

# Employment prospects of social media : an empirical inquiry on Egyptian youth perceptions

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## Introduction

**Information and communication technology (ICT), often known as the digital economy (DE) is without a doubt the dominating force behind technological transformation and the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). As a result, ICT and digital skills have become more widely available and used, particularly in the labor market. Moreover, the possibility for automation is made inescapable by developments in artificial intelligence (AI), low-cost ICT, and higher Internet penetration rates. The annual job loss continues to rise, especially with the advent of social media on the internet (Agbawe, 2018). Alongside comes certain economic development issue related to the emergence of digitalization and technological progress. Egypt, like most Arab countries, sought to incorporate cutting-edge technology into its economy.**

Findings made by a recent McKinsey study that cover six Arab countries (Egypt, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman Kuwait, Bahrain). Currently demonstrated technology, today (45%) of the existing work activities in the labor market is automatable. According to some economists (Van Roy, Vértesy, and Vivarelli, 2018), the government must take action to prevent the loss of employment that will likely be replaced by technology. However, other researchers have argued that opposition to technology stems from a lack of understanding of the economic usefulness of technology (Peters, 2017) and such arguments also believe that technology will help to deepen job creation and youth empowerment and that increased automation and digitalization are creating new sorts of employment opportunities, modifying skill requirements, changing the nature and conditions of work, impacting labor markets, and changing the global division of labor. The spread of ICT hasn't just led to some jobs being redundant, it has equally opened larger opportunities for part and fulltime paid employment (McClure, 2018). Furthermore, a significant factor in determining a nation's ability to make use of new digital resources will be a key determinant of their competitiveness. This is only feasible if the new technology's economic development contribution is widely disseminated and utilized. Diffusion results from an individual's choices about the use of new technology; such is what social media offers. Harrah (2012) argues that the internet's existence has specifically provided a limitless window of entrepreneurial activity that is big enough to empower any enterprising youth.

### **Problem and Significance**

There is a growing concern that technology growth will replace a large portion of the workforce leading to widespread unemployment, human hardships, and social unrest (McClure, 2018). This unique dimension of ICT got more prospective with the advent of social media interaction in the digital space. Many young people now think that being connecting with the world online is more convenient than doing so in their actual physical spaces. In reality, a number of youths have been able to use this presence to empower themselves. Many Egyptian youths have their blogs through which they market their own products (things they can do in exchange for a pay) and services which the public can subscribe to. Yet, others have equally taken advantage of the paid services of leading social networking sites such as YouTube to market their videos while the networking sites pay them a certain amount of money based on the number of visitors traffic they bring to their networks. Going by the limitless opportunities provided by the ICT, perhaps there will be more empowerment among youths who utilize and take advantages of the potency of ICT especially social media to create profitable ventures.

Thus, this study intends to understand the perception of Egyptian youth on the employability prospects of social media with a reflection on whether its users' have taken advantage of its windows of entrepreneurship.

In view of the above, the following **objectives** will guide the study:

1. To determine youths' knowledge regarding the prospects of social media usage in Egypt.
2. To determine youths' appeal towards social media usage as tools for empowerment.
3. To evaluate gender differences in social media leisure and empowerment appeal among youths in Egypt.

## **Review of Literatures**

### **The Advent of Social Media**

The evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) especially the internet gave birth to the social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc. Social media networks are platforms or sites that facilitate the building of some relationships among people of different races and provide opportunities for them to share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2011). Social network services also consist of a representation of each user's social connections, and a variety of additional services (Chaudhry, 2014).

According to Odii (2013), social media is a platform for marketing and socializing, the plethora of social media networks are among the finest opportunities available to organizational marketers in their bids to connect with existing and prospective customers. Social networks are online content produced by users using highly adaptable and available communication tools. available under various digital gadgets like smart phones, notebook, palmtops, multi-media player etc. (Samuel & Joe, 2016). It represents how people discover, read and share news, information, contents, products and services. Social network applications provide users with new forms of empowerment and means of information sharing as it bridges the gap and physical barrier that exist in reaching out to the global community (Mahwish, Wajahat, Shazia, Hummaira & Nadia, 2017). As much as it has become a powerful tool for connecting with others; many youths have taken the advantage of it to gain market share and gain money by attracting followers and subscribers and linking them as customers to valuable range of information, products and services which ordinarily would have taken more resources to access and find.

### **Social Media and Empowerment**

Social media is influencing employment both as an industry that creates jobs and as a tool that empowers workers (users) to access new forms of work, in new and more flexible ways (Vein, 2013). According to Badran (2019) increased digitalization and automation is leading to new types of jobs and employment, these developments are changing the nature and conditions of work, altering skill requirements, affecting the functions of the labor markets and influencing the international division of labor. Moreover, the ability of countries and enterprises to exploit new digital resources will become a key determinant of their competitiveness. Vein (2013) mentioned that the emerging ICT-enabled employment opportunities because countries around the world are looking to create more good jobs, which have positive economic and social implications for workers and for society. As regards “connecting to work,” The new policy noted that Information and Communication Technologies may contribute to increasing employment prospects and thus identified three global drivers responsible for the increase in ICT-related jobs worldwide:

