Breaking Stereotypes or Reinforcing Norms? Gender Roles in SVOD Drama

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Abstract:

Media research throughout the years has stated and proven the underrepresentation of women in media content, or portrayed women in stereotypical roles such as caregivers, spoiled individuals or dependent characters. However, a notable shift in gender role representation has been identified by media scholars, particularly after the emergence of streaming platforms across different countries. This shift aligns with the fourth wave of feminism and the global adoption and worldwide implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); specifically goal 5, which advocates for gender equality. In this context, a systematic review was conducted to assess the gender role represented in content streamed on SVOD platforms; assessing the stereotypical and counter- stereotypical gender roles as being represented in streamed drama.

Keywords: Gender Roles, Gender Roles Stereotype, counter- stereotypical gender roles, SVOD, Sustainable Development Goals, Drama, Streaming Platforms, Systematic Review.

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Introduction

Over the years drama has proved its influence in changing perceptions, social movements and sometimes laws as well. Drama was used as a weapon in the third world war for publicity and propaganda, using strong emotional involvement for individuals. Drama, as a form of communication, gets into people's lives and influences their attitudes, behaviors and preferences. The spread of OTT (over the top) services, especially post COVID-19, many different streaming platforms started to dominate the market and attract many subscribers especially after producing the original content of the streaming platforms, like Netflix which penetrated the Arab societies influencing audience perception and exposing audiences to different ideologies than the content Arab audience used to like, which is more like the stereotyped media content especially in gender roles; which encouraged the regional streaming platforms like Shahid, Watchit, YangoPlay and TOD to produce its own original content as well, that relates and belongs more to the Arab culture and language, yet still those regional platforms are presenting new content that is different than the traditional TV drama content, raising some controversial questions regarding their content.

Research Problem

The prevalence of streaming platforms and their high usage by the audience became a huge concern for media scholars; Netflix subscribers exceeded 250 million from all over the world, in addition to new streaming platforms in the market. Many predictions indicate that the usage of these platforms will increase in the coming years, especially viewership of its original productions with the different content presented as there is less restrictions in the production than traditional TV production. These streaming platforms also have the privilege to reach a wider audience especially younger generations; as audience engage in streaming content more than before. (Deloitte, 2015; Hallinan & Striphas, 2016; Merrill & Rubenking, 2019).

Since, the SVOD content is presenting different content with different ideologies its crucial to study the content presented on SVOD; Therefore, **this research aims to study** how SVOD are portraying gender roles; to assess whether these platforms reinforce or break gender role stereotypes, and to assess whether these platforms can change the gender roles of women and men in the future or reinforce the traditional gender roles that exist today.

Research Objectives

- To identify gender role trends emerged from SVOD content.

- To examine stereotype reinforcement or subversion in SVOD content.

- To measure the influence of implementing gender equality in drama work flow in gender role drama content.

Research Significance

With over 250 million Netflix subscribers by 2021 (Shi & Zhou, 2021) and numerous other streaming platforms entering the market, such as TOD, Yango Play (which launched in March 2024

and has already launched its original content), Jawwy, Amazon Prime, Jazeera 360, and others, the significance of this research lies in the diversity of viewpoints and the competition between various streaming platforms in their original productions in portraying gender roles. Since that SVOD are attracting more subscribers than before especially the younger generation, which is the largest user base, subscribers prefer to watch their favorite content on VOD over traditional TV without the interruptions of commercials, every platform is striving for their loyalty and attention. In addition to the vision of the world 2030, the world will be 50-50 abiding by number five of sustainable development goals for gender equality that ensures effective participation for women and equal opportunities (UNDP, 2023), which is aligned with Egypt's 2030 vision; in reducing gender gap to achieve equality and social justice (CAPMAS, 2020). Media representation of women is no exception, on the contrary, media is a strong tool for socialization and constructing gender roles for the younger generations, especially that VOD services can be accessed and each platform is holding a different agenda with different principles, like Netflix's vision is representing minorities, including women, in a non-stereotypical representation.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the Prevailing Stereotyped Gender Roles in Drama Content?

