding purchase intention. In addition, public perceptions of SMIs' information quality and emotional attachment influence the mediation of the decision-making process.(Shah et al., 2023). Research revealed that SMIs have a positive impact on adolescents' intellectual aspects

in some Arab countries (Al-Ansi et al., 2023), as they are considered a trusted source of information. Previous research also indicated that SMIs perceived credibility motivates the Arab public to follow them on Instagram (Salameh, 2021). Furthermore, research shows that Islamic influencers play a significant role in building awareness among university youth concerning religious issues and in developing their Islamic culture (El-Said & Alfakharany, 2023). As far as the WoG 2023 is concerned, a study has investigated public engagement with and sentiments towards this war on legacy media Facebook pages. The study revealed the pervasiveness of appreciation sentiments among the public for the Palestinians, showing support for the Palestinian Issue and solidarity with Palestinians (Fayez, 2024). Another study revealed that public narratives on CNN's YouTube platform revolved around the history of this conflict and the accusations of Israel against the long Gaza blockade. While on the Middle East Eye, users' comments clustered around calling for Palestinian rights and a ceasefire, in addition to accusing Israeli rule and injustice (Chen et al., 2024). However, no research has investigated the role of SMIs in building public awareness concerning the Palestinian Issue or their cognitive, affective, and behavioural influences on Egyptian youth post-war 2023. This research seeks to fill in this gap.

Literature Review

Social Media and Public Attitudes and Sentiments towards the 2023 War on Gaza

Social media play an unparalleled role in shaping public attitudes, influencing their sentiments, and shaping their opinion, especially among the new generations, concerning world events. Previous research has investigated this issue in-depth, especially about the Palestinian Issue and the 2023 WoG. In this regard, **Buheji (2024)** investigated the influence of the 2023 WoG on Generation-Z (Gen-Z) attitudes towards social impartiality for the Palestinian Issue. Adopting a qualitative deep analysis approach, the study highlighted that the 2023 WoG has led Gen-Z to include personal values that emphasised compassionate values, such as resilience and global support. This is due to Gen-Z's unique access to information and their

engagement on social media with personal accounts and stories, which creates a sense of connection and empathy with international events. As the study put it, Gen-Z's "adept use of social media has been crucial in spreading awareness and mobilising support for both stopping the War on Gaza and the cause of Freeing Palestine" (Buheji, 2024b, p. 19). Moreover, "Gen-Z's scepticism towards mainstream media narratives and propensity to seek alternative news sources has led to a critical engagement with the portrayal of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Buheji, 2024b, p. 20), especially on social media. Moreover, **Buheji and Hamza (2024)** investigated the potential of branding Gaza amid the escalation of the WoG 2023 and how it could help reaffirm Palestinians' rights and cultural identity. The study employed narrative analysis to collectively examine selected media reports and social media posts three months after October 7th, 2023. The study emphasised the significance of utilising branding strategies in advocating Gaza's unique resilience, cultural identity, and humanitarian plight. The study also underlined the importance of merchandising global awareness campaigns in these branding efforts. Furthermore, **Buheji, Mushimiyimana and Ahmed (2024)** explored the empathy expressed towards Gaza on social media. Through thematic content analysis, the study unravelled the different patterns of empathy expressed on social media to support Gaza. The study highlighted the importance of empathy in accelerating an in-depth understanding of the situation in Gaza. Different types of empathy can be identified, such as social media support and advocacy, global protests, and humanitarian aid.

Significantly, **Fayez (2024)** used Artificial Intelligence (AI) supported tools to investigate public engagement with the 2023 WoG on Al Jazeera and BBC Arabic Facebook pages. Using sentiment analysis and topic modelling, the study examined 571,267 comments and 8,353,047 types of engagement on the two news media Facebook pages. The study highlighted that admiration sentiment came on the top of expressed feelings at 68.18% and 51.77% on Al Jazeera and BBC News Arabic pages, respectively. Concerning the topic modelling analysis on Al Jazeera's Facebook page, the study showed that the most salient topics were supporting the Palestinian cause and the resistance, along with sympathy for children and victims. In

contrast, on the BBC News Arabic Facebook page, the topics included solidarity with Palestine and Gaza, as well as Israeli attacks on hospitals and civilians. Similarly, **Chen, Ho and Chen (2024)** investigated the public and media narratives concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on social media. The study analysed 60 YouTube Shorts from Middle East Eye and CNN three months after October 7th, 2023, in addition to 2,006 user comments on both media platforms. The study revealed six clustered topics from analysing CNN users' comments, on top of them are the History of Conflict and Accusations in Israel-Palestine and Gaza Blockade and Aid from Southern African Nations. Additionally, the investigation revealed seven clustered topics from analysing the Middle East Eye users' comments, on the top of them are Palestinian Rights, and Call for War Ceasefire, and Accusations of Israeli Rule and Injustice. Similarly, **Oguejiofor (2024)** studied the role of user-generated narratives in shaping public perceptions during the 2023 WoG. The study also highlighted the role of misinformation and disinformation in shaping distorted and polarised perceptions and viewpoints amid this escalating violence. The study underlined the unprecedented influence of social media in shaping public narratives during the conflicts. The study underscored that the Israeli narratives revolved around Israel's right to defend itself, the threat posed by Hamas, the need for humanitarian actions, and the humanising of the Israeli perspective to gain international sympathy. Comparatively, the Palestinian narratives revolved around the disproportionate influence of Israeli militant response, its violation of human rights, and the continuing occupation of the land of Palestine. Collectively, these studies underlined the significant role played by social media in shaping public perceptions and fostering their engagement with the ongoing 2023 WoG, especially on social media.

Source Credibility and Social Media Influencers

Source credibility has long been considered a pivotal indicator of influencing public attitudes and behaviours, especially when perceiving the source of information as credible (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Nadarevic et al., 2020; Serman & Sims, 2023; Wilson & Sherrell, 1993). New studies underlined the role of SMIs' credibility

in public engagement and building their cultural awareness. For example, **Salameh (2021)** identified the factors influencing the Arab public's following of influencers' accounts via Instagram. The respondents confirmed that there are factors that motivate them to follow an influencer, such as the quality and value of the content, the credibility of the influencer among followers, his interaction with them, and his response to their questions. Moreover, **El-Said & Alfakharany (2023)** studied the effects of the religious content of Islamic influencers via social networks on the religious knowledge and awareness of university youth in light of the theory of communicative action. They surveyed a sample of 300 Egyptian youngsters. The results showed a statistically significant correlation between the respondents' exposure to the content of Islamic influencers through social networks and the development of their Islamic culture. **Othman (2021)** investigated the Egyptian public's attitudes towards satirical videos of influencers on social media platforms and the role of these videos in addressing the issues of Egyptian society. Regarding the participants' motives for following influencers, the most prominent reason was influencers' acceptance among followers 58.3%. The nature of the content presented 57%, and finally, the way they present their content 51.4%.

Furthermore, **Ooi et al. (2023)** highlighted that perceived SMI credibility had a positive influence on attitudes towards SMI and the endorsed product or service. Interestingly though, the study found that "the interactivity is negatively and significantly related to the attitudes towards influencers" (Ooi et al., 2023, pp. 9, 10). This highlights that influencers' interactivity with their followers shapes their followers' attitudes towards them. Additionally, **Balaban and Mustătea (2019)** conducted group discussions in Romania and Germany among university students to investigate the influence of perceived source credibility of SMIs marketing for products on their perceived trust among users. The study highlighted four dimensions of source credibility, namely attractiveness, trustworthiness, expertise, and similarity, are perceived as significant indicators of the perceived credibility of SMIs. Moreover, **Li and Feng (2022)** examined the role of social media influencers in nation branding through the lens of engagement with their followers and their perceived authenticity. The

study found that SMIs could play a significant role in representing the national brand to their followers backed by their perceived authenticity, which in turn is influenced by influencers' engagement with their followers, in addition to their content, creativity, and interactivity. **Li and See-To (2024)** examined the role of source credibility and emotional message appeals in determining responses to eWOM. The study results showed that 53 per cent of the variance in responses to eWOM is explained by the message source credibility and emotional message appeal. The study further highlighted that "message source credibility plays a central role in the social media environment" (Li & See-To, 2024, p. 36). Moreover, the study underlined that while source credibility and emotional message appeal had an impact on female users, on the contrary, male users were merely influenced by message source credibility. **Muda and Hamzah (2021)** investigated the effects of audience perceptions of source credibility of YouTube videos generated by other customers or User-Generated-Content (UGC) on their attitudes and behavioural intentions. Using partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), the study revealed that customers' perceptions of source credibility indirectly influenced their purchase intention and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) subjected to their attitude toward UGC. **Yuan and Lou (2020)** investigated the factors that guide the parasocial relationship or the online connection and networking between social media influencers and their followers and how in turn, this may influence public interest in their advertised products. The study highlighted that SMIs perceived credibility among the audience, significantly their perceived attractiveness and similarity, in addition to their fairness interactions, especially their procedural and interpersonal fairness positively strengthened audience parasocial relationship with their SMIs. This, in turn, positively enhanced audience perceptions of the endorsed products by them. However, there is no research, as far as this researcher knows, that has investigated the role of social media influencers in shaping Egyptian youth's awareness of the Palestinian Issue. This study seeks to fill this gap in research.

Problem Statement

This research seeks to investigate social media influencers' influence on Egyptian youth awareness of the Palestinian Issue post-October 7th 2023. Meanwhile, to examine to what extent youth exposure to social media influencers' content post the War on Gaza 2023 has cognitive, affective and behavioural influences on them.

Research Questions:

The research pursues to answer the following questions:

RQ1: To what extent have Egyptian youth been exposed to social media influencers' content regarding Palestine since October 7, 2023?

RQ2: How has the exposure of Egyptian youth to social media influencers' content after October 7 influenced their awareness of the Palestinian issue?

RQ3: What are the cognitive, affective, and behavioural influences on Egyptian youth posts being exposed to social media influencers' content following October 7?

RQ4: To what extent do Egyptian youth consider social media influencers credible sources of information?

RQ5: What are the attitudes of Egyptian youth towards the content shared by social media influencers?

RQ6: How do Egyptian youth perceive the quality of information disseminated by social media influencers?

RQ7: To what extent do Egyptian youth interact with social media influencers? In addition, to what extent do they perceive SMIs' interaction with them?