1. **Greater connectivity** – According to the Pew Research Center, more than 120 countries now have over 80 percent market penetration of mobile telephones (Pew Research Center, 2019). In alignment with Egypt Vision 2030, and Egypt’s digital transformation strategy, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) has embarked on building Digital Egypt. Digital Egypt is an all-encompassing vision and plan, laying the foundations for the transformation of Egypt into a digital society (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, n.d.).
2. **Digitization of more aspects of work** – The government put an initial investment of EGP 400 million (USD 26 million) towards upskilling, reskilling, and providing lifelong learning and capacity building in different ICT specializations as part of the digital skills and job component of Digital Egypt (Kamel, 2021). Under its ICT 2030 strategy, the Egyptian government is undertaking a series of investments, capacity building and training programs, digital government services reforms, and infrastructure upgrades. The strategy calls for launching new initiatives to maximize the contribution of the ICT sector to Egypt’s economic growth by focusing on capacity building, electronics design and manufacturing, and technology parks (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, n.d.). Additionally, in order to support innovative and tech-enabled start-ups to increase their competitiveness, the government launched a series of initiatives, mentorship programs, boot camps, incubation, and acceleration schemes targeting undergraduate and graduate students, entrepreneurs, and professionals – with programs earmarked for youth and women across all governorates to meet the

growing need in the local market, improve unemployment ratios, and introduce the new trends associated with the future of work and the opportunity to access and compete internationally given the reach provided through digital transformation (Kamel, 2021).

**3. More globalized skills** – According to Egypt’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Egypt has become a major outsourcing hub, the local ICT sector has achieved the highest growth rate of about 16.3% among different state sectors during the year 2021/2022. (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, n.d.)

The Ministry is also working on developing six technology parks in the cities of Minya, Menoufiya, Mansoura, Sohag, Qena and Aswan. These parks are aimed at supporting entrepreneurship and innovation and will consist of hardware design labs, startup incubators and training institutions and integrated systems for AI training, data science, and cybersecurity (El Bedawy & Elsayed, 2022). The ICT industry in Egypt is managed by MCIT. It oversees the following organizations (Blind, Pohlmann, Ramel, & Wunsch-Vincent, 2014):

- National Telecom Regulatory Authority – NTRA
- IT Industry Development Agency – ITIDA
- Egypt Post
- Information Technology Institute – ITI
- National Telecommunication Institute – NTI
- Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage – CULTNAT
- The Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center – TIEC
- Smart Villages
- Silicon Waha
- Technology Development Fund

Social media enabled by various ICTs is providing new avenues for job creation that could help tackle global unemployment (Raja, 2013). According to “Egypt App Market Statistics”, Egypt is one of Africa’s most important and developed economies. With a population approaching 100 million people, it boasts some of the continent’s highest rates of smartphone penetration, this development of the mobile phone applications industry has created new opportunities for small- and medium-sized enterprises (42matters, n.d.). A firm that provides a digital application to the Apple app store, for example, gains access to over 500 million app store account holders. Social media connect people to jobs. By connecting job seekers with companies worldwide, online employment markets assist an estimated 12 million individuals worldwide in finding jobs. “Wuzzuf.net” is an example of job search services and is considered one of the biggest online recruitment platforms in Egypt. Providing More than 100 thousand open

vacancies are available annually, is an example of using internet-based and mobile tools. Such services empower workers by making labor markets more transparent and inclusive; for instance, Bayt.com is also one of the leading **job** sites in the Middle East and North Africa, connecting job seekers with employers targets low-income and marginalized communities (World Bank, 2013).

To maximize the positive impact of ICTs on employment, the World Bank in Vein (2013) recommends that policymakers pay attention to five enabling systems, adapting the mix as needed to the country context (World Bank, 2013):

1. **Human capital systems:** A labor pool with appropriate ICT skills, and the awareness and soft skills that give competitive advantage in the labor market.
2. **Infrastructure systems:** Ubiquitous connectivity to ICT; access to electricity and transport; infrastructure to support innovation and adoption of technology by SMEs.
3. **Social systems:** Networks of trust and recognition for workers and employers, social safety nets, and measures to minimize possible negative outcomes of ICT-enabled employment.
4. **Financial systems:** Efficient and accountable systems to ensure timely payments; and access to finance to support innovation and entrepreneurship.
5. **Regulatory systems:** An enabling environment that creates employment opportunities and increases labor market flexibility while protecting the rights of workers.

Guided by these principles, social media evolved into the ideal cloud society where individuals from all backgrounds may connect, engage, and exchange goods and services without boundaries and discrimination. Social media has the ability to empower young people in this way, giving them the opportunity to offer services to their, subscribers, and followers.

### **Prospects and Challenges of Social Media**

As good as the evolution of the ICT has been, there have been also opportunities and difficulties.

**Prospects:** Given the vast number of users of the most popular social media platforms, social media is an important media platform for the dissemination of information. For instance, Facebook is the largest social media platform in the world with more than 2.4 billion users while other social media platforms including Youtube and WhatsApp also have more than one billion users each. Odine (2016) contends that with the population of the world at 7.7 billion, at least, 3.5 billion people are always online at any point these numbers are enormous in terms of how quickly a message or piece of information can

spread online, as well as for advertising and blogging.

