'Today I break my silence': Perspectivization in Egyptian women's stories on sexual assaults[(*)]

Aya Ahmed El Shafei
Assistant Lecturer - Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Arts - Cairo University

Abstract

Combatting gender-based violence and sexual harassment has been at the core of cyberactivism in post-revolutionary Egypt. Numerous studies have focused on the 25 January 2011 Revolution and the role of technology-mediated tools, both in driving the events and empowering many silenced women to find their voice and stand up to their sexual aggressors. Expanding on this, the present paper aims to explore the ways in which survivors of sexual violence are developing online strategies for assessing and acting upon allegations of sexual assault. It investigates the discursive construction of the 'survivor' identity in 15 online stories on sexual violence posted by Egyptian women between 2020-2023. Using a discourse-historical approach, the study examines the linguistic choices employed by the female survivors in their self-presentation alongside their male perpetrators in the light of the discursive strategy of perspectivization. Although the findings reveal that the 'survivor' is predominantly portrayed as a weak and vulnerable participant, pressured by the abuser, feelings of shame and passiveness of society, some narratives depict more resilient women who are willing to challenge the victim-blaming culture, reflecting a shift in women's understanding of gender roles and behaviors. The analysis also identifies other social actors who contribute to exacerbating the survivors' struggle, such as the survivors' families and witnesses. The work advances the developing area of digital feminism research and adds to the limited research that explores sexual violence discourse in contemporary Egyptian society.

Keywords: sexual violence, social media, Egyptian female survivors, women's narratives, discourse-historical approach

اليوم أكسر صمتي": منظور الراوية في قصص النساء المصريات عن الاعتداء الجنسي

الملخص

تعتبر مكافحة العنف القائم على النوع الاجتماعي والتحرش الجنسي من القضايا الأساسية التي تبنتها المقاومة السيبرانية فى مصر منذ ثورة يناير. وقد ركزت العديد من الدراسات على الثورة ودور التكنولوجيا في دفع الأحداث وتمكين العديد من النساء لإبراز أصواتهن والوقوف في وجه المعتدين عليهن. وبناءً على ذلك، يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف الطرق التي تتبناها الناجيات من العنف الجنسي لتطوير استراتيجيات عبر الإنترنت لتصوير الاعتداء الجنسي. ويتناول البحث البناء الخطابي لهوية "الناجية" في ١٥ قصة عن العنف الجنسي نشرتها نساء مصريات عبر مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي بين عامي ٢٠٢٠-٢٠٢٣. باستخدام المدخل الخطابي التاريخي، تقوم الدراسة بتحليل الخيارات اللغوية التي تستخدمها الناجيات في تصوير أنفسهن وكذلك المعتدي الجنسي. على الرغم من أن النتائج تكشف عن تصوير الناجية كطرف ضعيف وهش بشكل عام بسبب ضغط المعتدي وإحساس العار وسلبية المجتمع، إلا أن بعض القصص تُظهر نساءً أكثر صمودًا، مستعدات لتحدي ثقافة لوم الضحية، مما يعكس تحولًا في فهم النساء للأدوارالجندرية والسلوكيات المرتبطة بالنوع الاجتماعي. كما أظهرت نتائج البحث عنصرين آخرين يسهمان في تفاقم معاناة الناجيات، مثل دور عائلاتهن وشهود الواقعة. تعزز هذه الدراسة مجال البحث في النسوية الرقمية كما أنها تضيف إلى الدراسات اللغوية المحدودة التي تستكشف خطاب العنف الجنسي في المجتمع المصري المعاصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العنف الجنسي، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الناجيات المصريات، روايات النساء، المدخل الخطابي التاريخي

1   Introduction

Violence against women (VAW) has been reported worldwide as a serious public health problem and a violation of women's human rights. Estimates published by the WHO indicate that globally about 1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO 2021). Considering the African region, Egypt can be seen as one local context that bears a high percentage of (sexual) violence against women. In 2013 a study by UN Women suggested that 99.3% of Egyptian women had been sexually harassed, either verbally or physically (*Egypt Serial Sex Attacks*, 2020). Many have tied this to the wider political conditions of the country, especially in post-2011 revolutionary Egypt where sexual violence is believed to have been used as a weapon by the state to discourage women activists from political participation (e.g. El-Rifae, 2014). Others have linked the phenomenon to the intertwining socio-economic factors facing the country, such as poverty, unemployment, late marriage, as well as impunity, leading to the aggravation of many of the problems afflicting Egyptian society (e.g. Kassab and Mamdouh, 2012). In a society that tends to blame the victim rather than the abuser, the struggle of women in reporting sexual assault remains a problem.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to explore how Egyptian women use online spaces to construct their identities as 'survivors' in their digital narratives posted on social media platforms as one of the 'public' spheres. It comes as a continuation of the scholarly attempts to understand how social media can act as alternative outlets for female survivors to speak up about their experiences of sexual violence (SV). More specifically, the study seeks to explore the strategies they use to respond to the rape/victim-blaming culture that is still prevalent in the Egyptian society. This is done by examining the linguistic choices employed by women in their self-presentation as well as for the representation of their perpetrators in their personal stories on sexual assaults. Accordingly, this paper addresses the following main research question:

    1.   *How are the narratives of sexual assaults focalized through the*

perspective of Egyptian women survivors?

To answer the posed research question, I analyze the women's narratives qualitatively using the discourse-historical approach (DHA), a branch of critical discourse analysis (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, 2009; Wodak, 1986, 2001, 2015) that aims to "reveal and demystify power structures from the perspective of those who suffer" (Wodak, 2008, p. 2). These personal accounts are explored in terms of perspectivization, one of the discursive strategies which are involved in the constructions of identities (the survivors), of the 'other' (the sexual assaulters), and of the events in general (sexual harassment, rape, blackmail and so on).

In this paper, first I introduce the socio-cultural context in Egypt with respect to the local views around sex and sexuality, and the struggle of women in reporting SV. Second, I discuss the potentialities of online technology and particularly women's social media/digitized narratives as an emerging model of resistance or 'counter-publics' (Fraser, 1990, p. 61). Third, I provide an overview of literature that has sought to understand survivor online disclosures, and potential motivations for sharing experiences of SV online. Then, I describe the analytical framework used in my research as well as the data and methodology employed. Finally, I present the results and discussion of my data.

1.1 Women's position in the public sphere and the 'unspeakability' of SV: A socio-cultural perspective

The term 'public sphere' is defined by Habermas (1989) as a deliberative space between the state and society in which individuals come together as citizens in order to discuss and identify societal problems, and accordingly, influence political action. Historically, women's participation in this sphere has been rigorously defined (Fraser, 1990). Salter (2013) argues that in 'old media', normative structures or rules set by the state, that are implicitly masculine, had to be followed by social actors upon their entry into the public debate, resulting in a form of inequality and social structures. These male-oriented structures or rules have led to the exclusion of women from the public sphere, since their concerns and experiences were seen as

'trivial' or regarded as a 'private' matter that did not fit into public discussion (Pateman, 1988; Salter, 2013). As a result, reporting of women's allegations of SV was either neglected or questioned (Benedict, 1992). Their experiences would simply fall under the category of 'unspeakable things' (Penny, 2014).