RQ2: How Implementing Gender Equality Influences Gender Roles in Drama Content?

RQ3: To What Extent does SVOD Drama Reinforce or Challenge Traditional Gender Norms?

Methodology

This research uses systematic review as a *qualitative research method*. Systematic review as defined by The Cochrane Collaboration (2006) in Ham-Baloyi and Portia Jordan (2016) is "a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review." (p.122). Additionally, they identify and minimize bias via transparent, explicit, and systematic methodology. Systematic review also known as research synthesis providing unbiased, comprehensive synthesis to different studies in the same document. Hence, this research uses *Lines-of argument* (LOA) synthesis which involves building up a whole picture from different studies.

Results and Findings

First Question: The Prevailed Stereotyped Gender Roles in Drama Content.

- **Gender Roles in International TV Drama**

Drama has huge influence on how people perceive the society around them, and gender roles is no exception as the socialization process includes media as well as family and peers. From here comes the accusation of media, especially drama, that supports gender inequality by its under-representation of women and when they are represented they appear in stereotyped manner (Anwar, 2023). Women are mainly shown as negative, irresponsible housekeepers, who are emotional and weak (Collins, 2011). Research shows that women are portrayed according to society's perspective. In drama women are submissive and always a wife or a mother, while men are employed, independent, charismatic, and leading (Carroll, 2012; Lauzen et al, 2008). In the past decades Malaysian TV portrayed women as dependent and sensitive to men and that most of their activities revolve around

family and home, at that time, media only reflected current societal norms and did not impose any new ones (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Another study of Spanish television series on women representation analyzing female roles, the results revealed that men had more leading characters in series and that women's images were stereotyped (Meso & Rovirosa et al., 2013).

An analysis of prime-time TV programs in the United States revealed that female characters inhabit roles like romance, family, and friends; however, male characters, conversely, are more likely to have roles work-related (Lauzen et al. 2008). The UN Women Organization indicates that more than 40% of media highlights gender stereotypes and only 6% represents well-balanced aspects of masculinity and femininity (UN Women, 2020). Some television series focus on harassment or domestic abuse against females and their resilience towards the relationship despite the challenges. On the other hand, men always glorify women's bodies and describe their ideal shape of women's body shape, and this indeed impacts the ideologies on femininity and attractiveness among the viewers (Wang, 2022). Also, there is a consistent concept of the female's body, in order to be attractive, they should look in a certain way dressing in expensive fitting clothing. In addition to the film making sector that represents women in supporting actor roles, wives or girlfriends to the main characters; which reflect that femininity is about support and not taking the lead on issues, which creates negative impressions of women's capabilities (Lee, 2018).

Montasseri, Khaghaninejad & Moloodi, (2020) examined how males and females were represented in American films and the results showed that they were represented in a stereotypical manner of gender role; men have the high ranked positions and jobs, while women were represented as passive, having the low income jobs, child care and sexual aspects. Examining the mothers' portrayal in American TV drama series by Searfoss (2017) showed that despite significant progress in improving the portrayal of mothers in American series, many modern portrayals in television drama series in the United States still cling to traditional gender roles and restrictive norms (Searfoss, 2017).

- **Gender Roles in Egyptian TV Drama**

The TV drama content in the Egyptian culture has a huge influence on the culture and shapes the perception of the Egyptian audience, especially when it comes to women's issues. Women are underrepresented in TV drama series; however, many positive and empowering representations of women were after the 2011 revolution represented in drama (Nassar, 2019). Female portrayal in Egypt has changed over the years. Zaki (2016) analyzed the image of the working woman as reflected in television drama by analyzing the content of 19 television drama series and the study concluded that there is a positive development and less stereotype in television drama when dealing with the roles of the Egyptian working woman in society, confirming her positive role in achieving development for the society in which she lives. Abu-Lughod (2001) studied the social drama genre that shares educational pro-feminist ideology; and the results of the analysis of these series revealed that women were portrayed in positive images of female leaders and also discussed the traditional taboo gender role issues (Abu Lughod, 2001).