According to Ambrose and Catherine (2013), social media may empower its users, especially youth, in a variety of ways. As a result, social networking sites have taken on major importance in young people's lives. Ambrose and Catherine believed that the youth are the most vulnerable consumers of the social media, networks, and ICT that have enriched the modern day. Generally, they use internet mostly for entertainment but now is the time to make them aware about the benefits of technologies and also enlighten them on how to make their contributions to the development of the country (Odine, 2016). Social media may be utilized for social, political, religious, economic, and health reasons. Since there are so many social media platforms available to young people in Egypt, the economic implications of their use could be as follows:

i. **Online editors:** Online media editors are one of the most deep-rooted professions that have been created by the internet and social media. The online market or global community currently needs online communicators with a good command of languages such as English and power of persuasion.

ii. **Web developers:** There is a chance for individuals to provide this service because practically all businesses and people need to have websites.

iii. **Data security specialist:** Everyone wants reassurance that the information they provide online is secure. Having the ability to use the internet to protect websites, and blogs, among other things, from online hackers, has therefore created an opportunity.

iv. **Online training and certification:** Today, formal and informal education can be online. Social media promotes scientific and technical improvement while opening up endless opportunities for educational advancement. Scholars have argued that the internet is the ultimate interactive environment and offers education needed to move from what he described as a teacher-centered approach to learning, to a learner-centered approach. To put it another way, technology is now a key instrument for advancing modern learning and education.

v. **E-marketing:** More than just a place to post selfies and memes, social media offers a lot more potential. That potential is something that's been recognized by nearly every company as an opportunity to help grow their business - Many companies even experience a sense of "invisibility" when they lack a social media presence. In some ways, this is true - Almost all types of businesses may utilize social media as an effective marketing tool.

vi. **Blogging:** Blogging is a discussion or informational website published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete, often informal diary-style text entries (posts). Posts are typically displayed in reverse chronological order, so that the most recent post appears first, at the top of the web page. It can be hosted by an individual or a

group and the bloggers earn money based on the volume of traffic to the site. Egyptian bloggers have been able to hold their own, while commanding whole new armies of online warriors, who are spell-bound by their engaging contents. Whether you are after fashion and style, political news or even technology. An example of a successful bloggers in Egypt is, Mohamed Khairat, with his blog "Egyptian Streets" engaging social platform to discover and discuss all the various issues that impact the middle east region, Rola Kamel the founder of "Identity-mag.com", a blogzine that's described as the voice of entertainment in Egypt, her blog features fashion and lifestyle articles bringing the latest and hottest trends within Egypt. Ryan Gargiulo the Egyptian travel blogger with his blog "Pause the Moment", providing some of the most well-crafted stories and photography on Egypt landscape. Noha Serageldin an Egyptian Food Blogger, with her blog "Matters of the Belly", though she is currently living in Australia, her blog focuses on Egyptian whole foods, healthy recipes. Omar Samra is an Egyptian lifestyle blogger and also the Founder of "Wild Guanabana". Taimour Othman is a photo blogger from Egypt that's hugely popular on Instagram. Zeinab Mohamed, also known as "Zeinobia", runs Egyptian Chronicles, a blog that covers news in Egypt, politics, and current affairs, including Middle East issues and affairs.

vii. **Pay per view (PPV) and pay as you view and click (PPC):** this is an area being explored by many creative people in the internet. It involves creating short videos, Memes and GIFs, and internet users pay for viewing the clips. In turn, the originators are paid heavily.

### Challenges

Despite these promising developments in social media's role in empowerment, there have been obstacles along the way. The following are some challenges and difficulties in using social media:

1. **Addiction:** The research by Chou, Condron, and Belland (2005) cited in Umeogu and Ojiakor (2014) observed that Internet addiction has been noticed among young people, especially students, who have gotten hooked with it in addition to utilizing it for educational purposes. Accessibility and affordability were cited as the causes of the addiction.
2. **Poor academic performance:** Studies have shown that social media is a huge distraction to students who spend most of their time visiting non educational sites. Finding a balance between exploiting social media's potential and preventing its negative impact on one's academics makes this difficult (Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014; Olasinde, 2014).
3. **Cyber bullying or online harassment:** In Egypt, the digital society included 48.5



million users in 2020 as 35 million have active Facebook accounts (The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2020). Although social media platforms have many established benefits, numerous negative implications have been encountered as cyberbullying acts. Cyberbullying refers to conveying language or images, disclosing personal information, or sending offensive and derogatory comments through communication technology to defame, threaten, harass, bully, exclude, discriminate and stalk others (Faucher et al., 2014). Unsurprisingly, cyberbullies are using online technological tools to inflict harm upon others (Abaido, 2020).

**4. Distractions:** Despite the new line of socioeconomic, educational and technological advancement opportunities opened by the social media, there is the fear that young people (digital natives) are very much distracted by the social media platforms. (Agbawe, 2018) found out that social media addicts give more than 20% of their daily time schedule to chatting or browsing on social media platform.

**5. Lack of self-control:** There is also the fear of lack of self-control by the young people in the use of social media leading to moral decay, low educational values and unethical behaviors, (Agbawe 2018; Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014).