Theoretical Framework

Media system dependency theory (MSD) and **source credibility theory (SCT)** represent the theoretical framework for this research. MSD was developed by Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1976) in their seminal work *A Dependency Model of Mass Media Effects*. It posits that the audiences rely on mass media to gain knowledge during ambiguous situations or in times of instability. In return, two

assumptions are theorised. First, the more the media fulfil their audience's needs for gaining knowledge and having entertainment, for instance, the greater they depend on these media. Subsequently, the greater the audience relies on media, the greater the effects on them (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Lin, 2015). Accordingly, three types of media influences can occur, cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). Recently, researchers have extended this theory and applied it to the Social Networked Sites (SNS) environment (Kim & Jung, 2017) and to understand what drives users to follow SMIs (Shah et al., 2023). Correspondingly, this research operationalizes the media exposure construct as to what extent Egyptian youth is frequently exposed to SMIs' content, and particularly to their content on Palestine post the 2023 WoG, and its cognitive, affective, and behavioural influences on them.

Additionally, **source credibility theory (SCT)** has its basis in Hovland et al. (1953) seminal work *Communication and Persuasion*. In this regard, Hovland et al. (1953) have set the road for studying communicator credibility by defining credibility as the trustworthiness of information and its source (Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Accordingly, source credibility is defined as "a communicator's positive characteristics that affect receivers' acceptance of a message" (Ohanian, 1990, p. 41, cited in Dedeoglu, 2019, p. 516). Hovland & Weiss (1951) highlighted the importance of source-perceived trustworthiness in changing opinions. In the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences,* source credibility is defined as "the perceived trustworthiness, competence, and goodwill of a person or entity … where individuals are more likely to follow or believe information from credible sources compared to less credible ones" (*Source Credibility*, 2015). As Serman & Sims (2023) pointed out, there are three dimensions at the core of the source credibility construct or its measurements: "attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness" (Serman & Sims, 2023, p. 2319). Recently, studies have been conducted to investigate three characteristics of SMIs credibility: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Li & See-To, 2024; Muda & Hamzah, 2021; Yuan & Lou, 2020). Social media influencers are defined as third-party endorsers who shape public attitudes through social media platforms, such as Facebook,

YouTube, X, or alike (Freberg et al., 2011). Accordingly, users perceive a given source as trustworthy when confident that they communicate the most valid information (Hovland et al., 1953 cited in Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Moreover, source expertise refers to the extent to which "a source of a persuasive message is seen to be knowledgeable about the message's topic" (Muda & Hamzah, 2021, p. 444). Finally, attractiveness describes to what extent a source is perceived as "physically, socially, or relationally" attractive or the "physical or social attractiveness of the individual who serves as" a communicator persona (Schiappa et al., 2007, p. 306; Yuan & Lou, 2020, p. 4). Accordingly, this research operationalizes source credibility as the extent to which the Egyptian youth perceive SMIs as trusted sources of information, recognises their expertise in relation to the Palestinian Issue, and perceives them as attractive personas.

Finally, according to Cambridge Dictionary online, awareness is the state of being aware that something exists, being knowledgeable of this, or having an "understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). It is also defined as "the quality or state of being aware" or having "knowledge and understanding that something is happening or exists" (Matin et al., 2022; Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Accordingly, awareness is the state of being aware of the existence of something or having a good understanding of a given situation or object. Previous research highlighted the role of social media in raising public awareness. For instance, in increasing environmental sustainability awareness among students and staff in higher education (Hamid et al., 2017). Moreover, studies highlighted the role of SMIs in building brand awareness (Matin et al., 2022), or in raising Egyptian youth cultural and religious awareness (El-Said & Alfakharany, 2023; Salameh, 2021). This research operationalizes awareness as the state of being knowledgeable or aware of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and, subsequently, the Palestinians' right to defend themselves and free their land.

Accordingly, this research seeks to investigate the following hypotheses:

H1: Egyptian youth's exposure to SMIs' content following the 2023 War on Gaza will positively correlate with 1) cognitive, 2) affective, and 3) behavioural influences on them.

H2: Egyptian youth' exposure to SMIs' content following the 2023 War on Gaza will positively correlate with their awareness of the Palestinian Issue

H3: Egyptian youth's exposure to SMIs' content following the 2023 War on Gaza will positively correlate with 1) the perceived quality of SMIs information, 2) their perceived credibility among youth, and 3) youth attitudes towards them.

H4: SMIs' credibility among the Egyptian youth will correlate positively with 1) youth attitudes towards SMIs' content, 2) the perceived quality of their information, and 3) interactivity.

H5: There are significant differences in Egyptian youth Exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue following the 2023 War on Gaza based on their demographics: 1) gender, 2) residence, and 3) age.

H6: There are significant differences in Egyptian youth awareness of the Palestinian Issue following the 2023 War on Gaza based on their demographics: 1) gender, 2) residence, and 3) age.

H7: Egyptian youth awareness of the Palestinian Issue can be predicted by the following constructs: 1) exposure to SMIs' content on Palestinians, 2) exposure influences on them, 3) the perceived quality of SMIs' information, 4) SMI's credibility, 5) Egyptian youth attitudes towards SMIs' content, 6) interactivity, 7) Egyptian youth demographics.

Methodology

Research design and sample

This research used a quantitative research design. An online survey was distributed among Egyptian youth aged (18-40) years old for a month-long from 14th December to 14th January 2023, roughly two months and one week post-October 7th. Convenience sampling was used to collect research data, in which the snowball-sampling

technique was used. As such, respondents were asked to distribute the Google Form link of the survey among their acquaintances through WhatsApp, Facebook, or other social media platforms. This procedure yielded 419 valid responses. Table one breaks down the sample demographics and social media usage, including their frequency of following social media influencers.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographics and Social Media Usage Profile

Demographics and Social Media Usage		Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	121	28.9
	Female	298	71.1
Age	18 < 25 years	325	77.6
	25 < 35 years	44	10.5
	35 ≤ 40 years	50	11.9
Economic Level	High	20	4.8
	Medium	364	86.9
	Low	35	8.4
Residence	Urban	207	49.4
	Rural	212	50.6
Education Level	Undergraduate	334	79.7
	Postgraduate	71	17
	Less than a university education	14	3.3
Social Media Usage	Always	290	69.2
	Sometimes	119	28.4
	Rarely	10	2.4
Respondents' Frequency of Following SMIs Content on SM	Always	132	31.5
	Sometimes	249	59.4
	Rarely	38	9.1
Frequently Used Social Media Platforms among Respondents	Facebook	321	76.6
	YouTube	163	38.9
	X	66	15.8

Demographics and Social Media Usage		Frequencies	Percentage (%)
	TikTok	114	27.2
	Instagram	214	51.1
	Telegram	122	29.1
	WhatsApp	36	8.6
	Other	10	2.4
Total		419	100%

As shown in the table, the majority of respondents were females (298, 71.1%) followed by males (121, 28.9%). Most respondents were young adults (325, 77.6%), followed by those aged 35 to 40 years (50, 11.9%) and those aged 25 to under 35 years (44, 10.5%). This highlights that the vast majority of respondents - almost four-fifths or eighty per cent of the sample are considered Gen-Z[1] or iGen, those who were born from 1997-2012 and aged between 12–27 years. The last fifth of the sample is considered Millennials or Y-Gen, those born between 1981-1996 and now aged between 28–43 years[2] (Dimock, 2019). Moreover, the vast majority of respondents were in medium economic level (364, 86.9%), and are somehow balanced in proportions regarding their place of residence, whether rural (212, 50.6%) or urban (207, 49.4%) areas. Finally, the vast majority of respondents have higher education, with 334 (79.7%) holding a degree and 71 (17%) having or pursuing postgraduate education. Most respondents reported that they always use social media, 69.2% or sometimes 28.4%. Moreover, the majority follow social media influencers to some extent, with 31.5% doing so always and 59.5% sometimes. Furthermore, Facebook is the most popular social media platform among the respondents (321, 76.6%), followed by Instagram (214, 51.1%), and then YouTube (163, 38.9%).

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[1] All age groups/ranges adjusted to 2024.
[2] This research did not use exact distinct barriers between generations Z and Y age ranges.

Measurements and Data Analysis

This research sought to identify to what extent SMIs' content influences youth and raises their awareness of the Palestinian Issue. In this regard, several constructs were adapted from previous literature to fulfil research aims. Accordingly, interactivity, SMIs credibility (expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness) and attitude towards SMIs constructs were adapted from (Ooi et al., 2023). Tables 5 to 7 expose these scales' items, their means (M), standard deviations (SD), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and weighted scores (WS). Moreover, the perceived quality of information scale was adapted from (Shah et al., 2023). Moreover, a construct of three questions, using a three-Likert scale, was used to measure Egyptian youth exposure to SMIs' content. In this regard, the youth asked to specify to what extent (always = three; sometimes = two or rarely = one) $M = 2.224$ and $SD = 0.596$ they follow SMIs' content on social media. Moreover, they were asked about the frequency of their exposure to SMIs' content (daily = three; more than once a week = two; and once a week = one) $M = 2.358$ and $SD = 0.709$. Finally, respondents were asked to identify to what extent (largely = three; sometimes = two; or rarely = one) $M = 2.673$ and $SD = 0.562$ they followed/were exposed to SMIs content on Palestine post the 2023 War on Gaza. These three questions were then constructed on one scale to measure youth exposure to SMIs' content. The mean and standard deviation for this construct are $M = 2.427$ and $SD = 0.567$. Additionally, SMIs' content influences were measured using twenty items, which measure different cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects. Other ten items were constructed to measure youth awareness of the Palestine Issue. Both constructs were developed by the researcher upon a pilot study conducted on SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue post the 2023 War on Gaza. Both constructs used a three-Likert scale. Again, tables 9 and 10 expose these scales' items, their means (M), standard deviations (SD), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and weighted scores (WS).

Validity and Reliability Tests

To ensure the face validity of the questionnaire instrument, the research tool was submitted to a group of academic experts[3] in mass communication and public relations who reviewed its questions against the aims, questions, and hypotheses of this research. After taking into account the referees suggested adjustments, a pre-test or a pilot study was conducted on 44 respondents, roughly 10.5% of the sample; no adjustment was made at this stage as all questions and scales were clear to respondents. The reliability of the whole instrument and its sub-scales were measured using Cronbach's Alpha. As apparent in Table 2, all Cronbach's Alpha are accepted and reliable as they are greater than 0.60 (Cronbach, 1951; Raharjanti et al., 2022). For the sake of representation, all scales are translated from Arabic to English using a professional translation tool. Afterwards, two independent researchers checked the quality and clarity of the translation against the Arabic source.