The idea that SV is an 'unspeakable' experience has been maintained and perpetuated in different socio-cultural contexts. Loney-Howes (2018) explains that the law and clinical understandings of trauma and social norms impose elements of rape's (un)speakability in the sense that there are hegemonic "scripts" governing the ways victims can articulate rape and rape trauma. For instance, there are some modes of "authenticity" of rape/rape victim including signs of violence, victimization, coercion, innocence and trauma. In that sense, Loney-Howes (2018) views trauma as a social construct insofar as victims of unspeakable violence are expected to articulate their experiences in certain ways. Thus, there are embedded and codified perceptions not only of 'what' traumatic experiences ought to look like but also 'how' one should speak of them. Accordingly, claims that do not align neatly with these discourses are often viewed as illegitimate both socially and within the criminal justice system (Loney-Howes, 2018). For Egyptian women, this 'illegitimacy' of speaking up about their experiences can be seen in a similar light. Yet, their struggle of reporting SV requires a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural views around sex and sexuality.

In a society that prescribes distinct gender roles to men and women, "Egyptian men are not brought up to realize the gravity of sexual harassment, in the same manner that they learn to perceive the seriousness of crimes like theft or murder." (Ibrahim, 2022, p. 162). Sexual harassment might even be seen as a show of power, or a form of punishment for women who do not conform to societal expectations on how a woman should behave in public (Ezzelarab, 2014). This entails dressing, living and behaving in a certain way that should be abiding to 'normative' social traditions. In consequence, women who defy these patriarchal societal norms or deviate from 'appropriate' ways of being and appearing in public space are frequently subjected to policing,

disciplining, or reprimanding by strangers and onlookers who are mostly men (Elmeligy, 2021). In February 2012, General Adel Afifi, one member of the Shura Council, Egypt's legislative body, blamed women for one of the mob assaults in Tahrir. He stated that "women contribute 100 percent in their rape because they put themselves in such circumstances" (*Egypt: Epidemic of Sexual,* 2013). His statement epitomizes the deeply rooted patriarchal views and victim-blaming culture that has greatly influenced official discourse around sexual assault.

Another relevant case is the one dubbed by the Egyptian media as the 'TikTok girls' that took place in 2020 and ironically turned into a 'matter of public concern'. Two women were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for violating "family principles and values upheld by Egyptian society" by posting "indecent" videos and images (Columbia Global Freedom of Expression, 2021). Authorities stated that the arrests were initially prompted by the women's appearance, choice of dress and dance moves. This case was questioned by feminist supporters who argued against the convictions, since the Public Prosecution criminalized 'citizens' based on their appearance (*Digital Campaign Supports TikTok,* 2020). This, in turn, echoes the aforementioned views around the hegemonic "scripts" governing the ways women speak and behave, which results in the 'illegitimacy' of their discourses on the one hand – if they wish to defend themselves – and the legitimization of gender biases in other democratic institutions, on the other hand, such as the criminal justice system (Salter, 2013).

The imposition of purity norms on women and girls from a young age further complicates the situation in Egypt. Youssef (2006), for example, argues that in Egyptian and Arab cultures in general, virginity is a symbol of "the girl's faithfulness toward her longed-for husband" and a proof of her capability of safeguarding herself and her reputation until her wedding night. It follows that premarital sex is generally condemned in the Egyptian society where virginity is traditionally associated with honor, whereas sex outside marriage is associated with shame and moral laxity (Ibrahim, 2022). Thus, a woman's chastity defines her honor, and by extension the honor of her family. This

established image of the 'model woman' in the Egyptian culture is contrasted with the image of the male chauvinist, who perceives sexual harassment as 'harmless fun' and a perk that comes with the job of being a 'man'.

Therefore, the problem arising in the Egyptian context is that when women are exposed to sexual harassment or become victims of sexual assault, they become shamed and blamed by society. Consequently, "if a woman is raped, she is stigmatized and no longer marriageable" (Haddad, 2017). The issue that emerges from purity culture, then, is that it leaves women burdened with the responsibility of their own safety from SV, as well as the responsibility of upholding the behavior of men by ensuring that they do not "tempt" them. It is not surprising, then, that women in Egypt find it difficult to take action against their perpetrators. Although many forms of sexual assault are now punishable under the new Anti-Sexual Harassment Law introduced in 2014, criminalizing sexual harassment for the first time in the country (*Egypt Brings in New,* 2014), many survivors still do not report sexual crimes either because they are embarrassed, humiliated, or scared of social stigma.

It is important to mention, however, that refraining from reporting sexual assault is a common phenomenon that is not just restricted to the Egyptian context. The 2016 analysis of violent crime by the American Justice Department reported that "80% of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported for reasons such as fear of retaliation – not just from the perpetrator, but from society at large, and distrust of the police" (Kimble and Chettiar, 2018). From a psychological perspective, these experiences can result in confusion and shock, often leading to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a type of trauma internalized as a coping mechanism and can take time to make sense of what has happened, and thus, incidents would go unreported (Stollznow, 2021).

1.2 Digitised narratives of SV: An emergent model of resistance

In response to their exclusions in the public sphere, women have

generated 'counter-publics', that is, subaltern discursive networks and sites, in order to elaborate 'alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech' (Fraser, 1990, p. 61). Feminist media researchers have described the range of means employed by women to create these female publics, including publishing houses (Murray, 1998), community radio (Mitchell, 1998), and 'zines' or self-published magazines (Zobl, 2004). These counter-publics also found their way into the Arab world through TV channels (Matar, 2007), and later through literary blogs (Elsadda, 2010). However, analysts believe that the traditional forms of counter-publics have been hindered by cultural (re)production and resisted by the one-directional nature of 'old media' technologies, such as television, radio and newspaper (Habermas, 1989; Warner, 2002).

The development of new media technologies such as the Internet has restored the 'possibility of response' denied by 'old media' platforms (Salter, 2013), disseminating alternative modes of understanding and responding to gender-based violence. Emerging online responses to SV include the use of social media to collect and publish evidence and punish abusers. Arguably, the most significant movement online to expose SV against women was *#MeToo*. The movement was considered the largest on social media in 2017 and has inspired other international responses since then, such as *QuellaVoltaChe* in Italy, and *Ana Kaman* in the Arab world (Fahmy and Ibrahim, 2021).

Some notable online responses to SV in Egypt are illustrative. On 1 July 2020, a seemingly ordinary Instagram account named 'reportabz' was created anonymously but later revealed as led by an Egyptian girl named Nadeen, a 22-years-old student at the American University in Cairo (AUC). The account featured a photo of a young man (initials A.B.Z.), a former AUC student, and accused him of being a sexual predator. The account 'reportabz' was later renamed 'Assault Police' and has been active to this day. Though it started with a single case, 'Assault Police' shifted its focus later to include new cases, such as the 'Fairmont gang rape case' (*Witnesses Arrested and Intimidated,* 2021).