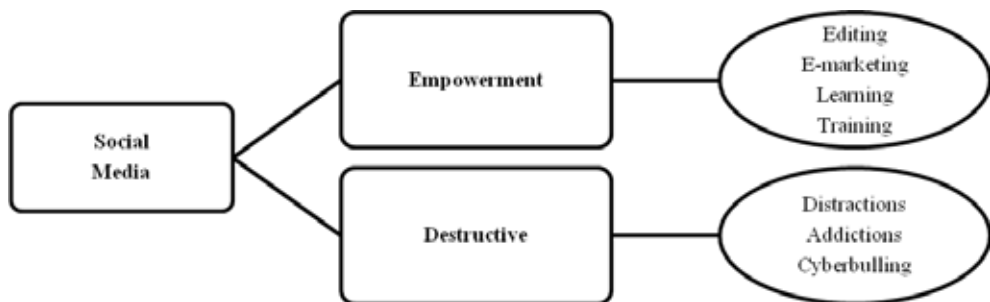
Despite the aforementioned challenges, social media users are hopeful that social media usage will continue to advance, particularly in terms of empowerment, which currently outweighs the difficulties. There have been studies which have linked social media to empowerment. For instance; the study by Sherif Kamel (2021) on "The Potential Impact of Digital Transformation on Egypt" concluded, that the digital transformation will offer Egypt a unique opportunity to transform several economic sectors such as financial services, retailing, healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing while creating opportunities for individuals and enterprises and impacting inclusive development and economic growth. Kamel Discussed that however digitalization can make a significant difference in the economy, it should be supported by the required technological infrastructure, human capital, and the appropriate legal, regulatory, and other enabling environments so that digital transformation becomes a platform for equity rather than divide.

The impact of the digital economy on employment is difficult to assess in the context of Egypt, and it is not clear if it is ready for digitalization yet. With the increasing shift in consumer behavior, which was further accelerated by the pandemic, the trend of embracing innovative digital platforms is likely to gain gradual momentum. Digital platforms can help create opportunities to increase businesses efficiency as well as provide opportunities for women, young graduates, and people with disabilities (ILO, 2021).

Also Kamel (2021) revealed that although there has been clear progress, there is

still a lot that needs to be done so that the society across Egypt benefits from digital transformation, which can help transform the lives and livelihoods of many Egyptians. Therefore, policies need to ensure that universally different groups of people in various geographical locations, including rural and underprivileged areas across Egypt, have affordable access to technology platforms, coupled with the opportunity to acquire the needed knowledge as well as the digital (and other) skills to adopt them.. Kamel's findings further revealed that young people could acquire relevant new skills and become efficient in a multi-task environment in the social media as forms of entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure (1): Social media empowerment and destructive model depicting aspects of social media that could empower users and inherent dangers that could also destroy users.**

The diagrammatic representation conceptualizes that the users of social media are usually pulled by the empowerment or destructive aspects of social media which is dependent on the aims and mindset of the user.

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study on “Employability Prospects of Social Media and Egyptian Youth Perceptions” is based on the Uses and Gratifications (U and G) theory of social media. The U and G theory emphasizes that individuals are attracted to different types of media and content that fulfill their social and psychological needs (Ancu & Cozma, 2009). This theory suggests that it is important to consider how individuals engage with media, rather than solely focusing on the impact of media exposure on audiences (LaRose & Eastin, 2004; Ruggiero, 2000).

In the context of the study, the theoretical framework recognizes that the perceived benefits and gratification derived from social media play a significant role in shaping youth's usage patterns. The conceptual framework illustrates that these motives can

have both positive and negative consequences, leading to either empowerment or destructive outcomes. These motivations influence the extent to which social media platforms are utilized by youth in their pursuit of employment prospects.

### **Research Question and Hypotheses**

The following Research question and hypotheses will guide the study:

**RQ1: To what extent is Egyptian youth aware of the empowerment prospects associated with the usage of social media?**

This research question aligns with the U and G theory as it suggests that individuals, in this case, Egyptian youth, are aware of the potential benefits and empowering aspects of using social media. According to the U and G theory, people actively choose and engage with media that fulfill their needs. In this case, Egyptian youth may recognize that social media platforms can provide them with opportunities for empowerment, such as building professional networks, accessing information, or promoting their own ideas and causes.

**H1: The level of social media usage for leisure purposes is higher among Egyptian youth compared to its usage for empowerment prospects.**

This hypothesis also relates to the U and G theory as it emphasizes the role of gratification and individuals' choices in media usage. According to the theory, individuals seek media content that satisfies their social and psychological needs. In this case, the hypothesis suggests that Egyptian youth are more likely to use social media for leisure activities, such as entertainment, socializing, or relaxation, rather than explicitly seeking empowerment-related benefits. It acknowledges that the gratification derived from leisure aspects may outweigh the pursuit of empowerment prospects for Egyptian youth.

**H2: There will be significant gender difference in social media leisure and empowerment appeals among youths in Egypt.**

This hypothesis incorporates the U and G theory by considering the potential variation in media usage motives between genders. The U and G theory acknowledges that individuals have different needs and motivations when it comes to media consumption. Therefore, this hypothesis proposes that there will be a significant difference between males and females in terms of their preference for social media usage, specifically in terms of leisure appeals and empowerment appeals. It recognizes the potential for variations in how males and females in Egypt seek gratification and utilize social media platforms for different purposes.

By incorporating the U and G theory, these hypotheses recognize the active role of

Egyptian youth in seeking gratification through social media usage, while considering the potential variations in motives and preferences based on empowerment and leisure appeals, as well as gender differences.

### **Methodology**

The methodology section of this study outlines the research design and data collection procedures utilized to investigate the employability prospects of social media among Egyptian youth and their perceptions regarding its impact. This section provides a detailed account of the method employed as online surveys is the data collection tool used for this study.

### **Research Design**

The research design used in this study is a cross-sectional design. A cross-sectional design involves collecting data from a sample at a specific point in time. In this study, the researcher utilized an online survey to collect data from a representative sample of Egyptian youth. The survey captured information about the participants' awareness of empowerment prospects associated with social media usage, level of social media usage, social media leisure and empowerment appeals, and demographic information such as gender.