On the other hand, when El Mursafi, (2018) analyzed portrayals of women in series; mistreatment of household help and abuse were found, and despite the domestic violence and mistreatment of spouses; women tolerate such relationships, and always seek protection and safety by not depending on themselves but rather develop a strong social relationship with influential people. In Addition to that, women also tend to marry upper class men even under inhumane conditions such as keeping their marriage a secret or marrying without having children. These results are aligned with the

findings of Al-Wazzan's, (2020) study that stated that there was discrimination and recommended that gender roles should be revisited, despite the fact that women protect their status and their dignity, but men always beat and reduce their freedom, even if the objective was noble.

Musbah's (2015) study for the mother role in Egyptian drama shows that the mother is qualified for the most important jobs in society because motherhood is the most difficult and complex job, the series rather emphasize stereotypical aspects of Arab women over their essential role, Arab women seem to advance without aspirations, opinions, or involvement in public issues.

A study by Abd El Aziz, (2024) stated that there were many dramatic works presenting women's issues from the old and new drama productions, like the series *"Faten Amal Harby"* "فاتن امل حربي" which was released in 2022 on Egyptian TV drama channels and pointed out the women's issues which led to the public opinion being affected using many social media hashtags. Similary the drama series *"Taht El-Wesaya,"* "تحت الوصايا" which was released in 2023 and presented the situations of widowed women, influenced public opinion and led to the call for changing the legal status of such women. Some experts in the media field stated that drama highlights the issues of many women, and through it, a lot of them learned their rights (Abd El- Aziz, 2024). Previously, most of the representations of women showed violence or discrimination towards women in modern TV drama series, as well as, the stereotypical representations of them (Anwar, 2023).

Second Question: Gender Equality Influencing Gender Role Drama Content

- **Feminism Movements: Where do we Stand?**

Feminism movements went through different stages, these movements called for women rights from the very basic and early rights to today's rights, it also evolves and adapt to the new eras and new technologies. According to Mohajan (2022), feminism is the belief that women and men should be treated equally in all spheres of society, including social, economic, and political ones. Originating in the United States and Europe, feminism progressively expanded throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America before becoming ingrained globally. It serves as a catch-all term for a variety of cultural phenomena pertaining to the patriarchal oppression of women (Dicker, 2008). Furthermore, it opposes female infanticide, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), wearing veils in public, and other practices in some nations.

Feminists shared the belief that women's oppression was linked to their sexuality because feminism as a concept is more concerned with the social category of females than with their sex. Every wave of feminism has its own set of principles and conditions for granting women their rights (Rampton, 2015; Malinowska, 2020). According to Ghorfati & Medini, (2015), feminism is based on both the intellectual commitment and the political movement that seeks justice for females and ending all forms of sexism. There are different kinds of Feminism which seek different principles and conditions. (liberal, Radical and Socialist Feminism)

Liberal feminism aims to make men and women equal. It highlights each person's ability to change discriminatory practices against women. It is considered as one of the most significant forms of feminism. The movement known as *radical feminism* believes that the only way to end sexism in society is by eliminating the concept of gender. *Socialist feminism* advocates for the ending of capitalism, seeing gender inequality as an inherent feature of the system that profits greatly from women's underpaid labor in the workplace and unpaid labor in the home (Ghorfati & Medini, 2015).

Over time, feminism has different kinds and waves, each seeking principles and different conditions to grant women their rights (Rampton, 2015; Malinowska, 2020), and by the development of feminism waves media reflects that wave in different forms, such as Lily, the first newspaper in the US, owned, edited, and published by Amelia Bloomer in 1849. Another media breakthrough happened when (AWSA) the American Women Suffrage Association published the Woman's Journal in 1870 (Johnson, 2017).

The term *First Wave of Feminism,* that showed up in the 19th and early 20th centuries, emphasized the political power of women, discussed overturning legal inequalities and women's suffrage (Begum, 2019; Lear, 1968). Liberal feminism is a representation of the period between the 1820s and the 1940s, when women were viewed as second-class citizens in societies dominated by men. Its primary objective was to ensure women's voting rights and equal rights (Rampton, 2015; Malinowska, 2020; Mohajan, 2022).