- **Assoc. Prof Marwa El-Said**, Associate Professor of Public Relations, Mass Communication Department, Faculty of Arts, Mansoura University.
- **Assoc. Prof Mohamed Atran**, Associate Professor of Public Relations, Faculty of Mass Communication, Cairo University.
- **Assoc. Prof Mostafa Elwan,** Professor of Journalism and Publishing, Faculty of Mass Communication, Al Azhar University.
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- **Prof Dr Osama Abdel Raheem Ali**, Professor of Journalism, the Faculty of Specified Education, Mansoura University.
- **Prof Dr Samy el-Nagaar**, Professor of Journalism and Head of Mass Communication Department, Faculty of Arts, Mansoura University.
- **Prof Dr Wail Ismail Abdel Barry**, Professor of Mass Communication, Faculty of Women, Ain Shams University.

Table 2: Reliability Tests for Questionnaire Instrument and Scales

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha (*a*)
Media Exposure to SMIs' Content	0.61
Interactivity	0.83
Credibility of SMIs	0.93
Attitude towards SMIs	0.63
Quality of Information	0.87
Awareness of the Palestine Issue	0.90
Cognitive Influences	0.83
Affective Influences	0.88
Behavioural Influences	0.86
Questionnaire's Overall Cronbach's Alpha Score	0.92

Results

Respondents were asked to identify how frequently, on a daily or weekly basis, they follow SMIs' content. Figure 1 shows their responses. As apparent from the figure below, the majority of the sample, 207 respondents (49.4%), follow SMIs daily, while 155 respondents (37%) follow them intermittently more than once a week, and only a slight fraction of 57 respondents (13.6%) get exposed to their content once a week. This indicates the popularity of SMIs' content among respondents, with many incorporating them into their daily or weekly routines.
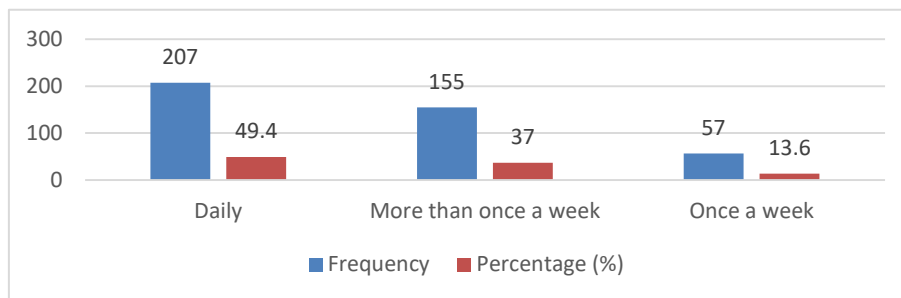

Figure one: Respondents' Frequency of Exposure to SMIs' Content

Furthermore, respondents were asked to what extent they were exposed to SMIs' content on Palestine post the 2023 WoG; figure 2 highlights their responses. The majority of respondents, 302 individuals (72.0%), reported that they largely follow SMIs' content about Palestine. This indicates a high level of engagement and interest in the content related to Palestine among a substantial proportion of the sample during the 2023 War on Gaza. The next group, comprising 97 respondents (23.2%), followed this content sometimes, suggesting intermittent engagement. The smallest group, only 20 respondents (4.8%), rarely follows this content, indicating minimal engagement with SMIs on this topic.
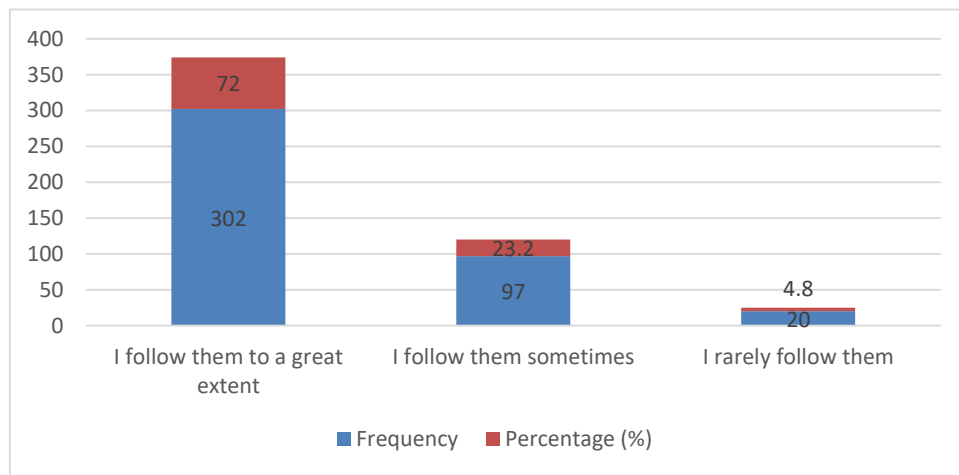

Figure two: Respondents' Frequency of Exposure to SMIs' Content on the 2023 War on Gaza

Furthermore, Table 3 highlights the prominent SMIs and the extent to which respondents engaged with their content on Palestine during the War on Gaza across different SM platforms. Hazem Shoman stands out as the most highly engaged influencer, with a weighted score of 50.17, placing him in the top rank. This high engagement could be attributed to his content's relevance to the Palestine issue, especially from a religious perspective. Ahmed El Ghandour (Al-Daheeh) follows closely, with a weighted score of 48.45, earning him second place. Indeed, his most famous episode, named "Palestine...The Story of a Land", got over twenty million views on YouTube. Motaz Azaiza is another prominently engaged influencer. He ranks third with a

weighted score is 46.35. Azaiza was one of the most followed influencers during the War on Gaza, for he used to provide his followers with instantly updated captured videos and photos from inside the Gaza Strip. Bassem Youssef, with a weighted score of 46.25, ranks fourth. His most famous interview on the Palestinian issue, especially on the Piers Morgan Show, went viral with over twenty-two million views. Other influencers, such as Abdullah Rushdy, show moderate engagement, with a weighted score of 40.75, placing him fifth. Finally, an interesting result is that SMIs who provide their content mostly in English, such as Mohammed Hijab, Megan Rice, and Andrew Tate, although they have lower rank, it is a worthy note that their content is viewed among Egyptian youth. This indicates either their capabilities for reaching out to the global audience or youth's interest in following influencers who speak a language other than their own.

Table 3: Respondents Engaged with SMIs Whose Content on Palestine during the 2023 War on Gaza across Social Media Platforms

SMIs	M	SD	WS	R
Al-Daheeh (Ahmed El Ghandour)	1.93	1.078	48.45	2
Mokhbir Eqtisadi (Ashraf Ibrahim)	1.14	1.076	28.65	8
Bassem Youssef	1.85	1.043	46.25	4
Hazem Shoman	2.00	1.063	50.17	1
Abdullah Rushdy	1.63	1.088	40.75	5
Mahmoud Al-Sayed Ali	0.97	1.036	24.47	13
Hazem El Seddiq	1.16	1.107	29.22	7
Omar Jihad	0.98	1.056	24.57	12
Mohammed Hijab	1.07	1.054	26.85	9
Megan Rice	0.99	1.030	24.87	11
Andrew Tate	1.00	1.038	25.17	10
Motaz Azaiza	1.85	1.216	46.35	3
Saleh Al Jafarawi	1.58	1.246	39.67	6
Total	419 (100.0%)			

Respondents were requested to list their reasons or motivations for following SMIs' content on SM. Table 4 shows their responses. Apparently, the most common reason, with the highest ranking (M = 2.77, SD = 0.503), was that respondents follow SMIs' content to gain diverse information and knowledge. This suggests that this motivation is consistently important across the sample. Furthermore, the second most common reason was that SMIs provide opinions and information on current affairs. Similarly, 80.0% of respondents report that they always seek influencers' opinions on current affairs, with a mean of 2.74 and a standard deviation of 0.548, indicating a high level of agreement among respondents.

Table 4: Reasons for Respondents' Exposure to SMIs' Content via Social Media Platforms

Reasons for exposure to SMIs' content	M	SD	WS	R
Entertainment and amusement	2.20	0.777	72.86	5
Passing time	2.06	0.795	68.05	6
I am attracted to their way of presenting content	2.28	0.746	75.37	4
To gain new information and knowledge	2.77	0.503	91.44	1
To learn new skills	2.64	0.618	87.35	3
Everyone around me follows their content and is influenced by them	1.57	0.719	51.91	7
Provides me with opinions and information on current affairs and events	2.74	.548	90.58	2

A considerable proportion of respondents engage with influencers to learn new skills, with a mean score of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 0.618, reflecting a strong, though slightly more variable, interest in educational content. Additionally, nearly half of respondents are drawn to influencers due to their presentation style, with a mean score of 2.28 and a standard deviation of 0.746, indicating moderate response variability. Having entertainment and amusement came in the fifth rank, indicating that entertainment value is a significant motivator, with a mean score of 2.20 and a standard deviation of 0.777. This highlights that a good portion of respondents engage with

influencers for entertainment or for passing time ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.795$). The least frequent reason for engaging with influencer content is peer influence ($M = 1.57$, and $SD = 0.719$).