Other movements and digital initiatives created to address

everyday SV on the Egyptian streets include HARASSmap (2010) (Loney-Howes *et al.*, 2022), 'Speak Up' and 'Al-modawana', among others. All these online initiatives come as a natural extension to offline social resistance and as a new attempt by feminist activists to shed light on SV. They belong to a broader tradition of digital feminism that not only aim at providing a space for victims to tell their stories but also to chart out advocacy work aiming to change laws in Egypt (Marzouk and Vanderveen, 2021). Even more recently, 'Speak Up' has expanded its focus on feminist issues to advocate for purely political causes, such as calling for humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Israel-Gaza War and condemning their 'collective punishment' by the Israeli Forces[1].

2   Previous studies

Previous studies on sexual violence narratives have tackled the potentialities of online technology to serve as a platform for counter-public expression through which girls and women have developed alternative routes to representation and participation in the public sphere, and thus, disseminating counter-hegemonic discourses (e.g. Marzouk and Vanderveen, 2021; Ibrahim, 2022). Some scholars have investigated the role of social media in responding to rape culture (Keller *et al.,* 2018; Mendes *et al.,* 2019). Others have explored what online spaces can offer in terms of providing survivors of rape with alternative modes of justice outside the boundaries of the law (Loney-Howes, 2018; Salter, 2013).

Building on Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere and Fraser's (1990) related critiques, Salter (2013) examines three case studies in which girls and women have used various online platforms to make extrajudicial allegations of SV and abuse. He observes that while these counter-publics are considered as a violation in 'old media' and legal contexts, they are received differently in online contexts in the sense that these understandings are circulated in ways that can directly influence traditional media coverage and court rulings. However, Salter points out that not all girls and women seem to have equal access to the

---

1   https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=648036770810134&set=pb.100068
   114493000.-2207520000

support of online networks and activists, as it appears that some cases need to meet certain criteria of 'newsworthiness' based on age and appearance of the victim. Therefore, although these media technologies have restored women's 'responses' denied by 'old media' platforms, they can still be (re)producing other forms of cultural biases (Salter, 2013).

Another study by Loney-Howes (2018) investigates how survivors of rape use online spheres (including blogs, social media content) to challenge the victimization rhetoric of the traditional "rape script". In her analysis, the author contends that the survivors incorporate more diverse accounts of rape that would typically not be defined as rape in the criminal justice system or recognized as such within particular socio-cultural discourses. Moreover, challenging such perspectives is further enabled through a system of 'peer-to-peer' witnessing which enables survivors not only to establish solidarity and recognition but more importantly to have their experiences validated by peers. According to Loney-Howes, this can be achieved through commenting on blog posts, reblogging or sharing on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and also through 'slaktivist' techniques, such "liking" or "retweeting" posts.

Cyberactivism has also been studied in the local Egyptian context. For instance, Marzouk and Vanderveen (2021) explore how Instagram-based account 'Assault Police', created by feminist activists, uses the tools of social media to name and shame (alleged) perpetrators in their testimonies. Through the concept of 'framing', the authors analyze photos posted by the account between July 2020 and January 2021 to understand the development of the account campaign. Their findings reveal the ability of 'Assault Police' to adapt and evolve not only regarding the framing of claims but also according to the nature of the medium they use. This is done through the range of visual aids employed to build their claims about SV against women, including memes, screenshots and artwork. This highlights the novel means through which female publics have evolved and acted as an agent for social and legal change locally and internationally.

Along the same lines, Ibrahim (2022) argues that the spread of

women's narratives on social media is a major reason behind changing legislations in Egypt. In her research, Ibrahim focuses particularly on the collected evidence against ABZ at the time of the allegations. Through a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, she examines 100 narratives posted in June 2020 on the same Instagram account, 'Assault Police'. Her findings show that the male abuser is generally constructed as the active agent while the female victims as acted upon. However, according to Ibrahim, this does not deny the positive impact of the women's stories that have indeed resulted in a push for an amendment to Egyptian law in 2021, placing harsher penalties on crimes relating to sexual harassment and concealing the identity of victims (Oak 2021). In contrast, El-Tantawy (2023) examines the broader impact and effectiveness of 'Assault Police' cyberactivism, and analyzes its expanded focus on the two major rape cases of ABZ and the Fairmont Case. She contends that, despite the fact that online platforms have significantly enhanced the visibility of violence against women in Egypt, allowing them to bypass traditional media censorship and societal taboos, there are considerable challenges, such as online harassment and backlash from conservative segments in society, which can still hinder the process of translating such digital activism into legal reform in Egypt.

Though the above studies demonstrate the successes and limitations of cyberactivism in shaping public discourse and influencing legislative changes, still there is little available research on the ways in which survivors of SV in Egypt are developing online strategies for assessing and acting upon allegations of sexual assault. In other words, most of the studies that have addressed the topic in the Egyptian context (e.g. El-Elemi *et al*., 2011; Sharaf El-Din *et al.,* 2015) have focused on data 'about' female survivors rather than 'by' female survivors. In a society where gender hierarchy is significant, these issues are expected to be presented differently than in the "Western" world. Additionally, the fast-growing impact of the social media on the socio-cultural understandings and the legal outcomes of SV might be reflected differently when investigating more diverse accounts online. By analyzing the 'collective' conceptualizations of other Egyptian

women vs. their perpetrators, different results might be obtained, especially when including narratives within a broader time span, which is what the present study aims to do.

Accordingly, the present research aims to understand how social media can provide Egyptian survivors with alternative modes of justice as well as to understand the strategies they use to respond to the victim-blaming culture. The data prescribed in this paper are derived from a chapter in my doctoral thesis, which seeks to investigate two different spaces in the public sphere: social media narratives and Egyptian news reports, around the legislative moment of passing the Anti-Sexual Harassment Law in 2014, criminalizing the act for the first time in the country's history. Examining how Egyptian survivors construct social realities in this context will enable us to understand how the position of women in the public sphere might be changing, how the normative structures are challenged and transformed in the Egyptian society, and later in my dissertation, how this transformation might be reflected in the depiction of women in the broader institutionalized public sphere.

3   Methodology
3.1 The Discourse-historical approach (DHA)

The discourse-historical approach (DHA) in critical discourse analysis (CDA), created by Wodak and her colleagues, is an influential approach that highlights the relations between the Self and Other (KhosraviNik, 2015). In accordance with other approaches devoted to CDA, the DHA perceives both written and spoken language as a form of social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). It considers discourse to be socially constructed and socially constitutive, that is, it both constructs social practices and is, at the same time, constructed by them.