By employing a cross-sectional design, the researcher aimed to gain insights into the relationships and differences among the research variables at a specific moment in time. This design allows for the examination of the current state of social media usage and perceptions among Egyptian youth, providing a snapshot of their employability prospects and attitudes towards social media.

It is important to note that a cross-sectional design provides a snapshot rather than longitudinal data, which would involve tracking changes in variables over time. As such, the findings from this study will provide valuable insights into the current perceptions and usage patterns of Egyptian youth regarding social media and its employability prospects.

### **Study Sample**

The sample size for the study was N=153, representing a specific subset of Egyptian youth who voluntarily participated in the survey. The researcher made efforts to ensure the sample's representativeness by targeting participants from different regions and backgrounds, although it is important to acknowledge that the sample may not fully represent the entire population of Egyptian youth.

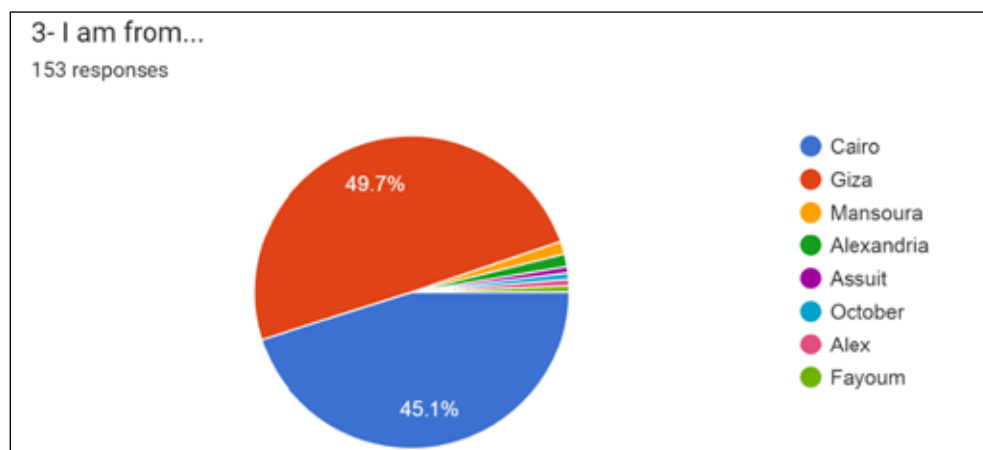
The respondents were classified as 94 females and 59 males that were drawn

purposively through the researchers' active contacts from three social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram). The ages of respondents ranged between 17 to 37 years with a mean age of 23.6 and standard deviation of 1.10 (see Table 2).

**Table 1. Age Range, Mean Age, and Standard Deviation**

(Age Range (Years	Mean Age	Standard Deviation
37-17	23.6	1.10

As shown in Figure (2) the majority of respondents (49.7%) were from Cairo Governorate and (45.1%) from Giza governorate the remaining (5.2%) were distributed among Mansoura, Alexandria, Assut, and Fayoum governorates (see figure 2).



**Figure (2): Respondents Geographical Distribution**

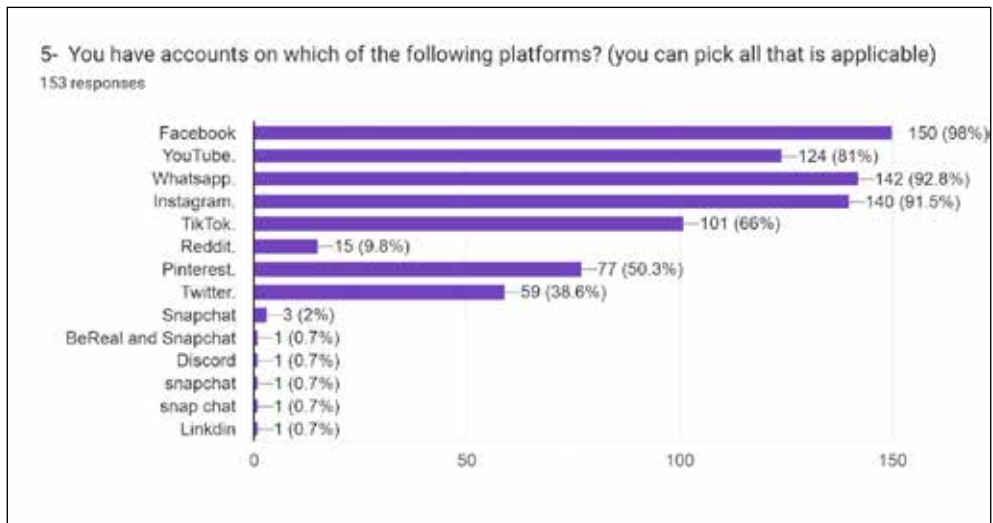
### Data Collection Method

The study relied on an online survey as the method of data collection. The decision to utilize an online survey was motivated by its convenience, efficiency, and the ability to reach a larger and diverse sample of Egyptian youth. Participants were recruited through various online platforms, social media channels, and relevant online communities. The survey questions were carefully constructed based on previous literature and research objectives.

The participants were presented with "Social Media Usage Perception Index" developed by the researcher to assess the social media perception and preferences of the participants especially as regards the social media prospects (empowerment or destructive), its appeal and gender preferences. The index was administered to the

participants as a measure of their attitudes and preferences related to social media usage.