Figure 3 illustrates the persuasive techniques and methods employed by influencers to attract audiences to their content about the Palestinian Issue. Accordingly, this analysis reveals that **Quranic Verses and Hadiths** ranked first as the most convincing method used by SMIs, with 79.0% of respondents indicating this. **Filmed videos and documentaries** ranked a close second, with 76.8% of respondents noting their importance. **Historical documents and facts** were considered significant by 69.7% of respondents, while 62.1% reported that **religious texts** are effective tools used by SMIs to convince them. **Books and scientific encyclopaedias** came in twelfth place, noted by 33.4% of respondents, followed by **specialists and experts' commentaries or content,** which ranked thirteenth with 32.7% of respondents. Lastly, the method of **refuting others' opposing viewpoint** ranked fourteenth, reported by 27.9% of respondents. This data is meaningful from several viewpoints. First, it reflects respondents' view of the Palestinian Issue to a considerable extent as a religious matter. This is evident considering that the most followed persona among respondents is the Islamic scholar, Hazem Shoman, with a weighted score of 50.17. Moreover, the second and third most followed personas are Ahmed El Ghandour and Motaz Azaiza. El Ghandour, in his most influential episode "Palestine...The Story of a Land", used several filmed captures to show the plight of Palestinians and to reflect on the Israeli occupation. Meanwhile, Motaz Azaiza, a Palestinian photojournalist, provides his followers with instantly updated captured videos and photos from inside the Gaza Strip during the war.
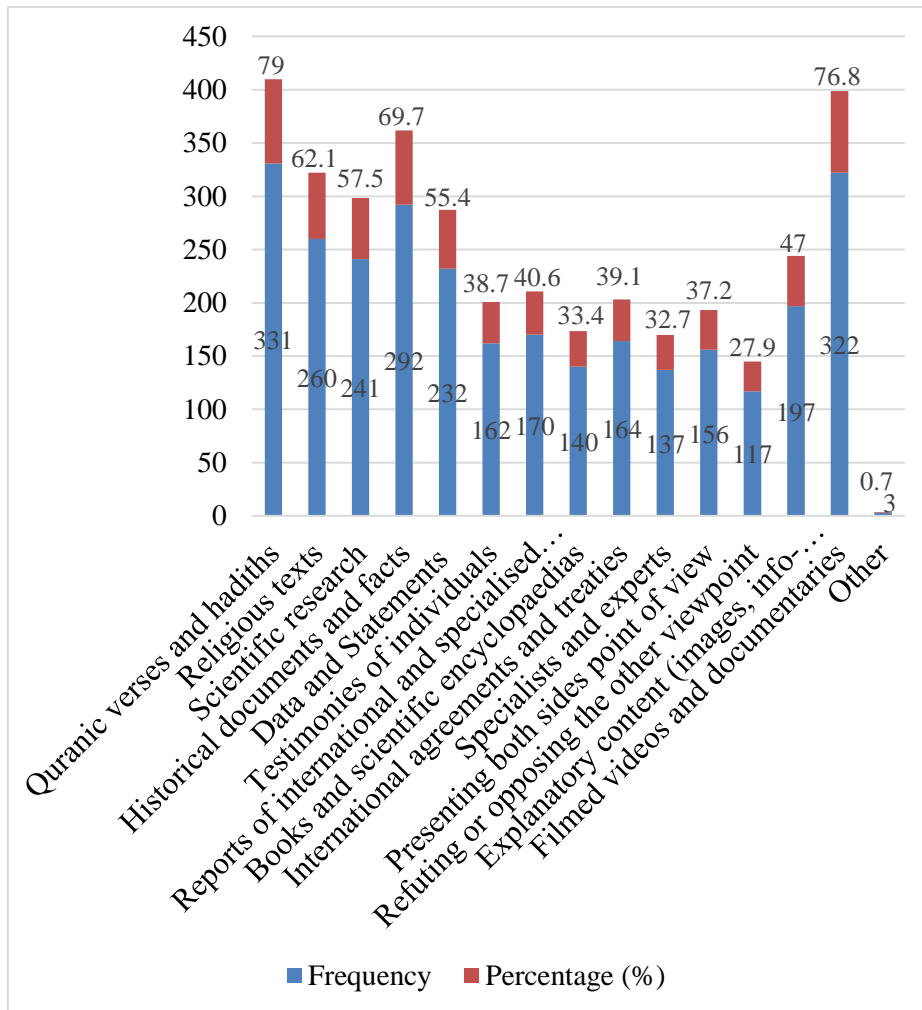
Figure three: SMIs Used Persuasive Techniques and Methods to Shape Convince Their Audiences' Opinion Concerning the Palestinian Issue

Generally, the data highlights that religious content, such as Quranic verses and Hadith, are the most effective persuasive techniques used by influencers to promote content about the Palestinian Issue. Filmed videos and documentaries also play a crucial role, suggesting the importance of visual and engaging content, perhaps this is due to the public desire to stay updated concerning the ongoing WoG. Interestingly though books and scientific data still hold significant influence. They are viewed less important than filmed videos and

captures. This could be due to the public's desire to stay up-to-date on the ongoing war events.

Respondents were required to indicate their ways of interaction with SMIs' content and how those influencers are interacting with them in return. Table 5 shows that the mean scores range from 2.09 to 2.56, indicating varying levels and sorts of interactions between respondents and SMIs. Meanwhile, the highest mean score (2.56) corresponds to "I like his/her content," which ranked first, suggesting that respondents are most inclined to interact with SMIs content and express their approval of the content by liking it. The lowest mean scores (2.09) are seen in "Responds to comments" and "I comment on his/her content," ranked seventh and sixth, respectively, indicating that direct commenting is a less common method of interaction between respondents and SMIs.

Table 5: Interactivity between Respondents and SMIs

Interactivity between Respondents and SMIs	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
Responds to comments	0.745	2.09	0.724	69.06	7
Encourages me to interact with him/her directly	0.753	2.21	0.741	72.93	4
Interacts by liking comments	0.717	2.22	0.737	73.49	3
Fulfils the wishes and requests of his/her followers	0.680	2.25	0.679	74.28	2
I share his/her content on my page	0.697	2.15	0.790	71.11	5
I like his/her content	0.656	2.56	0.639	84.57	1
I comment on his/her content	0.712	2.09	0.7530	69.23	6

Moreover, respondents were asked to express their perceptions of SMIs' credibility, mainly to what extent they perceive SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue as credible. The answers are illustrated in Table 6. The means and weighted scores range from 2.65 to 2.80 and 93.6 to 88.4, indicating commonly high credibility perceptions among respondents concerning SMIs. The highest mean scores (2.80) are seen in statements related to trustworthiness: "honest in his presentation of the Palestinian cause" and "genuinely cares about the Palestinian Issue", with weighted scores (93.6) and (93.5), respectively, placing them first and second. The following statement,

which ranked third, reflects respondents' perceptions of SMIs' expertise that sustains their ability to provide followers with "sufficient information about the Palestinian Issue". This indicates that trustworthiness is highly esteemed by respondents. The lowest mean score (2.65) is related to the expertise statement "has sufficient experience to provide information about the Palestinian Issue," with a weighted score (88.4), highlighting that respondents perceive SMIs as relatively lesser experts to provide sophisticated information on the Palestinian Issue. Altogether, these data highlight respondents' perceptions of SMIs as honest and sincere in delivering information concerning the Palestinian Issue. Nevertheless, expertise statements had relatively lower scores, suggesting that respondents may perceive SMIs as less qualified to provide proven information about the Palestinian Issue. Surprisingly enough, attractiveness has been regarded in many cases as a significant indicator of SMIs' credibility.

Table 6: The Extent of SMIs Perceived Credibility among Respondents

Credibility Factors	Statements	CFA	Mean	SD	WS	R
Expertise	Provides sufficient information about the Palestinian Issue	0.699	2.77	0.479	92.4	3
	Qualified to provide verified information about the Palestinian Issue	0.723	2.71	0.501	90.5	9
	Has sufficient experience to provide information about the Palestinian Issue	0.753	2.65	0.547	88.4	10
	Relies on credible historical and scientific sources to support his claims about the Palestinian Issue	0.769	2.73	0.514	91	7
Trustworthiness	Honest in his presentation of the Palestinian Issue	0.810	2.80	0.437	93.5	2
	Trustworthy in what he presents about the Palestinian Issue	0.772	2.75	0.501	92	4

Credibility Factors	Statements	CFA	Mean	SD	WS	R
	Genuinely interested in the Palestinian Issue	0.701	2.80	0.444	93.6	1
	Presents objective evidence and statistical data to support his claims about the Palestinian Issue	0.812	2.75	0.472	92	4=
Attractiveness	I am attracted to the way he presents his content about the Palestinian Issue	0.768	2.74	0.487	91.6	5
	The style of presenting his content about the Palestinian Issue is distinctive	0.756	2.72	0.522	90.8	8
	I like his self-confidence in presenting his content about the Palestinian Issue	0.765	2.72	0.505	91	7=
	I do not feel bored while he is presenting his content about the Palestinian Issue	0.708	2.74	0.485	91.3	6

Statements such as "I am attracted to the way he presents his content about the Palestinian Issue" and "I do not get bored while he is presenting his content about the Palestinian Issue" ranked fifth and sixth, with weighted scores (91.6) and (91.3), respectively. This reflects that, to some extent, the way SMIs present their content is as important as the trustworthiness of their content.
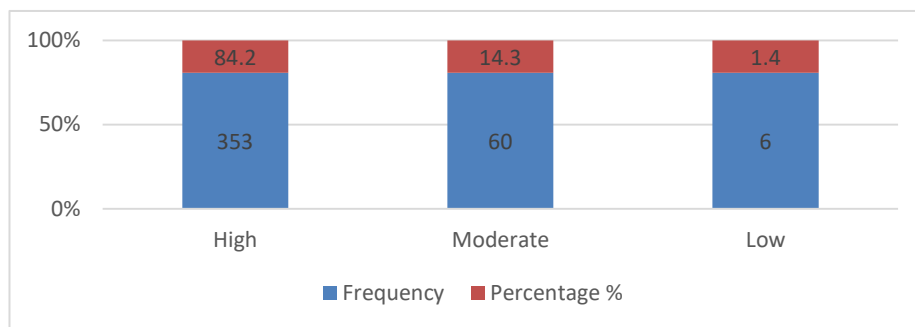

Figure 4: SMIs' Perceived Credibility among Respondents

The figure highlights that the majority of respondents perceive SMIs to have high credibility (84.2%), while (14.3%) view them as moderately credible,. Only six respondents, (1.4%), believe SMIs have low credibility.