The explanatory nature to CDA, which aims to understand social phenomena through the analysis of discourse (KhosraviNik, 2015), is taken a step further in the DHA. Generally, the DHA attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the social and political contexts in which discursive 'events' are embedded (Wodak, 2001). Further, it explores the ways in

which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change, and thus, adding a historical dimension. Lastly, it integrates social theories to be able to explain context. Thus, the concept of context is an inherent part of the DHA, which involves the analysis of the linguistic text, along with the intertextual and interdiscursive relations to other texts and discourses, the situational context, and the historical and sociopolitical conditions in which the text or speech is embedded. While focusing on all these levels and layers of meaning, researchers explore how discourses, genres, and texts change in relation to sociopolitical change.

Considering the analytical tools involved in the discursive construction and representation of identities, the DHA has identified five discursive strategies that are common within discourse, namely nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and mitigation or intensification (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001, 2009; Wodak, 2015). A 'strategy' is defined as "a more or less intentional plan of practices (including discursive practices), adopted in order to achieve a particular social, political, psychological, or linguistic goal" (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009, p. 94). These discursive strategies are oriented to five main questions:

    1.   How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically?

    2.   What characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events, and processes?

    3.   What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?

    4.   From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?

    5.   Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or mitigated?

For the sake of space, the present study selects one of these strategies, as shown in Table 1 below, to analyze the narratives, with a particular focus on perspectivization, corresponding to question 4 above. I have

chosen this strategy to be in line with my research aim, which is to explore the inner conceptualizations of the narrators and how their stories are focalized through their perspective. Thus, the analysis investigates one aspect of the survivors' identity constructions within the narratives.

Table 1

Discursive strategy selected for analysis*

Strategy	Objective	Devices
Perspectivization, framing, or discourse representation	Positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance	• deictics • direct, indirect or free indirect speech • quotation marks, discourse markers/particles • metaphors • other
*Adapted from Reisigl and Wodak (2009, p. 95)		

4 Data and methods

4.1 Corpus design and ethical issues

The study deals with the narratives of victims of rape, sexual harassment and blackmail posted on social media platforms. The data were collected manually from Facebook and Instagram, as these two platforms are the most commonly used by Egyptians (according to a survey conducted by *Statista²* in May, 2022). They are also a rich source of stories on SV that have emerged, following the *#MeToo* movement that started back in 2006, yet found its way to Egypt years later. The Egyptian social media anti-sexual violence campaigns have flourished since 2020 with the famous ABZ case that took place in the same year.

---

2 https://www.statista.com/statistics/1263755/social-media-users-by-platform-in-egypt/

The data include 15 narratives, selected based on their content and length (each consisting of 500-1000 words). These narratives were posted between 2020-2023 on three of the major anti-sexual violence pages: 1) *Assault Police*[3], 2) *Speak Up*[4] اتكلم/ى and 3) *Al-modawana*[5] دفتر حكايات, where hundreds of Egyptian women have shared their experiences of SV either anonymously or with their revealed identities. The data include English and Arabic texts, which were noticeably the two main languages used by the Egyptian survivors in their posts.

'Public' posts published directly through personal accounts were also included in the corpus, that is, posts by users who willingly chose to turn on the 'public sharing' option by changing their privacy setting from 'Friends Only' to 'Everyone'. According to D'Arcy and Young (2012, p. 541), this step "entails making personal content – otherwise protected within the confines of the site – 'public'", which means that everybody on or off the platform is allowed to view their posts. However, in my data examination, I have anonymized these public narratives to protect the privacy of the personal accounts, though in some instances I might refer to the fact that some of the narratives had 'named' users. I have collected these posts by tracing the hashtags relevant to the topic of sexual assault and harassment – similar to *#MeToo* – such as ماتسكتيش# ('speak up') and التحرش_جريمة# ('sexual harassment is a crime').

4.2 Procedures of analysis

Analyzing the corpus was done in three main steps. First, I categorized the narratives thematically based on the recurring topics in the narratives (See Tables 2-4 below). Second, I carried out an in-depth analysis of the corpus by selecting extracts from the narratives that illustrate the thematic categorization in the earlier step – with respect to

---

3 https://www.instagram.com/assaultpolice/
4https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=speak%20up%20%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%84%D9%85%2F%D9%8A
5 https://www.facebook.com/daftarhekayat/

the construction of the 'self' and the perpetrator – and identifying the discursive devices pertaining to perspectivization, as well as the lexical and grammatical choices involved in relation to the social actors. In the third step, the linguistic choices were discussed and explained in relation to the context of the narratives.

5   Results and discussion

A preliminary analysis of the data indicates that there are topics that are commonly raised in the 15 narratives under investigation; some examples include verbal and online harassment, blackmail and threat, shame and honor, as well as the role of the family. Tables 2-4 below describe the key notions involved in the construction of the male assaulter (Table 2), of the female survivor (Table 3) and of other social actors in the stories (Table 4).

Table 2

Thematic division of narratives on Facebook & Instagram accounts (male assaulter)

Category	*Verbal harassment*	*Online harassment*	*Physical assault*	*Odd behavior*	*Blackmail & threat*
No. of occurrences in narratives	3	4	8	2	4

Table 3

Thematic division of narratives on Facebook & Instagram accounts (female survivor)

Category	*Shame & honor*	*Clothing*	*'Post sharing' as a means of*

			support/empowerment
No. of occurrences in narratives	5	7	8

Table 4			
Thematic division of narratives on Facebook & Instagram accounts (other social actors)			
Category	*Family*	*Law/Legal authorities*	*(Passive) witnesses/ Bystanders*
No. of occurrences in narratives	8	7	3

As expected in stories on SV, Table 2 describes various forms of actions by the abuser, all of which fall under sexual assault as a crime. These actions range from 'odd behavior', 'verbal harassment' to 'actual physical assault', which has the highest number of occurrences (8 out of 15 narratives), followed by 'blackmail and threat' (4) and 'online harassment' (4), whereas 'odd behavior' only recurs twice in the narratives.

Table 3 shows other key notions related to the construction of the survivors. Ranked first, 'post sharing' (in 8 out of 15 stories) is seen by the survivors as their main source of empowerment on social media through which they can open up, expose their harassers, raise awareness, seek advice from their peers, and more. Though the idea of 'shame and honor' still exists among sexual assault survivors, as the Table shows, it is only brought up in 5 out of the 15 narratives under investigation. The fact that this notion is contested in some narratives

can suggest the growing awareness among women of their status as 'victims' rather than 'partners in crime'. Yet, it can also indicate that the idea of bestowing 'family honor' to female bodies still exists in the Egyptian culture. Likewise, the relatively high number of occurrences of 'clothing' possibly points to the conservative socio-cultural view that links women's 'provocative' clothes to the behavior of the assaulter and considers their physical appearance or the way they dress as a reason for being harassed. Nonetheless, in some instances, survivors use this as a starting point to protest against the society's claim, and hence challenge their rape culture.