The Social Media Usage Perception Index was prepared as a list of questions with options and was distributed online to researchers' list of contacts on WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram that are at least active in more than one social media platform. The participants were instructed on how to answer the questions sent to them via google forms link. The researcher was able to determine the participants' gender, frequency of social media usage, governorate of origin, and social media platforms used by participants through (see Figure 3.) the demographic data included in the online Index.



**Figure (3): Social Media Preferences among Youth.**

### Measurement of Variables

The research variables encompass the dependent variables and independent variables as outlined in the hypotheses as shown in table (1). The first hypothesis investigates the level of social media usage among Egyptian youth, specifically examining whether usage for leisure purposes surpasses usage for empowerment prospects. The dependent variable, "Level of social media usage," will be quantified by collecting data on the frequency, duration, or intensity of participants' engagement with social media platforms. The independent variable, "Purpose of social media usage," will be assessed using a measurement instrument that allows participants to indicate the primary motives behind their social media usage, differentiating between leisure and

empowerment purposes.

The second hypothesis explores gender differences in social media leisure and empowerment appeals among youths in Egypt. The dependent variable, "Social media leisure and empowerment appeals," will be measured using an appropriate scale or questionnaire that assesses participants' perceptions of social media in terms of its ability to fulfill leisure-related needs and empowerment-related opportunities. The independent variable, "Gender," will be collected through self-report, allowing participants to indicate their gender identity as male or female.

**Table (2): Research Variables and their Relationships**

Research Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable(s)
H1: The level of social media usage for leisure purposes is higher among Egyptian youth compared to its usage for empowerment .prospects	Level of social media usage	Purpose of social media usage (leisure, empowerment)
H2: There will be significant gender differences in social media .leisure and empowerment appeals among youths in Egypt	Social media leisure and empowerment appeals	Gender (male, female)

By employing rigorous measurement techniques, this study aims to capture the nuances and variations in the research variables, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the research questions and hypotheses. The next section will delve into the specific measurement procedures employed for each variable, ensuring transparency and reliability in the research process.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents was analyzed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The researcher used descriptive and inferential analysis to determine the frequency and percentage of the overall population.

### Findings

Based on the provided results for RQ1, which aimed to explore the extent of awareness among Egyptian youth regarding the empowerment prospects associated with the usage of social media, the following observations from Table (3) can be made, where participants in the survey were asked to rate their agreement with various statements related to social media perception and preferences on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree: Item 1: **"Social media has a lot of packages that can impact my life positively."**[Mean: 3.3, SD: 0.7576].The majority of respondents (31.4%) chose a rating of 4, indicating a relatively high level of

agreement that social media has positive impacts on their lives. A significant proportion of respondents (30%) selected a rating of 5, indicating a strong agreement with the statement. Item 2: **"There is much I can learn through social media to improve my potential."** [Mean: 3.3, SD: 2.670]. Approximately 45.8% of participants chose a rating of 4, suggesting a considerable agreement that social media offers opportunities for self-improvement and learning. However, it is worth noting that there is a higher standard deviation (2.670), indicating a wider range of responses and potential variability in perceptions. Item 3: **"I know about legitimate business opportunities available on social media platforms."** [Mean: 2.9, SD: 1.093]. The responses show a more mixed perspective, with a moderate level of agreement. Around 26% of participants chose a rating of 2, indicating disagreement or uncertainty regarding their knowledge of legitimate business opportunities on social media. Item 4: **"Social media creates opportunities for empowerment."** [Mean: 4.2, SD: 0.7974]. The majority of respondents (50.5%) selected a rating of 5, suggesting a strong agreement that social media provides empowerment opportunities. Notably, no responses were recorded for ratings 1 or 2, indicating a lack of disagreement with the statement.

Overall, the results indicate that Egyptian youth generally perceive social media as having the potential for positive impacts, learning opportunities, and empowerment. However, there may be some variations in awareness and knowledge of specific aspects, such as legitimate business opportunities. The findings provide insights into the extent to which Egyptian youth recognize the empowerment prospects associated with social media usage.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics on youths' awareness of the empowerment prospect of social media**

S/N	ITEM	Responses						Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5	N		
1	Social media has a lot of packages that can impact my life positively.	31	28	-	48	46	153	3.3	.7576
		20.3%	18.3%		31.4%	30%	100%		
2	There is much I can learn through social media to improve my potential.	17	34	7	70	25	153	3.3	2.670
		11.1%	22.2%	4.6%	45.8%	16.3%	100%		
3	I know about legitimate business opportunities available on the social media platforms.	35	40	9	37	32	153	2.9	1.093
		23%	26%	6%	24%	21%	100%		
4	Social media creates opportunities for empowerment.	-	-	40	36	77	153	4.2	.7974
				26%	23.5%	50.5%	100%		
	Total							3.4	1.3295



The result in Table (4) shows that primarily, majority 71.2% of youth are attracted to social media by its leisure appeal and they use it for chatting, connecting friends and leisure compared to 28.8% of youths who use it for learning, empowerment and opportunities. The finding is indicative that greater population of the youth is focused in the leisure appeal of social media like chatting, and connecting with friends and family.