Additionally, Table 7 shows respondents' attitudes towards SMIs. The mean and weighted scores for positive statements range from 2.54 (WS = 84.8) to 2.70 (WS = 90.06), indicating generally favourable attitudes towards SMIs among respondents. Respondents indicated that they agreed with the statement that "I agree with the content he presents and the issues and topics he supports", which ranked first with $M = 2.70$ and $SD = 0.502$. This was followed by "he expresses the values that I believe in and uphold", ranking second with $M = 2.59$ and $SD = 0.605$. On the contrary, the lowest weighted score, (58.46) and (60), were for the negative statements "my opinions and beliefs do not align with his opinions and beliefs," and "I disagree with him on many of his opinions and beliefs", with means of (1.75, $SD = 0.797$) and (1.80, $SD = 0.808$), respectively. Further analysis shows that (72.8%) of respondents embrace neutral attitudes towards SMIs, followed by (23.6%) with positive attitudes, and only (3.6%) with negative attitudes. This highlights that respondents generally have neutral to favourable attitudes towards SMIs. Figure 4 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 7: Respondents' Attitudes towards SMIs

|		Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
Attitudes towards SMIs	Positive	I agree with the content he presents and the issues and topics he supports	0.791	2.70	0.502	90.06	1
		My thoughts and beliefs are very similar to his	0.802	2.54	0.598	84.8	4
		He expresses the values that I believe in and upholds	0.839	2.59	0.605	86.4	2
		I appreciate him and feel a sense of familiarity with him	0.766	2.58	0.581	86.3	3
	Negative	My opinions and beliefs do not align with his opinions and beliefs	0.936	1.75	0.797	58.46	6
		I disagree with him on many of his opinions and beliefs	0.932	1.80	0.808	60	5
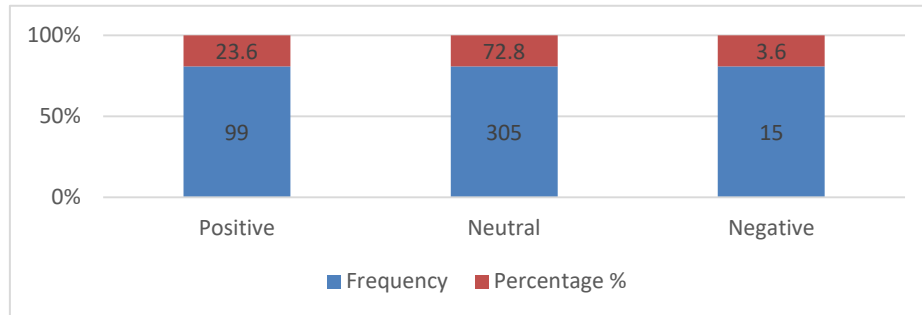
Figure 5: Respondents Attitudes towards SMIs

As represented in table 8, respondents were asked to report on their perceptions of the quality of information provided to them by SMIs. As such, the statistical analysis revealed that respondents generally perceive the information provided to them by SMIs of high quality, with weighted scores ranging from (91.73) to (89.26), respectively. In this regard, the highest mean score, (2.752, $SD = 0.499$), is for the statements "provides evidence and proof to support the accuracy of the information he/she presents", and "the information presented in his/her content is useful to me" (2.752, $SD = 0.484$) in the same rank. This suggests that respondents highly value accuracy and evidence-supported information. Conversely, the lowermost weighted score (89.26) is for "presents comprehensive information in the content he/she presents", with ($M = 2.678$, and $SD = 0.516$), indicating a slight perception that the amount of information provided by SMIs is not inclusive and needs to be improved.

Table 8: Respondents' Perceived Quality of Information Provided by SMIs

Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
Provides evidence and proof to support the accuracy of the information he/she presents	0.817	2.752	0.499	91.73	1
Has accuracy in presenting and documenting information	0.831	2.726	0.507	90.86	3
Provides new and constantly updated information in the content he/she presents	0.798	2.728	0.510	90.93	2
The information presented in his/her content is useful to me	0.827	2.752	0.484	91.73	1=
Presents comprehensive information in the content he/she presents	0.773	2.678	0.516	89.26	4

The data presented in Table 9 presents the results of exploring the cognitive, affective, and behavioural effects of respondents' exposure to SMIs' content concerning the Palestinian Issue and the 2023 War on Gaza. As far as cognitive effects are concerned, the table shows that the item "Palestinian resistance has an honourable history of military struggle against the Israeli occupation" ranked first with (M = 2.90, SD = 0.331, and WS = 96.66), this highlights respondents' appreciation and recognition to the Palestinian resistance against Israeli occupation. In second place came respondents' approval of the phrase "It helped me learn about the Israeli aggressive practices against the Palestinians", with (M = 2.89, SD = 0.335, and WS = 96.33) which highlights respondents' appreciation of the informative content that helped them learn more about Israeli hostile practices against Palestinians. In the last order of the cognitive influences, the statement "I became able to refute claims of Zionist propaganda" ranked eighth, with (M = 2.76, SD = 0.475, and WS = 92.26). This indicates that respondents felt more capable of challenging Zionist propaganda; however, it has the lowest rank among the cognitive statements. This could be due to the intensity of the war, and the severity of Israeli aggression, so respondents were more inclined to focus on the war's outcomes, such as the death toll, rather than believing Israeli propaganda. Furthermore, the analysis shows that in terms of affective effects, the statement "I gained more believe in the justness of the Palestinian Issue and the right of the Palestinians to their land" ranked first among affective items and with the highest score overall, with (M = 2.92, SD = 0.304, and WS = 97.53).

Table 9: Influences (Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioural) of Respondents' Exposure to SMIs' Content on Palestine and the 2023 War on Gaza

Influences	Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
Cognitive	It helped me understand some of the facts and historical context of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories	0.696	2.88	0.370	96.1	3
	I became able to refute claims of Zionist propaganda	0.648	2.76	0.475	92.26	8
	I became more knowledgeable about the Israeli media narrative	0.661	2.81	0.430	93.8	5

Influences	Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
	It helped me recognise the Israeli aggressive practices against the Palestinians	0.811	2.89	0.335	96.33	2
	Israeli claims that the Palestinians sold their land are false	0.618	2.80	0.495	93.4	6
	Israel was established after the expulsion and displacement of Palestinians from their land by force through terrorist operations	0.646	2.78	0.513	92.93	7
	Palestinian resistance has an honourable history of military struggle against the Israeli occupation	0.742	2.90	0.331	96.66	1
	The glorious victory of the October 6th is a major milestone in the Arab-Israeli conflict	0.664	2.86	0.391	95.4	4
Affective	It made me have more negative feelings towards the Israeli occupation of Palestine	0.705	2.91	0.335	97.13	3
	I became more sympathetic to the Palestinians and their right to their land	0.852	2.91	0.314	97.3	2
	I started carrying more unfavourable feelings towards some Western countries and their clear support for Israel	0.744	2.89	0.364	96.5	6
	I have more pride in the glorious victory of October 6th	0.664	2.84	0.430	94.73	7
	I gained more believe in the justness of the Palestinian Issue and the right of the Palestinians to their land	0.848	2.92	0.304	97.53	1
	I became more impressed with the Palestinian resistance and its steadfastness against Israeli aggression	0.828	2.90	0.340	96.96	5
	I became more opposed to the displacement of Palestinians from their land	0.736	2.91	0.312	97.13	=3
Behavioural	It encouraged me to read and research to learn more about the Palestinian Issue	0.698	2.87	0.344	95.86	5

Influences	Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
	It pushed me to do all I could to ensure the victory of the Palestinian Issue	0.852	2.90	0.328	96.73	4
	It encouraged me more to boycott products and goods from companies and countries that support Israel	0.785	2.92	0.307	97.46	1
	It made me participate positively in raising awareness about the Palestinian Issue and the importance of boycotting Western goods	0.827	2.91	0.301	97.2	2
	I became more inclined to buy national products in support of the Palestinian Issue	0.834	2.90	0.336	96.9	3

This may indicate that the severity of the war on Gaza post-October 7th and the humanitarian plights the Palestinians went through had a strong emotional influence on the Egyptian youth. Additionally, youth exposition to SMIs' content increased their belief in the justness of the Palestinian Issue. In the second rank came "I became more sympathetic to the Palestinians and their right to their land" with ($M =$ 2.91, SD=0.314, and WS=97.3), again with a weighted score of 97.3, more than the highest weighted scores of cognitive influences (96.66 and 96.33) respectively, as highlighted before. This provides further support for the affective influences of Egyptian youth exposition to SMIs' content on Palestine in comparison to its cognitive influences on them. In the last order came respondents' endorsement of this item "I have more pride in the glorious victory of the October 6th" with (M = 2.84, SD = 0.430, and WS = 94.73). Although this comes last, it significantly implies that the October 6th victory holds a notable emotional influence among the Egyptian youth, especially amid this WoG. Finally, concerning behavioural influences, the analysis revealed the following items ranked on top. First: "It encouraged me more to boycott products and goods from companies and countries that support Israel", with (M = 2.92, SD = 0.307, and WS = 97.46), and "It made me participate positively in raising awareness about the Palestinian Issue and the importance of boycotting Western goods"

with ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.301$, and $WS = 97.2$). Both items highlight that respondents were seeking to participate actively in supporting the Palestinian Cause, either through boycotting goods that support Israel and its aggression or raising awareness about the Palestinians' rights in their land. In the lowest rank, came "It encouraged me to read and research to learn more about the Palestinian Issue", with ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.344$, and $WS = 95.86$). This signifies that respondents were more motivated to boycott goods and advocate Palestinians' rights and less motivated to do their research and read about this issue. This is indicative that the youth culture is inclined towards more communication than individual efforts to enlighten themselves.
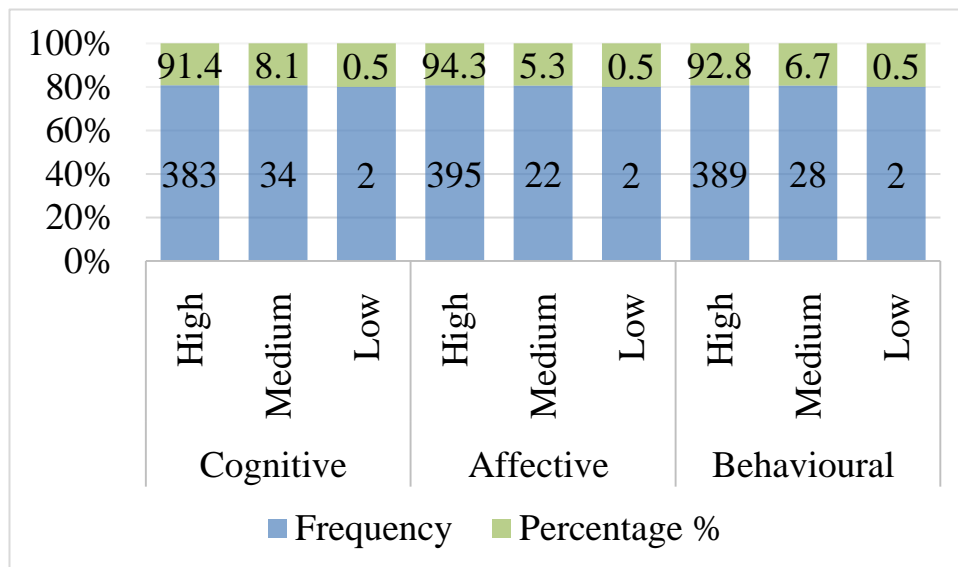

Figure 6: Levels of Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural Influences of Respondents' Exposure to SMIs' Content on the Palestinian Issue

Further analysis was conducted to reveal to what extent each type of influence had the highest influence on Egyptian youth. The majority of respondents (91.4%) indicated a high level of cognitive effect from SMIs' content, as seen in the bar chart in Figure 6. This shows that the content suggestively improved their understanding and information about the Palestinian Issue. Nevertheless, the most noticeable effects were affective, as 94.3% of respondents reported significant emotional involvement. This indicates that SMIs' content strongly influenced

respondents' sentiments and attitudes toward the Palestinian Issue. Considerably, behavioural influences were reported by 92.8% of respondents, indicating that SMIs' content had a considerable influence on their intentions and behaviours towards the Palestinian Issue.