The second wave feminism started in the 1960s and ended after three decades in the 1990s. The dominant issues of this wave were the sexuality and reproductive rights, where several types of political feminism was raised in society, such as Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, and ecological feminism (Jaggar, 1983). The second wave sought to end gender norms and cultural injustices and inequalities while establishing women's equality in society. Its main goal was to increase minority groups' self-consciousness. The second wave of feminism's backlash was used to develop the third wave, which covers the various strands of feminist activity from the 1990s to the 2000s. It directed the movement toward individual rights rather than collective goals (Jain, 2020). Through the characteristics of age, race, and class, the feminists of this wave attempted to illustrate the wide range of oppression and exploitation (Hundleby, 2012; Mohajan, 2022)

From the 1990s to the 2000s, *third wave feminism* was reflected in a variety of ways and to varying degrees. It was headed by Generation X scholars and activists; therefore, a large number of third-wave feminists are the daughters of second wavers (Munro, 2013). In addition to believing that they have more opportunities and experience less sexism than their first and second wave counterparts, third wave feminists regard themselves as competent, powerful, and assertive social agents (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). They referred to themselves as power feminists; as women were rebellious, strong and working in many occupations (Wolfe & Goldberg, 2000; Iannello, 2010).

Around 2012, *fourth wave feminism* emerged, presenting a new kind of feminism depending on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and others. The rise of different feminism waves led to numerous governments considered in many nations and countries to encourage women's involvement in all societal activities (Mohajan, 2022). The fourth wave is characterized by a rise in consumer-producer interaction through social media, which enables users to engage with media campaigns that were previously limited to print. The #metoo movement in 2017 is a good example of the hashtag movements that have taken over the world and allowed women from all over the world to share their stories (Anderson, 2018; Elizer, 2021). Fourth wave feminism uses social media to connect feminists, incorporating the voices of women from first wave picket lines, second wave magazine editorials, and third wave political media outlets. "Creating meaningful collaboration, fruitful coalitions, focused political action, and a firmer sense of what non-totalizing solidarity can and should look like" (Zimmerman, 2017, p. 65); and that would answer the question, where do we stand from feminism?

When studying feminism waves and the gender equality movements, the demographics of the Arab world and the Islamic culture should be considered. The new concept of feminism was transferred to

the Arab and Muslim countries, but these countries adapted to feminism waves differently; as Muslims already believe that one of the most important principles in Islam is justice and equality between different people, even if they are different in color, gender, race, etc.. yet, by the beginning of the 20ᵗʰ century new organizations started to be formed adopting new ideologies mainly for women which were called Islamic Feminism or Arab Feminism. Islamic feminism roughly has the same objectives and goals of western feminism, even with differences, Islamic feminism is considered one of the most powerful feminism movements (Mohajan, 2022).

Nowadays feminists make use of the media outlets for spreading information as media sometimes can portray feminism in a deformed way; which can harm and destroy their causes rather than help them (Steiner, 2014). According to Susan Faludi's 1991 book, the media has a significant role in influencing how feminism and women's liberation are portrayed in America. As feminist thought evolved, it tended to emphasize diversity and plurality rather than just the male-female binary (Magdy et al, 2022).

- **Gender Equality between Crew and Content**

The UN Women's Organization claims that one of the main reasons of the gender role representation gap in media is that men are more likely than women to occupy senior positions in the media worldwide, and they have more influence over how women are viewed based on their own preferences and objectives (Wang, 2022).

Smith (2010) proposed a three methods to examine women representation in top grossing films; the number of the males and females as speaking characters, the gender of the crew behind the camera determines the gender roles that are portrayed on screen and finally the female protagonist in-depth analysis. Director, writer, and producer are three of the most important job titles in the film industry, decision makers in the creative and artistic part of the production. For about ten years, researchers have been monitoring the proportion of women in these positions and investigating the relationship between their presence and on-screen representations of women, particularly in television (Lauzen, et al., 2008). Smith, (2010) determined whether on-screen depictions of character sex in the majority of the 2007 top-grossing movies are related to the biological sex of content creators, the researcher calculated how many men and women were employed in each of these roles in 100 films, just 17% of these positions are held by women, with 3% in directing, 11.2% in writing, and 20.5% in producing, this indicates that employment in the highest levels of filmmaking is anything but an empire for men, with five men for every one woman in these esteemed positions, which lead to the representation of women from men's perspective.