Table 4 introduces other participants, such as the narrator's family members, the (passive) bystanders witnessing the event, as well as the people of authority, such as the police officers, the lawmakers, the jurisdiction, especially when the survivors refer to legal actions taken (or not) against their aggressors. The relatively frequent mention of the 'Law or legal authorities' (7 occurrences) might also indicate the survivors' increasing awareness of their legal rights as citizens that have been violated by their predators. Additionally, Table 4 suggests that the role of the family in the survivors' experiences is at the core of their stories; they could be seen as a source of support in some instances, yet in other instances, as a source of fear, self-blame, guilt, and more violence (since family members can also be sexual/domestic abusers). Their representation is greatly tied to the concept of 'shame and honor'. Due to space constraints, I have only addressed some of these topics in the more detailed analysis below, focusing particularly on the representation of the survivors vs. their assaulters. Other social actors, such as the family members and the witnesses are briefly referred to in some examples.

5.1 Perspectivization: Into the inner world of the survivor

Perspectivization is one of the discursive strategies pertaining to the positioning of the speaker's or the writer's point of view that can express involvement or distance. All the narratives under investigation are focalized through the perspective of the survivors who use the first-

person narration. The first-person pronouns 'I', 'me', 'my' and their Arabic equivalents 'أنا ana' [I] and ى- [my], as in 'قرارى *my* decision' and 'حقى *my* right', are used throughout. Through first-person narration, readers are given direct access to the survivors' inner thoughts. As pointed out in Ibrahim (2022), the depiction of the survivors' perceptions and emotions is likely to prompt readers to connect with their experiences and, hence, to sympathize with the survivors rather than condemn them, as it fosters a deeper understanding of their suffering.

When giving an account of their assaulters' behavior, singular masculine third-person pronouns are used, such as the subject pronoun 'he' and its equivalent 'هو howa' in addition to the object pronoun 'him', and the possessive 'his'. The third-person plural is mostly used to refer to the 'family' collectively, the witnesses or the assaulter's supporters. The second-person pronouns 'you' and 'yours', as well as their Arabic equivalents, are usually used when turning to the readers (i.e., followers on social media) for various reasons. One of these is when the narrators urge other abused girls to break their silence, expose their harassers and raise awareness, as in the following example (the translations of the extracts are provided in square brackets):

(1) ان حد يلمس جسمك دي جريمة القانون بيعاقب عليها ف خدي حقك
عشان صدقيني مش حتهدي غير بكدة

> [that someone touches *your* body is a crime punished by the law, so stand up for *your* right because believe me, *you* will not be relieved otherwise.]

Addressing the audience is also observed when the narrators seek the support of their peers by requesting to 'share' their posted stories:

(2) محتاجة تساعدوني ... ساعدوني ننشر الفيديو ده ويتعاقب ونحمى
بناتنا وأخواتنا من التحرش

> [I need *you* to help me... Help me spread this video and punish him and protect our girls and sisters from harassment.]

Even though 'sharing' posts could be one of the 'low-impact' slaktivist

techniques used on social media, among others (e.g. 'liking', reblogging, 'retweeting'), according to Loney-Howes (2018), it can still be a form of solidarity and recognition among social media users, as this allows survivors to have their stories validated by peers (who could also be other survivors).

The following example is another instance of using the second person narration where the survivor blames her harasser and addresses him directly in her post, though the post could also be directed to all men approving of the harasser's misconduct and to the passive witnesses of the incident:

(3) انا على فكرة بنتك واختم ومراتك وامك . ازاى رضيت عليا تتحرش
بيا وتضربنى واللى حواليك بيتفرجوا

    [By the way, I'm *your* daughter, *your* sister, *your* wife, *your* mother. How could *you* accept harassing me and hitting me while everybody around was watching!]

By identifying herself as a daughter, a sister, a wife and a mother, the narrator is likely to arouse the readers' sympathy with her. These lexical choices in example (3) (and earlier in example 2: "our girls and sisters", along with the collective "our") establish a 'familial' kind of bonding with the audience. Thus, alternating between the first and second-person narrative is a way of connecting to the social media users by involving them in their posts. This positions the survivors at a very close distance with the readers, creating a kind of connectedness between them.

Switching between the direct and indirect speech is another strategy that enables the narrators to engage their readers and allow them to identify with their struggle. Though most of the survivors use indirect speech when reporting past events or the words of their abusers, in some instances the narrators quote the exact words of the assaulter and other participants when reporting the incident [italicized for reference]:

    (4) I had to make sure that the page wasn't hacked, so My cousin reached out to him and called him to ask wether the account

is hacked or not, His response was *"no it wasn't hacked"*, further more when my cousin confronted him…, He denied at first but then he admitted sending them saying that *"he was drunk and so what ?*

(5) فتحت لقيته بيقولي انه مش عارف يشغل شفرة الاسانسير .

[I opened (the door), then he told me he couldn't unlock the elevator code]

(5b) هو **انت** مش طالع بيها؟!

[Haven't *you* already used that code to come upstairs?!]

(5c) أصل السيكيورتي هو اللي عملهالي

['asl' [DM] it was the security man who helped *me* enter it]

(5d)= طب روح دلوقتي افتح الاسانسير حتلاقي أرقام وفوقها شاشة صغيرة حط الشفرة عليها حتصفر ودوس ٠ كدة اشتغلت.

[Ok, then go into the elevator and you will find numbers with a small screen on top on which you can enter the code then it will beep, then press 0 and it will work.]

(5e) راح فتح الاسانسير ودخل ايده قالي ماعملتش صوت

[So, *he* opened the elevator and inserted his hand, then told me it didn't work.]

The two extracts above illustrate how the narrator moves between the indirect and the direct speech. This instantly drags the reader into the actual conversation between the survivor and her harasser. Switching between the indirect and direct speech is signaled by the quotation marks (as in example 4) and by the change from the third-person '*he* told...' (in example 5a) to the second-person 'you' (in example 5b), both referring to the harasser. By integrating a second voice (of the abuser), the narrator creates a mental representation of the described situation, making it more vivid and perceptually engaging than the sole use of indirect speech (Eerland *et al.,* 2013). On another level, the direct speech allows the readers to interpret the scene more objectively, and hence, provides more convincing evidence regarding the condemnation of the assaulter.

In the Arabic example (5), the survivor reports on her conversation with a deliveryman right before he sexually harasses her inside her home elevator. In this extract, it is also noticeable that the narrator employs free indirect speech, through which the assaulter's voice is partly mediated by the voice of the survivor. This can be particularly seen in line 3 (5c), 'asl it was the security man …'. The free indirect speech frames the situation through the survivors' perception. By combining the first and third-person narration, the survivor presents the assaulter's voice through her own perspective. It is worth mentioning also that the Arabic discourse marker (DM) 'asl', used by the harasser, is a 'filler' in colloquial Arabic conversations. It can have a pragmatic function similar to that of the English 'in fact'/ 'actually' that is sometimes used in conversations, showing hesitation, or when pausing to think. In the present context, the DM 'asl' can have two pragmatic functions. On the one hand, it might indicate the confusion or the dishonesty of the harasser in response to the woman's earlier request for confirmation (in 5b). On the other hand, it might also reflect the sarcastic and critical tone of the narrator toward her harasser's unconvincing response (in 5c), given the fact that it is a reported story. That is, this DM might have been inserted by the narrator to enhance her sarcasm.