Additionally, Table 10 shows a statistical analysis of respondents' data that measured their awareness of the Palestinian Issue and the 2023 War on Gaza. The vast majority of respondents agreed with the statement that "Jews have no right to the land of Palestine", which was ranked first, with ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 0.288$, and $WS = 97.53$), highlighting respondents' clear opinions that stand against the Israeli occupation to the land of Palestine. Moreover, in the second rank comes the statement "Israel practices state terrorism against the unarmed Palestinian people" with ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.376$, $WS = 96.9$). This again indicates their decidedly refusal of the violent practices of Israel against the Palestinian people. The next statements, which support this claim, in consecutive order, are "Israel commits war crimes against the Palestinian people during its war on Gaza" ranked third ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.384$, $WS = 96.7$) and "Palestinian groups are waging an honourable patriotism against the Israeli occupation", ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.352$, and $WS = 96.7$) together ranked tertiary. Altogether, these last statements underline respondents' condemnation of Israeli war crimes, on the one hand. On the other hand, it underlines their acceptance of Palestinians' rights to defend their land against Israeli occupation.

Table 10: Respondents' Awareness of the Palestinian Issue and Al-Aqsa Flood post-October 7th, 2023

Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
What happened on October 7 'Tophan Al-Aqsa' or Al Aqsa flood is a legitimate right of the Palestinian resistance	0.407	2.88	0.395	96.1	7
Israel commits war crimes against the Palestinian people during its war on Gaza	0.801	2.90	0.384	96.7	3
Israel practices state terrorism against the unarmed Palestinian people	0.863	2.90	0.376	96.9	2
Israel aims to expand settlements through its war on	0.794	2.84	0.479	94.66	9

Statements	CFA	M	SD	WS	R
Gaza					
Israel aims to displace Palestinians to neighbouring countries	0.827	2.88	0.404	96.2	6
Western and European countries practice double standards and support Israeli aggression against Gaza	0.809	2.81	0.484	93.96	10
Jews have no right to the land of Palestine	0.441	2.92	0.288	97.53	1
The Israeli occupation targets civilians in its war on Gaza	0.909	2.87	0.411	95.93	8
Zionist propaganda has shown the falsity of its claims during the war on Gaza	0.828	2.89	0.389	96.5	5
Palestinian groups are waging an honourable patriotism against the Israeli occupation	0.502	2.90	0.352	96.7	=3

In the last order comes the statement, "Western and European countries practice double standards and support Israeli aggression against Gaza", which was ranked tenth, with ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.484$, and $WS = 93.96$). Although it is in the last order, it is still meaningful and suggests Egyptian youth awareness of the double standard policy practised by some Western countries concerning the Israeli occupation of Palestine and amid 2023 WoG.
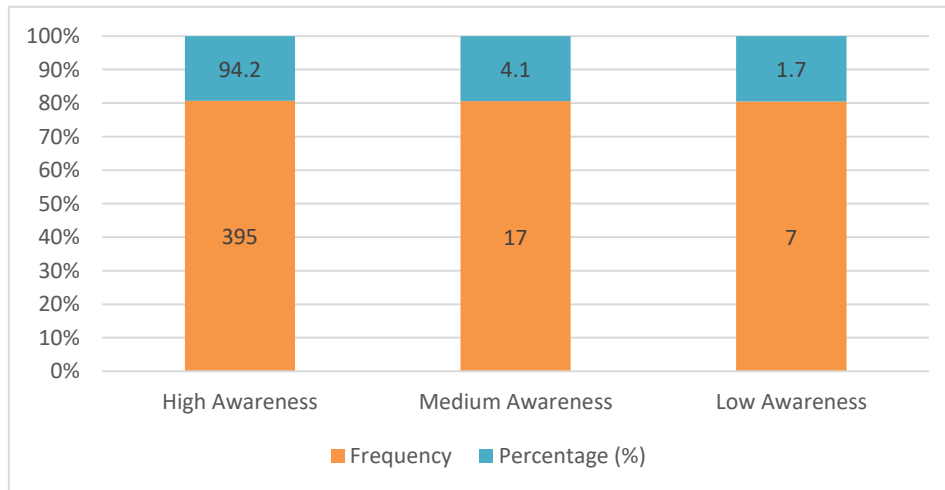

Figure 7: Respondents' Awareness Levels of the Palestinian Issue during the 2023 War on Gaza

A substantial majority of respondents, 395 (94.2%), reported a high level of awareness about the Palestinian Issue during the 2023 War on Gaza. Meanwhile, a small percentage of respondents (4.1%) reported a medium level of awareness, followed by a low level of awareness (1.7%). These data highlight that Egyptian youth have a good understanding of the current situation and history of the Palestinian Issue. Nevertheless, the Israeli occupation of Palestine is a major issue in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hence, it is triggering that more than five per cent of the sample holds medium to low awareness about it. This requires further effort to increase awareness about this issue among youth and to keep the current awareness level up. The following section presents a statistical investigation of the research hypotheses.

Table 11: Statistical Examination of Respondents' Exposure to SMIs' Content on the Palestinian Issue and Its Correlation with Studied Variables

H	Respondents' Exposure to SMIs' Content on Palestine during the 2023WoG	r	p	M	SD
1.1	Cognitive influences	0.128	0.01**	2.90	0.303
1.2	Affective influences	0.196	0.01**	2.93	0.260
1.3	Behavioural influences	0.233	0.01**	2.92	0.283
2	Respondents' Awareness of the Palestinian Issue during the 2023WoG	0.1	0.05*	2.92	0.319
3.1	Respondents' perceived quality of information provided by SMIs	0.305	0.01**	2.72	0.407
3.2	Respondents' perceived credibility of SMIs	0.293	0.01**	2.82	0.413
3.3	Respondents' attitudes towards SMIs' content	0.141	0.05*	2.20	0.482

Table 11 shows a statistical analysis of the Pearson correlation coefficient between respondents' exposure to SMIs' content post the 2023 WoG and its cognitive, affective, and behavioural influences. Accordingly, the analysis revealed a weak positive relationship

between exposure to SMIs' content and cognitive influences ($r = 0.128$, $p < 0.01$), a weak positive relationship between exposure to SMIs content and affective influences ($r = 0.196$, $p < 0.01$), and a weak positive relationship between exposure to SMIs' content and behavioural influences ($r = 0.233$, $p < 0.01$). All relationships are statistically significant at the 0.01 level. As such, this research accepts hypothesis one thoroughly.

Additionally, the statistical analysis of the Pearson correlation coefficient between respondents' exposure to SMIs' content post the 2023 WoG and their awareness of the Palestinian Issue revealed significance at the 5% level ($r = 0.1$, $p < 0.05$). However, the relationship is weak. Likewise, the table shows a statistical investigation of research hypotheses concerning respondents' exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue and their correlation with the studied variables. The table demonstrates that the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.305$, $p < 0.01$) is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, which indicates a weak positive relationship between respondents' exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue during the 2023 War on Gaza (WoG) and their perceived quality of information provided by SMIs. This suggests that higher exposure to SMIs' content is associated to some extent with a higher perceived quality of the information provided by SMIs. Furthermore, the statistical analysis of the relationship between respondents' exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue and their perceived credibility of SMIs revealed that ($r = 0.293$, $p < 0.01$), is statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Indicating that increased exposure to SMIs' content is associated with the perceived credibility of the SMIs, yet the relationship is weak. Additional statistical analysis of the relationship between respondents' exposure to SMIs' content on Palestine and their attitudes towards SMIs' content is statistically significant at the 5% level ($r = 0.141$, $p < 0.04$). However, the correlation is relatively weak. As such, hypothesis three is accepted thoroughly.

Table 12: Statistical Examination of Respondents' Perceived Credibility of SMIs Content on the Palestinian Issue and Its Correlation with Studied Variables

H	Respondents' Perceived Credibility of SMIs	*r*	*p*	M	SD
4.1	Respondents' attitudes towards SMIs' content	0.512	0.001***	2.33	0.390
4.2	Respondents' perceived quality of information provided by SMIs	0.765	0.001***	2.72	0.407
4.3	Interactivity	0.494	0.001***	2.22	0.513

Furthermore, table 12 shows a statistical examination of the relationship between SMIs credibility among respondents, the Egyptian youth attitudes towards SMIs' content, the perceived quality of SMIs' information, and the interactivity between SMIs and respondents and reverse. The statistical analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between respondents' perceived credibility of SMIs and their attitudes towards SMIs content ($r = 0.512$, $p < 0.001$) at the 0.001 level. Moreover, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.765$, $p < 0.001$) indicates a strong positive relationship between respondents' perceived credibility of SMIs and their perceived quality of information provided by SMIs at the 0.001 level. Additionally, the Pearson correlation coefficient statistical analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between respondents' perceived credibility of SMIs and the interactivity between them ($r = 0.494$, $p < 0.001$) at the 0.001 level. As such hypothesis four is accepted thoroughly.