These findings are roughly similar to results obtained by Lauzen, (2008) who examined the sex of behind-the-scenes workers across 250 top-grossing 2013 films, the study tracked the directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors, and cinematographers' gender for the top 250 grossing films, and the results showed that female-directed films feature a higher percentage of on-screen girls and women (44.6%) than do male-directed films (29.3%). While this finding is notable, it must be interpreted with caution. The percentages in female-directed fare emerged across three films. Yet a similar pattern was found in the analysis of gender roles in 150 Academy Award & Best Picture nominated films: the six films directed by women featured substantially more female characters (41.2%) than did those directed by men (26.8%), (Lauzen, 2011; Lauzen & Dozier, 1999).

There is ample evidence in dramas and films that women in executive roles behind the camera can lessen gender stereotypes. According to Panosky, (2005), the female director, Dorothy Arzner,

concentrated on female characters and the challenges they faced in society as women. She presented the female characters as strong, underappreciated women and used these plots to represent her feminist beliefs. The difficulties faced by women who had to do whatever it takes to survive during the Depression are depicted in her film *"Working Girls"* (1931). Another director who represented women in films in their counter-gender stereotypes director is Lina Wertmüller who showed women in her films as strong, defying social expectations and not confining themselves to the conventional roles that society has assigned them. Stereotypes that are applied to women include the domestic wife, the caregiver for the family, the nurturer, and the deferential woman who obeys her husband and the rest of patriarchal society (Panosky, 2005). Showing female characters leading unconventional lives, director Penny Marshall's films subvert gender stereotypes. She challenges the stereotypes of women by portraying them in a way that is different than what women are expected to look or act like. The fact that Penny Marshall is a well-known and respected director in Hollywood, who portrays women in ways that subvert social norms and feminine stereotypes by going against society's expectations of them relinquishing traditional female roles and instead creating new roles for themselves (Panosky, 2005).

Even in Disney films, Shawcroft et al, (2022) found that gendered patterns like attractiveness, leadership and occupations were different according to the film's producer, director and writer; which indicates that women involvement in Disney productions make difference in the portrayals of gender roles.

According to studies, women are unable to achieve high-power roles, and there is a significant pay gap between actors and actresses on and off screen. Women are not given the chance to make major productions or win awards for their work, even when they hold powerful positions behind the camera. This can be resolved if more women held powerful positions. Women in executive positions could reduce the pay gap between actors and actresses in films and provide women in the industry with larger budgets and opportunities (Ferrari, 2024). Numerous studies have highlighted the need for more women to pursue filmmaking and carve out a niche for themselves by learning the craft's fundamentals. In this manner, their movies can be more popular and successful, generating better revenues (Liddy, 2020).

According to Perkins and Schreiber (2019), women are heavily involved in the production of programs and films, which is a strategy used to challenge stereotypical feminist narratives; previous portrayals of women emphasize them as anti-heroes and encourage the idea that they can withstand abuse and toxic relationships. Women's participation in the production process can reduce the stereotyped portrayals of women and can make space for them to become the main characters who can have it all.

Third Question: SVOD Drama Reinforcing or Challenging Traditional Gender Norms

- **Gender Roles as Represented in Streaming Platforms Series**

Streaming Platforms with all the different types attracted different audiences to watch platforms more than before; these platforms offer many advantages to their audience like the freedom to watch whatever they want whenever they can, so individuals now appreciate their paid VOD services more than the traditional cable services (Deloitte, 2015) and watch their selected content rather than in appointment viewing (Hallinan & Striphas, 2016), and the spread of streaming platforms that are popular in the middle east like Yango Play, ToD, Jawwy, beside Shahid and Watchit that were already used by users and the foreign platforms as well.

Digital streaming platforms became an escape zone for creators and drama makers as there is less censorship, allowing them to discuss bold topics confidently portraying minorities including women as well as discussing taboos and controversial topics that are not easy to be exist in TV drama series; which cast the spotlight on studying the OTT (Over The Top), especially the SVOD (subscribed video on demand).