The use of the free indirect speech can also be spotted in the survivors' criticism of the voices of other participants, such as the abuser's potential supporters, or the bystanders [underlined for reference]:

(6)بس دلوقتي حقي راح، حقي وحق كل ست هتتأذي في المستقبل من الرجالة اللي أذوني أو رجالة غيرهم شافوا إن عادي ممكن ننتهك عرض واحدة ست في الشارع والكاميرات تصورنا وبردو نطلع براءة!

[but now I've lost my right, my own right and the right of every woman that will be in danger in the future because of those men who assaulted me or because of other men who believed that it is normal, *we* can sexually abuse women on the streets, and *we* can be caught on camera and *still* be declared unguilty!]

(7) والدنيا اتلمت وكانوا بيحاولوا يخلصوا من [Huband's Name] وصحابه ويقولوله ده حد محترم ويعرف ربنا وبيصلي وحافظ قرآن، هتضيعوا مستقبله ده طالب وبيدرس ومحترم

[and the place suddenly overflowed with people, they were trying to get rid of [Husband's Name] and his friends, telling him that this is a respectful man who knows God and who prays and knows the Quran. You will destroy his future, he is a respectable/decent student.]

The use of the free indirect speech in the examples above shows the disapproval of the survivor towards the supporters who tend to normalize sexual abuse against women. In example (6), the paradox of the situation is marked by the concessive cancellative marker 'still'. According to Bell (2010), a concessive cancellative marker both concedes the truth of the prior discourse and signals the cancellation of the potential consequence derivable from the prior discourse segment. Based on his explanation, 'still' in example (6) signals the fact that the perpetrators can go unpunished regardless of the consequences of their crime. In example (7), the narrator reports the exact words of the 'crowd' who were defending her sexual harasser. By using free indirect speech to report the witnesses' positive descriptions of the harasser, the narrator is constructing an image of hypocrisy and superficiality for those witnesses. All their lexical choices carry positive connotations, such as 'respectable/decent student', 'knows God/the Quran, and 'prays', which conflicts with the harasser's actual behavior towards her.

Therefore, the hybrid form of narration utilizing a range of voices is functional in building the narrator-reader relationship. Moving from the indirect to the direct speech, and back again, is an objective way of recounting the incident that puts the reader in closer contact with the narrator. In addition, the frequent use of the free indirect speech reflects the sarcastic thoughts of the survivor towards the assaulter's words, as well as her criticism of other participants and their views that represent the collective voice of the society. This gradually convinces the reader to take the side of the narrator and adopt her negative view of the abuser,

and consequently, denounce his actions.

The first-person narrators tend to use unmodalized propositions which 'always express higher reliability than propositions involving evaluations of reliability' (Halliday, 1994, p. 89). This tendency is reflected by the relational processes which include forms of the verb 'be' (is, are, was, were) and the equivalent Arabic forms for 'was', كان (kan, 'he was') كانت (kanet, 'she was'), كنت (kunt, 'I was') and كانوا (kanu, 'they were'). This is likely to earn the readers' trust in the stories of these narrators since they are presented as factual. The use of mental processes further enhances this connection, with the survivors functioning as 'actor'. It enables readers to get into the inner world of the survivors and relate to their inner struggle. Klosterman (1997, p. 140) argues that narratives of sexual abuse is 'pro-survivor writing' that 'do not objectify the victim'. She also points out that if the mental processes are not used by the narrators, 'it is easier to blame the victim for individual pathology because the context for her decisions, perceptions, and behaviors - crucial for the audience's understanding - are omitted' (ibid). Yet, Klosterman's argument could still be questionable as to whether all the narratives are 'pro-survivor writings', given the possible backlash of negative/judgmental comments they might receive by social media users.

The narratives under study are largely dominated by mental processes, with the pronoun 'I' as the actor, referring to the survivor. The following examples taken from the accounts show the range of feelings and emotions reflected by mental processes of affection/reaction, perception and cognition [italicized for reference]:

Affection/reaction:

(8) I *feel* more and more powerless, vulnerable, and angry.

(9) I *hated* myself

(10)   I *wish* my parents know that this is a crime against me and not a crime I did.

(11)   نفسى المجتمع المقرف ده يتغير [I *wish* that this disgusting society changes]

(12)   عشت إحساسي بالذنب والعار سنين [I *went through* feelings of guilt and shame for years]

(13)   بخاف من بابا – بنخاف يحبسونا [I *feel scared* of dad – we are *scared* that they lock us up at home]

(14)   I *am tired* of fighting for my own right to walk down the streets.

Cognition & perception:

(15) فكرت كتير أسيب بيت أهلي لإحساسي بعاري

[I *thought* many times to leave my family's house because of my deep sense of shame]

(16) I *thought to myself* that this is it. The life I built for myself is over.

(17) I *thought* it was weird

(18) فاكرة إحساسي اني مش هطلع من المكان ده عايشة... قررت انسى عشان اعرف أعيش

[I *remember* my feeling that I will not go out of that place alive… I decided to forget so that I can move on with my life.]

(19) I am once again *reminded of* every time my body was violated, every time my body didn't belong to me

As can be seen in the examples, the mental processes employed show the various negative states of mind experienced by the survivors. They include feelings of weakness and anger (8), of fear (13 and 18), of shame and self-blame (12 and 15), of disappointment and pessimism (10 and 16), of disgust (11), of exhaustion (14), and of self-hate (9). Even the mental process of cognition 'thought' either conveys a negative perception of the survivor towards the behavior of the assaulter (17), or involves desperate thoughts, such as leaving the 'family's house' (15) because of a 'deep sense of shame'. Likewise, the two

mental processes 'remember' (18) and 'reminded of' (19) reflect feelings of fear and discomfort.

The metaphorical expressions used by the narrators further intensify their negative mental and emotional states. In example (19), the expression 'my body was violated... didn't belong to me' can motivate the metaphor BODY AS A VIOLATED TERRITORY or BODY AS A STOLEN PROPERTY. A survivor's abused body is perceived as a possessed property that has been 'violated' or taken by force by the act of harassment. This context-specific metaphor reinforces the survivors' perception of sexual assault as a 'crime', and consequently, the sexual aggressor as a criminal who is to be punished by law.

The role of the family in generating negative feelings in the survivors is also highlighted in the above examples. For instance, the absence of emotional and mental support on the part of the parents is echoed in example (10) ('I *wish* my parents know...') that points to a lack of awareness and acknowledgement of the daughter's victimization. In other instances, parents are also viewed as a source of threat, as in 'I *feel scared* of dad' (13), along with their anticipated act of 'locking (the daughters) up'. Thus, the narrators' inner thoughts expressed above serve to establish a negative image of the family members, which contradicts their expected role as a daughter's 'support system'.