Table 13: T-test Results for the Relationship between Exposure to Influencer Videos and Content about Palestine and Respondents' Gender and Residential Areas

H	Dependent	Independent		t	p	df	M	SD
5.1	Respondents' Exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue	Gender	Male	0.147	0.935	417	2.41	0.463
			Female	0.146			2.42	0.471
5.2		Residence	Urban	0.962	0.116	417	2.39	0.493
			Rural	0.964			2.44	0.442

The differences in respondents' exposure to SMIs' content post the 2023 WoG and their awareness of the Palestinian Issue according to their gender and residential areas were investigated using Independent-Sample T-Tests. The t-test results show no significant difference in exposure to SMIs' content about the Palestinian Issue between males and females (t = 0.147 and 0.146, respectively, and p > 0.05). Furthermore, the t-test results display no significant difference in exposure to SMIs' content about the Palestinian Issue between urban and rural residents (t = 0.962 and 0.964, respectively, and $p > 0.05$). The results underline that neither gender nor residence plays a substantial role in influencing Egyptian youth exposure to SMIs' content.

Table 14: T-test Results for the Relationship between Gender and Exposure to Influencer Videos and Content about Palestine

H	Dependent	Independent		t	p	df	M	SD
6.1	Awareness of the Palestinian Issue	Gender	Male	3.123	0.001***	417	2.93	0.175
			Female	2.466			2.86	0.324
6.2		Residence	Rural	3.001	0.001***	417	2.84	0.357
			Urban	3.020			2.92	0.193

Further investigation, though, highlighted differences based on gender and residential areas in relation to awareness of the Palestinian Issue among Egyptian youth. The test results exposed a statistically significant difference in awareness of the Palestinian Issue between

males and females ($p < 0.001$). This indicates that gender is a significant factor influencing awareness levels. As such, males have a higher mean awareness score ($M = 3.123$) than females ($M = 2.466$). This suggests that males are generally more aware of the Palestinian Issue than females. Furthermore, the statistical analysis shows a statistically significant difference in awareness of the Palestinian issue between rural and urban residents ($p = 0.001$). Accordingly, urban residents have a slightly higher mean awareness score ($M = 3.020$) than rural residents ($M = 3.001$). Although both groups show high levels of awareness, urban residents exhibit a marginally higher awareness.

Table 15: Differences in Exposure to SMIs Content on the Palestinian Issue according to the Age Variable

H	Variables				Sum of Squares	Mean of Square	*df*	F	*p*
5.3	Differences in Exposure to SMIs' Content on the Palestinian Issue during the 2023WoG according to the Age Variable	**Age**	18 < 25	Between groups	0.523	0.174	3	0.793	0.498
			25 < 35	Within groups	91.219	0.220	415		
			35 ≤ 40	Total	91.742		418		

The one-way ANOVA tests in Table fifteen assess whether there are statistically significant differences in respondents' exposure to SMIs' content about Palestine during the 2023 War on Gaza across different age groups. The age groups considered are 18 to 25, 25 to 35, and 35 to 40, which cover, to a great extent, generations Y and Z, or Millennial and iGeneration or Gen-Z. The results revealed no statistical differences across the age groups in terms of their exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue during the 2023 WoG (F = 0.793, $p > 0.05$).

Table 16: Differences in Awareness of the Palestinian Issue according to the Age Variable

H	Variables				Sum of Squares	Mean of Square	df	F	p
6.3	Differences in awareness of the Palestinian Issue according to the age variable	Age	18 < 25	Between groups	0.328	0.109	3	1.293	0.276
			25 < 35	Within groups	35.115	0.085	415		
			35 ≤ 40	Total	35.443		418		

Similarly, the one-way ANOVA test in Table 16 indicates whether there are statistically significant differences in respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue across different age groups. The results revealed no statistical differences across the age groups in terms of their awareness of the Palestinian Issue (F = 1.293, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that awareness levels are relatively consistent across the age groups studied. Accordingly, hypothesis five is rejected totally, while variable six is accepted partially.

Table 17: Stepwise Regression Analysis on Respondents' Awareness of the Palestinian Issue

H	Variables	R	R^2	R^2 Change	β	F	t	p
7.1	Exposure to SMIs' content on Palestine	0.141	0.020	0.020	0.041	8.435	0.932	0.01**
7.2	Cognitive	0.527	0.278	0.185	0.454	39.818	7.891	0.001***
7.3	Affective	0.536	0.287	0.009	0.125	33.210	2.352	0.001***
7.4	Perceived credibility of SMIs	0.276	0.076	0.056	0.003	17.154	0.048	0.001***

H	Variables	R	R^2	R^2 Change	β	F	t	*p*
7.5	Interactivity	0.305	0.093	0.017	-0.095	14.196	-1.964	0.001***
7.6	Residence	0.552	0.305	0.018	0.108	30.129	2.474	0.001***
7.7	Gender	0.559	0.312	0.007	0.091	26.653	2.082	0.001***

A stepwise regression analysis was conducted to identify significant predictors of respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue. All possible prediction variables were inserted gradually into SPSS to run a multi-regression analysis. Stepwise regression facilitated excluding variables that have no predictability. Only independent variables with explanatory power remained in the final model. The analysis results are illustrated in Table 17.

In the first model, respondents' exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue explains 2% of the variance in respondents' awareness (R^2 Change = 0.020, β = 0.041, and $p < 0.01$). The positive β value indicates a direct relationship between both variables. Furthermore, the perceived quality of SMIs' content contributes an additional 5.6% to the variance explained (R^2 Change = 0.056, β = 0.003, and $p < 0.001$). Additionally, interactivity between respondents and SMIs results in a 1.7% increase in the variance explained (R^2 Change = 0.017, β = -0.095, and $p < 0.001$), bringing the total R^2 to 0.093. Surprisingly enough, the negative β value indicates that higher interactivity with SMIs might slightly reduce awareness. This unexpected finding could suggest that interactivity could have an indirect rather than direct influence on awareness. Significantly, cognitive influences emerge as a strong predictor, contributing a substantial 18.5% to the variance explained (R^2 Change = 0.185, β = 0.454, and $p < 0.001$). Given that, cognitive influences alone have increased the explanatory power of the model to 27.8% (R^2 = 0.278). Additionally, affective influences add a modest 0.9% to the variance explained (R^2 Change = 0.009, β = 0.125, and $p < 0.001$), resulting in a total R^2 of 0.287. The insertion of residence contributes an additional 1.8% to the variance explained (R^2 Change = 0.018, β = 0.108, and $p <$

0.001), increasing the total R² to 0.305. The positive β value (0.108) indicates that geographical location influences awareness levels, with those in urban areas potentially being more informed, as shown by the T-Test examination in Table 13. Gender adds roughly another 0.7% to the variance explained (R² Change = 0.007, β = 0.091, and $p < 0.001$), culminating in a total R² of 0.312. Male respondents potentially being more informed than females about the Palestinian Issue, as shown by the T-Test examination in Table 14. Generally, the final model explains 31.2% of the variance in respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue (R² = 0.312). Accordingly, variable seven is accepted thoroughly.

Discussion

Social media play an unprecedented role in enhancing public engagement with current events. Accordingly, SMIs have become a new source of information and the daily routine of their followers. This research investigated SMIs' content influences on the Egyptian youth post the 2023 War on Gaza and their awareness of the Palestinian Issue. The statically analysed data revealed that 49.4% of respondents follow SMIs' on a daily basis, while 37% follow them intermittently more than once a week. Moreover, 72.0% of respondents reported that they are exposed to SMIs' on the Palestinian Issue on a daily basis, while 23.2% are exposed to this content sometimes. This suggests that two-thirds of the sample consider SMI one of their primary sources of the current conflict.

Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents reported that they are inclined to SMIs' content to learn new skills and to benefit from their provided opinions and information on current affairs, respectively. The least reported reasons among those are for passing time and imitating others, respectively. These results advocate that Egyptian youth have instrumental reasons that motivate them to follow SMIs content. These results are in line with (El-Said & Alfakharany, 2023), who indicated that (67.3%) of Egyptian youth follow Islamic influencers because they deal with issues of direct interest to them. However, it disagrees with (Othman, 2021), who underlined that entertainment is the main reason for Egyptian public exposure to influencers' satirical content. However, it conforms partially with

(Salameh, 2021), who pointed out that having entertainment and joy are at the top of Arab public reasons for following SMIs; nonetheless, developing oneself and benefiting from others' experiences came in second and third ranks, respectively, which are still instrumental reasons. Consequently, Quranic Verses and Hadiths, followed by filmed videos and documentaries, have been reported by 79.0% and 76.8% of respondents, correspondingly, as significant persuasive techniques used by SMIs to convince them when presenting their content on the Palestinian Issue. This could indicate the respondents' view of the Palestinian Issue as religious in nature. Moreover, respondents show a strong preference for filmed content, highlighting Egyptian youth's keen interest in the quality, credibility, and personal benefits of the content presented. This conforms to other results in this research, which indicated that respondents are inclined to SMIs' content that is supported by evidence and proof $M = 2.752$, and the utility of this content $M = 2.752$. Again, these results suggest that respondents value to a great extent content accuracy, especially when it is supported by evidence and the utility of the information provided to them. This conforms with (Salameh, 2021), who highlighted that the Arab public (17.2%) considers someone an influencer if the content presented is informative and meaningful.

Additionally, the results exposed that Egyptian youth interact with SMIs through liking their comments, which aligns with (El-Said & Alfakharany, 2023), who highlighted (70.7) of Egyptian youth interact with SMIs through likes. Likewise, the analysis revealed that 84.2% of respondents hold high perceptions of SMIs credibility, and 14.3% perceive SMIs as having moderate credibility among them. This slightly disagrees with (El-Said & Alfakharany, 2023; Salameh, 2021), who highlighted that SMIs hold moderate trust in the first place among respondents (58.7%) and (65.3%), respectively. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that respondents are inclined to positive attitudes in comparison to negative ones towards SMIs. Generally speaking, this confirms with (El-Said & Alfakharany, 2023), who highlighted that Egyptian youth have more favourable attitudes towards Islamic influencers than unfavourable ones. Nevertheless, in this research, altogether these attitudes revealed neutral (72.8%), followed by positive (23.6%) attitudes. These results expose that credibility, and

attitudes are two different components according to public views. Credibility reflects public perceptions of SMIs as trusted personas with expertise in the topics they discuss. Attitudes tackle respondents' favourable and unfavourable sentiments toward them. Accordingly, benefiting from someone's content does not require having favourable attitudes towards him or her, but the source should be perceived as credible.