- International Streaming Platforms

Netflix managed to obtain a strong viewership base in the Arabic market despite having some regional competitors like Shahid by MBC Group and Watchit by UMS, Netflix remains the leader in subscription video on demand with 27% of the MENA region, followed by STARZ Play Arabia with 10% of the MENA region (Khalil & Zayani, 2020).

Netflix is grounding gender equality in their narrative; as has been stated in Smith, et al., (2021) study the percentage of the female leads or even the co-leads in Netflix productions were even higher two years ago than in the most popular movies at the box office. This also includes the percentage of speaking and named characters by gender as well. When looking at a number of 172 scripted series, 61.2% were male characters and 38.8% were female. Gender-balanced stories were defined as including girls and women in 45.7%–55.9% of all speaking or named roles (Census Bureau, 2020).

A study by Dewi & Rustipa, (2022) analyzed the TV Netflix series *"Unbelievable"* to assess the difference between the male and female detective in treating the rape victim and the results revealed that the male detective was portrayed as insensitive to the victim's mental state by not providing protection or support, his only aim was looking for evidence, merely work and showing no empathy, while the female detective was portrayed as sensitive and aware to the mental state of the victim; showing the factors that influence the female detective to help the woman rape victim, the female detective characteristics as showed in the series are self-confidence, empathy for women, protestant work ethics that include hard work, individualism, and honesty, and her faith as her main motivation to work. The series also showed the heroine as on empowered woman who also empowers others, having the ability to achieve accomplishments in her life. She was able to work in a male-dominated police department, work better than other male detectives while having the ability to fulfill her family's needs without depending on her husband. One of the most important aspects that were mentioned in the analysis of this series was that the female detective succeeded in the balanced role of being a wife, mother, and professional detective through how she does housework, takes care of her children, and keeps being professional at work (Dewi & Rustipa, 2022).

Yünkül & Aycan, (2023) analyzed in their study the series *"Club",* Netflix's original content where the portrayal of the female character was strong, knowing exactly what she wants. Despite that some of the traditional female representations were found such as women trying to stand on their own feet. In addition to other problems created by patriarchy, topics such as motherhood, violence, harassment, and sexist division of labor also find a place in this narrative. In contrast to the traditional stereotype, there was an attempt to give women a new identity in the narrative, by situations that create a positive break from the traditional stereotypes, which was aligned by a study by Biga, (2023) that examined two Turkish series *"Hükümsüz"* released on the Exxen platform in 2021, and *"Mezarlık",* released on Netflix in 2022, and results of the study highlighted the solidarity among women. Women's organizations interviews however, revealed that while these series challenge traditional thinking of women, they do not inherently carry a feminist discourse and that the strengthening of the women's movement has a crucial role in advancing gender equality and women's rights in

society and they don't have a strong role in reshaping media representations, as well as the feminist political stance of the women's movement in the series portrayal.

Another study was conducted by Akaydin Aydin & Koç, (2024), on Turkish drama streamed on Blu TV, which was ranked as the most watched streaming platform in Turkey in 2023, followed by Netflix. The results of the study revealed that the female characters of two series (*"Magarsus"* and *"How Do I Fill This Emptiness?"*) were structurally different from the characters that appear in traditional television series. Females portrayed on streaming platforms are at the forefront with their different professions, sexuality, and power, either they are ballerinas, writers, cleaners, or the head of a traditional family, the female characters are portrayed as free and independent. The study is based on the argument that the serial content of digital platforms is more independent and the fiction of characters is more conflict-based.

The Spanish drama is no exception as been stated by Ramos & Gonzalez-De-Garay, (2021) that previous research on the Spanish drama presented on prime TV has detected underrepresentation and stereotyping of women; therefore they conducted a research to assess either this underrepresentation of women is still encounter in the VOD streaming platforms, 760 characters were analyzed from different series on different platforms like Netflix, Movistar, HBO, Amazon Prime and Atres Player Premium, and the results revealed that even though new streaming platforms tend to incorporate equality, the underrepresentation and stereotyping of female characters in terms of professional occupation, family, and emotions still exist, despite that there are more women than men with personal goals related to their private lives and interpersonal relationships, the TV characters with work-oriented goals are mostly men (Ramos & Gonzalez-De-Garay, 2021).