**Table (4): Descriptive statistics on youths' social media user appeal**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Chatting, connecting with friends and leisure	109	71.2%	71.2%	28.8%
Valid learning, empowerment and opportunities	44	28.8%	28.8%	100%
Total	153	100%	100%	

The result in Table (5) showed that significant differences were observed between males and females on social media user appeal at  $F(1, 152) = 50.55, p < .05$ . The result is indicative that greater number of females (69) has leisure appeal than empowerment appeal (25) whereas greater number males (40) prefer its empowerment appeal to its leisure appeal (19). The differences observed reached were statistically significant.

**Table (5): Descriptive statistics showing the male and female social media user appeal**

Gender	Social media user appeal	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	Leisure	2.2687	.15298	19
	Empowerment	2.9706	.21087	40
	Total	2.6218	.02274	59
Female	Leisure	1.3081	.48939	69
	Empowerment	1.7500	.31906	25
	Total	1.5495	.12559	94
Total	Leisure	1.75024	1.02661	109
	Empowerment	2.35298	1.62557	44
	Total	2.0521	.17627	153

### Hypothesis Testing

**H1: The level of social media usage for leisure purposes is higher among Egyptian youth compared to its usage for empowerment prospects.**

Based on the provided data in Table (4), the researcher can assess the hypothesis H1: The level of social media usage for leisure purposes is higher among Egyptian youth compared to its usage for empowerment prospects. The frequency distribution of responses suggests the following:

Chatting, connecting with friends, and leisure activities were reported by 71.2% of the participants, indicating a higher frequency and preference for social media usage for leisure purposes. Valid learning, empowerment, and opportunities were selected by 28.8% of the participants, indicating a relatively lower frequency of social media usage for empowerment prospects.

Based on these results, the researcher can tentatively conclude that the hypothesis H1 is supported. The data indicates a higher level of social media usage among Egyptian youth for leisure purposes compared to its usage for empowerment prospects.

The results of the hypothesis testing align with the principles of the Uses and Gratifications theory. The higher frequency and preference for social media usage for leisure activities indicate that Egyptian youth are primarily using social media to fulfill their leisure needs. This suggests that they seek entertainment, social interaction, and connection with friends through social media platforms.

On the other hand, the relatively lower frequency of social media usage for empowerment prospects indicates that Egyptian youth may not perceive social media as a primary source for empowerment or opportunities. This finding is consistent with the idea that individuals select media content based on their specific needs and preferences.

Therefore, by integrating the Uses and Gratifications theory, we can interpret the results of the hypothesis testing as supporting the notion that Egyptian youth predominantly use social media for leisure purposes rather than for empowerment prospects. This finding highlights the role of social and psychological needs in shaping individuals' usage patterns and preferences regarding social media.

## **H2: There will be significant gender difference in social media leisure and empowerment appeals among youths in Egypt.**

As shown in Table (6) for the Leisure category: male participants (N = 19) have a mean score of 2.2687 with a standard deviation of 0.15298, while female participants (N = 69) have a lower mean score of 1.3081 with a higher standard deviation of 0.48939. The t-value of 4.21\* indicates a significant difference between males and females in terms of leisure ( $t(63) = 4.21, p < 0.05$ ). For the empowerment category, male participants (N = 40) have a higher mean score of 2.9706 with a standard deviation of 0.21087, while female participants (N = 25) have a lower mean score of 1.7500 with a standard deviation of 0.31906. The t-value of 3.89\* indicates a significant difference between males and females in terms of empowerment ( $t(86) = 3.89, p < 0.05$ ). This provides evidence for a significant gender difference in social media empowerment appeals among youths in Egypt.

Overall, the results from the Table (6) support the hypothesis H2, which states that there will be a significant gender difference in social media leisure and empowerment appeals among youths in Egypt. Both the leisure and empowerment categories show significant differences between males and females, with males generally scoring higher than females in both aspects. The significance level of  $<0.05$  suggests a high level of confidence in these gender differences.

**Table (6): Comparison of Social Media User Appeal between Male and Female Participants**

Category	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Leisure	Male	19	2.2687	0.15298	*4.21	63	0.0153
	Female	69	1.3081	0.48939			
Empowerment	Male	40	2.9706	0.21087	*3.89	86	0.0215
	Female	25	1.7500	0.31906			

The higher mean score among male participants indicates that they may perceive social media as a means to fulfill empowerment-related needs, such as acquiring knowledge, professional development, and networking. They may actively engage with content and activities that provide them with a sense of competence, control, and personal growth. In contrast, female participants may have lower mean scores, suggesting potential differences in their motivations and engagement with empowerment-related content on social media.

These findings align with the core principles of the Uses and Gratification Theory, emphasizing that individuals select and use media channels based on their specific needs, motivations, and gratifications. The theory suggests that individuals actively seek out media content that fulfills their psychological, social, and informational needs (Ruggiero, 2000).

## Discussion

The findings from the analysis of the provided data shed light on the awareness and usage patterns of Egyptian youth regarding social media and its perceived empowerment prospects. The integration of the Uses and Gratifications theory enhances our understanding of the motivations and gratifications behind their social media usage. This is particularly true when one takes into account the findings of Ambrose and Catherine (2013), who found that social media can significantly contribute to the growth

of employability by empowering its users, particularly young people, in a variety of ways. As a result, social networking sites play a very significant role in the lives of all young people. The level of awareness is really high and has turned into a motivating factor for young users who have high expectations from social media.