Concerning influences of respondents' exposure to SMIs content post the 2023 WoG, the statistical analysis revealed 94.3% of respondents encountered high levels of emotional influences such as gaining "more belief in the justness of the Palestinian Issue" and Palestinian rights in their land, or "become more sympathetic" with Palestinians and their rights. Consequently, behavioural influences of 92.8% such as being encouraged to boycott companies' goods that support Israel or participating actively in raising awareness of the Palestinian Issue were at the top of these influences. Lastly, cognitive influences 91.4%, ranked third including respondents' perception that the "Palestinian resistance has an honourable history of military struggle against Israeli occupation" or that Israel is practising aggression against Palestinians. Expectedly, cognitive influences would have come first, but they came last. A rational interpretation could be due to the brutality of the Israeli war on Gaza and its subsequent atrocities. As such, respondents were emotionally prepared to engage with SMIs' content, which exposed them from time to time to filmed captures of both the continuing war and its results or some historical moments of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the Palestinians flee to their lands. Therefore, they become more concerned about the justness of the Palestinian Issue. Subsequently, this leads those to behave as such, for instance, through boycotting the goods of those who support Israel violence. Still, the cognitive influences are significant, although they came last; perhaps this is due to the historical moment that requires more engagement either emotionally or through taking actions. Altogether, these conform with (Fayez, 2024), who indicated that the most salient topics revealed from investigating public engagement with the 2023 WoG 2023 on Al Jazeera and BBC Arabic Facebook pages were supporting the Palestinian Issue and the resistance and expressing sympathy for children and victims. In addition (Chen et al.,

2024) revealed that user comments on CNN's Facebook page clustered around the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and accusations against the Gaza blockade. Furthermore, supporting Palestinian rights, calling for a ceasefire, and accusations of Israeli rule and injustice were revealed after analysing the Middle East Eye users' comments. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that respondents' exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue had revealed high awareness of it 94.2%, followed by moderate 4.1% and low 1.7% awareness, respectively. Taken together, the results highlight that respondents' exposition to SMIs' content has increased their understanding and awareness of the Palestinian Issue, to certain degrees. This has been further investigated to reveal possible correlations between exposure to SMIs and respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue.

The analysis revealed positive correlations between respondents' exposure to SMIs' content post the 2023 WoG and its cognitive, affective, and behavioural influences ($p < 0.01$) on them, which supports the first hypothesis thoroughly. Furthermore, the results yielded a positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) between respondents' exposure to SMIs content and their awareness of the Palestinian Issue post the 2023 WoG, which supports the second hypothesis. Altogether, these results indicate that SMIs play a significant role in shaping Egyptian youth's knowledge of the Palestinian Issue. In addition to affecting their behaviour and sentiments. They are in line with (Al-Ansi et al., 2023), who revealed that SMIs had a positive influence intellectually on adolescents (aged 12-22) in some Middle East countries, including Egypt. In addition to (Bonnevie et al., 2020), who highlighted that respondents' exposure to SMIs' content increased their knowledge and perceptions positively concerning seasonal flu vaccination. They are also congruent with previous research that indicated SMIs had a positive influence on increasing brand awareness among university students (Matin et al., 2022).

Moreover, the analysis revealed that exposure to SMIs' content post the 2023 WoG is positively correlated with respondents' perceived quality of their information, SMIs' credibility among them ($p < 0.01$), and respondents' attitudes toward SMIs' content ($p < 0.05$). These

results support hypothesis three. The results highlight that the more respondents realise the quality and benefits of SMIs' content, the more they are exposed to their content. This is congruent with (Salameh, 2021), who highlighted that the Arab public follows SMIs because of the quality of information they are providing and their credibility. Additionally, the results match (Shah et al., 2023), who highlighted that the quality of SMIs' information is an essential antecedent of purchase intention. They are also partially similar to those of (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022), who highlighted that influencers' trustworthiness, as an essential component of credibility, is associated with purchase intention. Additionally, the results are in line with (Othman, 2021), who highlighted that Egyptian public attitudes toward SMIs are associated with youth persuasion of their presented issues. Altogether, these results highlight that Egyptian youth are critical in their selection of the content they consume and the content provider persona. Simply put, the quality of this content is as important as its provider's credibility and attitudes toward the influencers and their content.

Further analysis revealed that Egyptian youth perceptions of SMIs credibility are associated positively with their attitudes toward them, perceived quality of SMIs information, and bilateral interactivity between them ($p < 0.001$), which supports hypothesis four thoroughly. The association between respondents' perceived credibility of SMIs and their attitudes towards them is congruent with previous studies (Ooi et al., 2023) and (Han & Balabanis, 2024). Additionally, (Li & Feng, 2022) highlighted that SMIs engagement with their followers is associated positively with their perceived authenticity among their audience. However, this result is opposite to (Penttinen et al., 2022), who highlighted that there is no correlation between interactivity and source credibility.

Further analysis revealed no statistical differences between respondents' demographics (gender, residence and age) and their exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue ($p > 0.05$). This highlights the pervasiveness of exposure to SMIs' content among Egyptian youth from different backgrounds, in addition to their interest in gaining knowledge concerning the Palestinian Issue from

non-traditional sources. Accordingly, hypothesis five is not supported thoroughly. Nevertheless, the analysis revealed statistical differences in respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue according to their gender and residence ($p < 0.001$), with male and urban residents holding more awareness. These results are justified concerning the fact that males could follow hard news and issues more than females. However, it is interesting that urban residents are more aware of the Palestinian Issue than rural residents are. Perhaps this is due to urbanisation pervasiveness in rural areas, or their lack of interest in hard news. Overall, this is an interesting result that requires further research to find out whether traditional rural values and identity that used to be attached to religious and spiritual morals have changed or not and become more attached to materialistic values. Yet, there are no significant statistical differences among respondents according to their age groups ($p > 0.05$). Again, this is another surprising result. It could have been expected that Gen-Z, or those born after Millennial, would be slightly less aware of the Palestinian Issue. Nevertheless, as (Buheji, 2024a) highlighted, the 2023 WoG has affected Gen-Z's attitudes to international impartiality and became more compassionate with Palestinian rights to be free and to defend their land. These results partially support hypothesis six.

Further analysis was conducted to investigate potential predictors of respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue. Regression analysis revealed a model fit that explains 31.2% of respondents' awareness of the Palestinian Issue. Cognitive influences appear to be the strongest predictor, contributing alone 18.5%, almost 20%, to the explanation power of the model. In addition, the perceived quality of SMIs' information explained another 5.6%, almost 6% per cent, of the variance. Furthermore, exposure to SMIs' content on the Palestinian Issue explained another 2% of the variance. The other variables have added almost another 3% to the explanation power of the model altogether. Interestingly though, interactivity, although added 1.7% to the explanation power of the model, negatively correlated with awareness ($\beta = -0.095$). A conceptualised explanation might be that the more interactions occur between Egyptian youth and SMIs, the more youth are distracted from gaining benefits from the content provided and become more focused on building a relationship with

influencers. However, this interesting finding requires further investigation. Yet, separating followers from interactivity metrics (Tafesse & Wood, 2021) could help reach new insights in this regard. Altogether, these results support hypothesis seven partially.

The results significantly contribute to understanding how Egyptian youth's awareness of the Palestinian Issue is shaped and how this awareness could be affected and predicted. In such a way, informative content and the quality of information are significant indicators in this regard. These results are congruent with previous literature that indicated the potential power of social media to build awareness concerning sustainability (Hamid et al., 2017) and wildlife conservation (Wu et al., 2018). In addition to (Li & Feng, 2022) who highlighted that SMIs are a potential force in raising public awareness concerning national branding. This underlines that Egyptian youth consider SMIs as quality-information producers (Lou & Yuan, 2019), so they turn to their content to gain knowledge, for instance, concerning the Palestinian Issue.

Conclusion

This research emphasises the significant influence of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) on Egyptian youth awareness of the Palestinian Issue, particularly after the 2023 War on Gaza. The findings revealed that a substantial portion of respondents regularly engage with SMIs' content, with a majority relying on them as a primary source of information on current events, including the 2023 WoG. This frequent exposure has led to heightened emotional, behavioural, and cognitive influences, where affective responses like increased sympathy for Palestinians often precede cognitive and behavioural changes. The study also highlights that Egyptian youth are sharp in their content consumption, prioritising the credibility and quality of information presented by SMIs. This discernment is evident in their preference for content backed by evidence and persuasive materials, such as Quranic verses, which align with their view of the Palestinian Issue as religious in nature. Furthermore, credibility remains a key factor influencing the youth's engagement with SMIs' content; this indicates that trust in the source of information is critical. The regression analysis further shows that cognitive influences, the perceived quality of information, and

exposure to SMIs' content are significant predictors of youth awareness of the Palestinian Issue. Interestingly, while contributing to the model, interactivity between SMIs and their followers shows a negative correlation with awareness, suggesting that excessive interaction may distract from the content's informative value.

Implications and Future Research

The findings of this research have contributed to our understanding of how SMIs shape public awareness, particularly in the context of heightened conflict such as the Palestinian occupation. The research highlights the role of SMIs as credible information producers among Egyptian youth, emphasising the importance of content quality and credibility in building awareness. As far as the practical implications of this research are concerned, media outlets, especially in the Arab and Muslim worlds, might benefit from those influencers by hiring them to provide some episodes on the history of the Palestinian occupation. These episodes may not only increase the outlets credibility but will also increase and sustain public awareness of the Palestinian Issue. Additionally, international influencers, especially those rallies against the Israeli occupation to the land of Palestine, might be hired for the same reason, but to educate the international public about this issue. Furthermore, influencers' content should be deeply studied by media researchers, especially in the Arab world. The aim is to reach some theoretical breakthroughs concerning media productions in the age of social media and artificial intelligence, media producers' characteristics. This will enrich media students and equip them with some of the latest developments in this field, both practically and theoretically.

Furthermore, this research has investigated the role of SMIs in building public awareness of the Palestinian Issue in the time of war. The Israeli occupation still going to the land of Palestine. Therefore, future research may study the role of social media influencers in building national and international public awareness of this issue in peace or ceasefire times, if any. Accordingly, a longitudinal study may reveal how this awareness is shaped in a time of no war.

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