The spread and the high exposure to the foreign culture that is different than the Arabic culture will indeed affect the perception of the audience; As for the impact of streaming platforms on the basics of cultural identity, a study by Eid, (2020), regarding university youth's exposure to dramatic works presented on platforms stated that about 70% of the youth mentioned that the impact of platforms on the value system is large and high; Negativity came first, and the most important negative behaviors are: violence, the spread of negative behaviors such as smoking and drug use, and the works also contain words that do not fit the customs of Arab society, and their heroes often resort to lying, and they call for liberation from family relationships. Another study by Osman, (2021), which studied the impact of series presented on Netflix concluded that the most negative values   presented by the series are family disintegration, depression, frustration, homosexuality, and marital infidelity, which agreed with a study conducted by Mohamed & Kamal, (2020) on the impact of binge-watching Netflix content on the value structure of society; where it confirmed that the Netflix platform changes the value system of society, which is a very dangerous matter that affects the behaviors of society. These results were aligned by Meng, (2018) study that found that the impact of American online series on the perception of reality and values   in China and stated that most of the sample members confirmed that watching American television series in China can cause the erosion of Chinese culture.

Netflix started releasing its original productions in the Arab world as many studies reported that the Arab audience prefer the American content over the Arabic one. A study by Eid (2022) on the patterns of Egyptian youth watching dramatic content on streaming platform stated that youth stressed that they prefer to watch international and American series more than watching Arab and Egyptian series, and that the entry of some exclusive companies to streaming platforms such as Netflix into the field of drama production in the Arab world affected the content provided.

- Regional Streaming Platforms

Feminists and media scholars have a common belief that women portrayal in television is mostly negative and the effect of television is huge on the general image of women (Auter, 2010; Hess & Grant, 1983; Soliman, 2021). A study by Soliman, (2021) studied the series in two countries, Egypt and Spain. The Spanish series portrayed females as empowermed despite that they were mostly framed within lower income and social classes, which reflects the economic need, the female leading characters were encouraged from an individual motivation, getting rid of the superior male. On the other hand, the Egyptian series portrayed the limitation of women within their social roles as wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters still prevailing, however, when a female lead actress is portrayed as an independent person, the narrative reduces her journey to a stereotypical social role by representing motherhood or giving the motive of breaking a social taboo. It can be said that Egyptian drama is a portrayal of the Egyptian society and its development. The Arab Women Development Report (1995-2005) analyzed 23 studies found that 78.68% of women portrayal on Arab television were negative, as it implies that most of women images in Arab media reinforce negative stereotypes, which can lead to damaging consequences for how the Arab societies view and treat women (Allam, 2008).

On the other hand, subscribed streaming platforms brought another vision and more of a foreign culture and background, adopting new and western ideas and cultures, as the study by Hamdallah (2021) on the influence of the Shahid platform on cultural values in streaming drama examined a purposeful sample of series produced by Shahid platform, including *The 77 Rules of Divorce* قواعد الطلاق الاربعون. It found that the value of Western liberation was the most prevalent value that emerged in the informal relationships depicted in the series. As for the variations in the dramatic versions based on the national culture, Kamal's (2020) study on the analysis of value systems in dramatic series on paid streaming platforms sought to monitor and analyze the values presented in the foreign series *Jane the Virgin* and its Egyptian version *Miss Farah* الانسة فرح. It also compared these values to the dominant social and cultural value; and concluded that the two-drama series presented a set of forbidden and suspicious relationships that may be consistent with the nature of American society while being entirely different from Arab society's values. The results also revealed the following: On Shahid, family bonding as a key to preserving cultural identity was the dominant theme (60%), while on Netflix, the negative impact of modern technology and social media on identity pride was prominent (41.7%). Emotional appeals were the most common narrative path, followed by a combination of emotional and rational appeals, both platforms emphasized social frameworks in their content, and active characters were present in all episodes. The primary causes of identity destabilization were identified as the absence of family (48.6%) and cultural openness (40.5%), while the greatest challenges were seen as the loss of control over youth (56.8%) and the weakening role of socialization institutions like family and school (54.1%), which take the lead to new ideologies and new perspective to be dominated by the streaming platforms and the women representation is no exception where women are empowered, strong and independent and that changes the dramatic narrative of women portrayal.