Further, in example (15), the feelings of shame generated in the survivor and her desire to leave her 'family's house' suggests a connection between the daughter's behavior and her family's public image. From a cultural perspective, this is because a woman's behavior is conventionally tied to the way she is raised, and therefore, being sexually assaulted not only brings disgrace to the victim but also to her family. In that sense, the example can implicitly reinforce the belief that a woman's body is tied to her family's honor.

Despite the negativity generated in the above instances, there are several examples of mental processes in the narratives that evoke

positive feelings, such as those of challenge and determination. The following are some instances where survivors give credit to previously shared stories that have proved to be helpful to other women in getting over their traumatic experiences [contrasting processes are italicized]:

> (20) Reading these stories *have helped me heal* from my trauma…you lovely women and girls are my hero

> (21) I'm lucky this movement happened before I could do anything to *harm myself* because I started to *lose hope* completely if it wasn't for all the stories I see that are posted on here that are so close to mine.

> (22) I'd like to thank you for making my father convinced that we *must stand for our rights* and *not be afraid* of 'shame' or scandal or people's talk (rumours).

In contrast with the feelings of fear, disappointment, and guilt introduced above, these extracts are meant to provide emotional and mental support to all survivors as well as gratitude to one another. The processes 'lose hope', 'harm myself '(21), as opposed to 'must... not be afraid', 'stand for our rights '(22) and 'helped me heal '(20) highlight the positive transformation in the emotional and psychological states of the narrators. The inclusive first-person plural 'we' and the possessive 'our' in '*we* must stand for *our* rights' (22), in addition to the conversational 'you' (20 and 22), evoke a sense of commonality and unity among the narrators and their audience, who share the same beliefs, experiences and objectives. Consequently, they regard themselves as members of the same empowered (and empowering) group of 'female survivors'. This points to the collective understanding of the 'conservative' view of sexual assault being challenged and echoed in the act of 'convincing the father' in example (22) (and previously touched upon in examples 10 and 13 above).

Generally, the above examples suggest that there are different types of narratives. While some narrators expose the centrality of 'shame' as a social construct, and how they can be devoured by this

notion as women (as in examples 10 and 15), others show a readiness to challenge the propagation of such reputation-oriented views (examples 7 and 22). Additionally, some other narratives blend the inner struggle of the survivors with positive feelings of optimism and hope, echoing a process of psychological and mental healing (examples 20 and 21). These shades of responses to sexual assault experiences demonstrate how survivors' perceptions of trauma can vary, and therefore, a deeper understanding of such individual differences might be obtained through investigating more accounts and other aspects of the narratives.

6   Conclusion

The present study has explored a type of female counter-publics that has recently emerged in Egypt in response to gender-based violence. It has revealed the way sexual assault survivors and their abusers are constructed in the narratives from the viewpoint of the narrators by examining 15 stories in the light of perspectivation as a discursive strategy. The analysis has shown that narrators alternate between first and second-person narration as a way of connecting to social media users by involving them in their posts, placing the survivors in very close contact with the readers. This narrator-reader relationship is further enhanced by the use of mental processes that give access to the survivors' inner feelings and emotions, which mainly reflect their inner struggle.

The analysis has revealed that the 'survivor' is predominantly constructed as a weaker and vulnerable participant who is pressured by the abuser and the passiveness of society. However, contrary to earlier studies on Egyptian survivors (e.g. Ibrahim, 2022), some narratives portray more resilient women, challenging the 'blame-the-victim' mentality. Further, the analysis has briefly covered the representation of other social actors whose presence has proved to be significant in reflecting on the evolved characters of the survivors, such as the bystanders and family members. Whereas the depiction of witnesses reflects the societal double standards in the law enforcement, the

portrayal of families typically shows a lack of support, echoing the ongoing social and legal struggle of female survivors in reporting sexual crimes. Yet, some narratives depict families positively, particularly when family members act against the perpetrator, as in the case of a cousin 'confronting' a harasser (example 4 above) or a husband fetching his wife's molester to the police (example 7 above).

Overall, using social media platforms by Egyptian women to respond to gender-based violence places them in the wider world of digital feminism. By sharing their experiences, publishing evidence and calling for the abusers' punishment, they can now be seen as more courageous, aware of their legal and human rights and of their abilities to seek 'alternative modes of justice' outside courtrooms (Loney-Howes, 2018). It is worth mentioning also that seven out of the fifteen survivors had 'revealed identities' on social media, echoing this change in the behavior of girls and women, and more broadly, the socio-cultural transformation in the Egyptian society.

Since this case study has focused solely on social media posts from the survivors' perspective, the narratives can also be studied in relation to the institutionalized public sphere, namely the Egyptian news reports, to examine the depiction of the female survivors in the press. In other words, exploring how these narratives that have been veiled as a 'private' matter are placed in the wider institutionalized 'public' discourse on gender violence can reveal the possible change in the representation of women as the surrounding socio-political conditions in the country evolve. Additionally, a cross-cultural examination of survivors' narratives is recommended to understand how different cultural backgrounds can influence the ways through which girls and women respond to and challenge rape culture in different socio-cultural and socio-political contexts. The narrators' choice of language and other orthographic means could also be explored as to how they can aid in expressing and intensifying their emotions.

References

Bell, D. (2010). Nevertheless, still and yet: Concessive cancellative discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics, 42*, 1912-1927. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2009.12.010

Benedict, H. (1992). *Virgin or vamp: How the press covers sex crimes.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Columbia Global Freedom of Expression. (2021, August 24). *The case of the Egyptian TikTok influencers.* https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/the-tiktok-girls-case/

D'Arcy, A. & Young, T.M. (2012). Ethics and social media: implications for sociolinguistics in the networked public. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 16*(3), 532–546. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-9841.2012.00543.x

Digital Campaign Supports TikTok Women Arrested Over 'Egyptian Family Values' Law. (2020, July 15). Egyptian Streets. https://egyptianstreets.com/2020/07/15/digital-campaign-supports-tiktok-women-arrested-over-egyptian-family-values-law/

Eerland, A., Engelen, J., & Zwaan, R. (2013). The influence of direct and indirect speech on mental representations. *PLoS ONE*, *8*(6), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0065480

Egypt brings in new sexual harassment laws. (2014, June 5). BBC News. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27726849

Egypt serial sex attacks prompt law change. (2020, July 9). BBC. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-53353744

El-Elemi, A., Moustafa, S., & Hagras, A. (2011). Reported cases of female sexual assault over a 5-year period in the Suez Canal area, Egypt: A demographic study. *Egyptian Journal of Forensic Sciences 1*(3-4), 118–123. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejfs.2011.08.002

Elmeligy, N. (2021). On chaos, disruption, and women in public space: Cairo's street situation and the murder of the "Maadi Girl" and the single "Al Salam Doctor". *Civil Society Knowledge Centre*. https://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/chaos-disruption-and-

women-public-space-cairo%E2%80%99s-street-situation-and-murder-%E2%80%9Cmaadi-girl%E2%80%9D-and?fbclid=IwAR0Z1ZS7QXIzDtbHVCqL6nWNUBQ1COkaluDx9v2eiv4ggWHPUwMZf-BFB-0

El-Rifae, Y. (2014, July 17*). Egypt's sexual harassment law: an insufficient measure to end sexual violence.* MEI@75. https://www.mei.edu/publications/egypts-sexual-harassment-law-insufficient-measure-end-sexual-violence.