Discussion

This paper reviewed many studies that analyzed how SVOD drama represented gender roles, especially in the new and recent productions. Many studies suggested that the new content is more likely to break the traditional gender role stereotypes, also knock the doors on taboos, which in turn reflects on the significance of the study as new generations are hugely influenced by the internet and digitalization. Different research stated that young generations are heavily influenced by gender role portrayal in the media, (Coyne et al., 2016). New generations often embrace gender fluidity and rejects rigid gender binaries; which reflects on their choices on what to watch. They are more likely to lean towards the narratives and the characters that break or challenge traditional gender roles (Anderson & Jiang, 2018), this is where the importance of this research stems from, as media scholars and drama makers should consider the influence of the SVOD content on the perception of the younger generations; especially that they are exposed to different ideologies from international content presented on international streaming platforms.

The usage of the Egyptian youth of the digital platforms is considered to be high intensity. The platforms content has a number of positive effects like learning about other cultures for example and negative effects like the fact that the content presented contradicts with the values, customs and traditions of the Egyptian society. (El-Banna, 2021). In research by Umara, (2022) which measured the impact of Netflix on Egyptian youth, the participants agreed that some people have suicidal thoughts like it was portrayed on Netflix with 53%, and 46% have same sexual behaviors like it was portrayed on Netflix and 45% acted violently like Netflix portrayed; the study concluded that 78% of Egyptian youth believe that Netflix can influence people's perceptions on controversial topics such as suicide and homosexuality.

Hence, the Egyptian new generations are affected by the content presented on different SVOD that is presenting counter-stereotyped gender roles; which may have a positive effect to achieve gender equality and give women more opportunity in a male-dominated society, and achieve number five of sustainable development goals. On the other hand, SVOD is changing the watching habits of the users, a new concern also in the media research is binge watching, as a viewing behavior, as in 2013 Netflix released a whole season at once which resulted in a change in the watching habits and viewing behavior (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020). Binge watching can have negative effects like lack of control and behavioral addiction along with negative effects on health (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020).

Finally, gender equality and equal work opportunities can guarantee the balanced representation for both genders, portraying the reality and the capabilities of both genders, and alternatively, balanced equal society where males and females are respected and gaining their rights in the society.

Conclusion

To conclude, this research aims to understand how media scholars are paying attention to the gender role portrayal in the subscribed video on demand services where the younger generations are directed and attracted to; new productions are presenting new ideologies as a part of the fourth feminism wave that we are living in. After reviewing different studies that analyzed the gender role in the SVOD; the new produced content is more likely to break the stereotypes and change the taboos to be familiar to the new generations; New generations are hugely influenced by the internet and

digitalization, Media plays an important role in shaping new generations' mentality including their gender role perception.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

The research's **limitations**; that there weren't enough studies that analyzed the gender roles especially in the Arabic drama production, most of the studies studied the Egyptian identity and the value system of the Egyptian society or different ideologies like homosexuality and their effect on the perception of the society. Also, there weren't clear and concise traits for toxic femininity or toxic masculinity to assess the portrayal of men and women.

Recommendations for future research to analyze the new original productions by the streaming platforms and to assess whether the gender of the producer, director and writer would change the agenda setting of the new productions of the SVOD or whether it's the vision of the platform. Also, more studies can be applied on the Egyptian new generations, starting from Gen Z and forward to Gen Alpha; especially that this generation are exposed to the ai world, to assess their watching habits their internet usage and the influence of the content they are exposed to on their perception and attitudes, and finally, measure the awareness level of the drama makers, to assess if they are influenced by the feminism movements and the gender equality vision, that would contribute to the content produced.

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