Elsadda, H. (2010). Arab women bloggers: The emergence of literary counterpublics. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication 3*, 312–332. https://doi.org/10.1163/187398610X538678

Eltantawy, N. (2023). Egyptian Women's Cyberactivism: The Ongoing Battle Against Sexual Harassment and Violence. In: Skalli, L.H., Eltantawy, N. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Media and Communication in the Middle East and North Africa*. (pp. 351–371). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11980-4_20

Ezzelarab, B. (2014, June 11). *The 'legal woman': sexual violence, the state and the law*. Mada Masr. https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/06/11/opinion/society/the-legal-woman-sexual-violence-the-state-and-the-law/

Fahmy, S. & Ibrahim, O. (2021). No memes no! Digital persuasion in the #MeToo era. *International Journal of Communication 15*, 2942–2967. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/15775

Fairclough, N. & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical discourse analysis. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Vol. 2, (pp. 258-284). London: Sage.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text 25*(26), 56–80. https://doi.org/10.2307/466240

Oak, K. (2021, Nov 9). *Egypt strengthens laws to mitigate sexual harassment.* Resource Equity. https://resourceequity.org/egypt-strengthens-laws-to-mitigate-sexual-harassment/

Habermas, J. (1989). *The structural transformation of the public*

sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haddad, M. (2017, May 9). *Victims of rape and law: How the laws of the Arab world protect rapists, not victims*. Jurist. https://www.jurist.org/commentary/2017/05/mais-haddad-arab-world-laws-protect-the-rapist-not-the-victim/

Halliday, M. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar.* London: Edward Arnold.

Ibrahim, W. (2022). Breaking the silence: A corpus-assisted analysis of narratives of the victims of an Egyptian sexual predator. *Open Linguistics*, *8*(1), 158–188. https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2022-0188

Kassab, B. & Mamdouh, R. (2012, September 20). The Widespread Plague of Sexual Harassment in Egypt. *AlAkhbar English.* https://web.archive.org/web/20120924114457/http:/english.al-akhbar.com/node/12456

Keller, J. & Mendes, K. & Ringrose, J. (2018). Speaking 'unspeakable things': Documenting digital feminist responses to rape culture. *Journal of Gender Studies, 27*(1), 22–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1211511

KhosraviNik, M. (2015). Theoretical Background. In M. KhosraviNik, *Discourse, identity and legitimacy: Self and other in representations of Iran's nuclear programme* (pp. 47-79). John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.62

Kimble, C. & Chettiar, I. (2018, October 4). *Sexual assault remains dramatically underreported*. Brennan Center for Justice. https://www.scribbr.com/citation/generator/folders/C1xPFrDZe3DDa3Plz3DNw/lists/c1TkIGHAj6wC2eX7teoOt/cite/webpage/?searchQuery=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.brennancenter.org%2Four-work%2Fanalysis-opinion%2Fsexual-assault-remains-dramatically-underreported

Klosterman, E. (1997). *The music she hears: Point of view and*

technique in women's writing about Childhood Sexual Abuse. Ohio: Bowling Green State University.

Loney-Howes, R. (2018). Shifting the rape script: "Coming out" online as rape. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies, 39*(2), 26–57. https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2018.a698452.

Marzouk, A. & Vanderveen, G. (2021). Fighting sexual violence in Egypt on social media: A visual essay on assault police, *Global Public Health, 17*(10), 2329–2341. https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2021.1991972

Matar, D. (2007). Heya TV: A feminist counterpublic for Arab women?. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 27*, 513–524. https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-2007-030

Mendes, K., Belisário, K., Ringrose, J. (2019). Digitised narratives of rape: Disclosing sexual violence through pain memes. In U. Andersson, M. Edgren, L. Karlsson & G. Nilsson (Eds.), *Rape Narratives in Motion*. Palgrave Studies in Crime, Media and Culture (pp. 171–197). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13852-3_8

Mitchell, C. (1998). Women's (community) radio as a feminist public sphere. *The Public, 5*, 73–85.
https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.1998.11008676

Murray, S. (1998). The women's press, kitchen table press and dilemmas of feminist publishing. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 5*, 171–193.
https://doi.org/10.1177/135050689800500204

Pateman, C. (1988). *The sexual contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Penny, L. (2014). *Unspeakable things: Sex, lies, and revolution.* London: Bloomsbury

Reisigl, M. & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and anti-semitism.* London: Routledge.

Reisigl, M. & Wodak, R. (2009). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed), (pp. 87–121). London: SAGE.

Salter, M. (2013). Justice and revenge in online counter-publics:

Emerging responses to sexual violence in the age of social media. *Crime Media Culture, 9*(3), 225–242. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659013493918

Sharaf El-Din, A., Elkholy, S., Metwally, E., & Farag, H. (2015). Pattern of female sexual assault in Qalyubia Governorate, Egypt, during the period from 2009 to 2013: A retrospective study. *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology, 36*(4), 276–284. https://doi.org/10.1097/PAF.0000000000000182

Stollznow, K. (2021, December 22). *Why women don't immediately report sexual assault*. Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/speaking-in-tongues/202112/why-women-dont-immediately-report-sexual-assault

Warner, M. (2002). Publics and counter-publics. *Public Culture, 14*, 49–90. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-14-1-49

Witnesses arrested and intimidated: How the Fairmont rape case fell apart. (2021, September 2). Mada Masr. https://www.madamasr.com/en/2021/09/02/feature/politics/witnesses-arrested-and-intimidated-how-the-fairmont-rape-case-fell-apart/

Wodak, R. (1986). *Language behavior in therapy groups*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak and M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis*, (pp. 62-94). Sage: London. https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028020.n4

Wodak, R. (2008). Introduction: terms and concepts. In R. Wodak & M. Krzyżanowski (Eds.), *Qualitative discourse analysis in the social sciences*, (pp. 1–42). Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wodak, R. (2015). Critical discourse analysis: discourse-historical approach. In K. Tracy, C. Ilie, T. Sandel & T. Chichester (Eds.) *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction,* (pp.1-14). John Wiley & Sons.

https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463/wbielsi116

World Health Organization. (2021, March 9). *Violence against women.* https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/ detail/violence-against-women

Youssef, N. (2006, January 19). *Virginity in Egypt: Double standards and hypocrisy.* Qantara.de https://en.qantara.de/content/virginity-in-egypt-double-standards-and-hypocrisy

Zobl, E. (2004). Persephone is pissed! Grrrl zine reading, making, and distributing across the globe. *Hecate 30*, 156–175. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/persephone-is-pissed-grrrl-zine-reading-making/docview/210931734/se-2