However, despite the fact that young people are aware of social media's potential for empowering them, the first hypothesis's findings showed that the majority of young people are drawn to it for its amusement value, which includes chatting, connecting with friends, having fun, and other forms of part-time work. The future is not promising from this angle because social media's propensity for empowerment, particularly in developing nations where unemployment is a persistent problem, is one of its main attractions. Additionally, if youth are more interested in pleasure than empowerment, it portends a certain type of social and moral risk. Umeogu and Ojiakor (2014) discovered that, in many cases, young people may be overwhelmed by the negative effects of social media use, such as addiction to social media, and a lack of self-control in using the platform, which can result in moral decay, a decline in educational values, and unethical behaviors like online fraud, crimes, cyberbullying and other vices related to technology.

In this light, it was concluded from the results that females were more drawn to social media's leisure appeal than males, while it was established that males were more drawn to the empowerment appeal than females proving the second hypothesis right, that show a significant gender difference in social media leisure and empowerment appeals. The results are in line with the sociocultural foundation of our Middle Eastern culture, which values men's ability to provide for their families and so privileges their interest in means of production above that of women. In line with the findings of Ojeleye, Opusunju, Ahmed, and Aku (2018) which found that social media impact significantly on entrepreneurship development among users, there is belief that males will see social media as an extension of productive means than women who will see it as a platform for leisure. This is supported by Agbawe's (2018) findings that despite the horrendous challenges articulated, social media portends some prospects that could be harnessed to change the shape of society and the way businesses are done.

Societal expectations and gender roles may shape the way males and females engage with social media (Bargh et al., 2002). In some cultures, there might be traditional expectations for males to assert their dominance, seek empowerment, or demonstrate their expertise. These expectations can influence their online behaviors and the content they engage with.

Males might have more access to resources, opportunities, and networks that contribute to their sense of empowerment (Lwin et al., 2019). Factors such as educational opportunities, career prospects, and social support systems might play a

role in providing males with more avenues for empowerment-related activities. This could lead to a higher likelihood of engaging with empowerment-focused content on social media.

In line with Pempek's Study (2009). Males might be more inclined to showcase their achievements, skills, and expertise, which align with empowerment-related activities. This could result in higher engagement with empowerment content and higher scores in the empowerment category.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have important implications for researchers, policymakers, and educators, shedding light on the limited interest of Egyptian youth in harnessing the empowering potential of social media beyond leisure purposes. This observation could be attributed to either a lack of knowledge or a lack of interest among the youth population. However, with appropriate knowledge and awareness, Egyptian youth have the potential to leverage the vast empowering capabilities of social media to navigate the challenges posed by the country's increasing unemployment rate.

For researchers, these results highlight the need for further investigation into the factors influencing youth attitudes and behaviors towards social media. Exploring the specific barriers and motivations that shape their perceptions of social media's empowering prospects can provide valuable insights for designing interventions and educational programs.

Policymakers should take note of the findings to develop strategies that enhance digital literacy and promote the awareness of legitimate business opportunities available on social media platforms. By creating an enabling environment that supports youth empowerment through social media, policymakers can contribute to economic growth and job creation.

Educators play a crucial role in equipping Egyptian youth with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize social media for empowerment purposes. Integrating digital literacy and social media education into the curriculum can help bridge the gap between youth perceptions and the actual potential of social media platforms. By empowering youth with the necessary competencies, educators can help foster a generation that can thrive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The implications of this study underscore the importance of addressing the knowledge gap and fostering interest among Egyptian youth regarding the empowering prospects of social media. By doing so, stakeholders can unlock the transformative power of social media and enable youth to navigate economic challenges, contributing to their personal growth and the overall development of the country.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Egypt has made notable strides in its digitalization journey in recent decades. These advancements can be characterized by several key factors: (1) the widespread and relatively advanced adoption of digital technologies by certain segments of the population, particularly the youth; (2) the emergence of tech-enabled start-ups and the growth of ICT-enabled services, indicating a promising trend in digital adoption; (3) the initial implementation of electronic government services, signifying progress in e-governance initiatives; and (4) the limited adoption of ICT by private sector enterprises, indicating room for further growth and development.

Looking ahead, with the continued expansion of ICT infrastructure and connectivity, coupled with increasing levels of ICT adoption, Egypt has the potential to experience a significant impact from digital transformation, potentially transforming its economy. However, it is important to note that the available evidence regarding the effects of current and future disruptions on employment opportunities in the country remains limited. Therefore, further research is necessary to comprehensively assess the repercussions of these disruptions and their potential implications for the labor market.

## **Recommendations**

Technological innovation and digital transformation have emerged as powerful forces with the potential to bring about profound societal changes. These changes encompass various aspects, including economic growth, job creation, human capital development, and the reduction of poverty and inequality. Given the accelerating pace of technological advancements, policymakers and enterprise owners must continually innovate and raise awareness among the youth population in Egypt. By doing so, Egypt can position itself better to navigate ongoing challenges and effectively respond to future ones.

Enterprise owners who make prudent investments in enhancing their digital capabilities are likely to emerge as leaders in their respective sectors. Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders in mass media, as part of their corporate social responsibility, urgently implement educational programs targeting the youth to foster a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with social media. Additionally, business leaders should take an active role in equipping young people with the necessary skills to leverage social media to their advantage.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this study, like any other research endeavor, has certain limitations that warrant consideration and further investigation.

**Limitations**

The most important limitation of this research is that the sample size is too small to represent the entire Egyptian youth population, to be able to generalize the results. In order to add more depth to this research, this quantitative method can be supported using a qualitative method like in-depth interviews or focus groups with the youth to gain a better understanding, and explore research subjects' opinions on the employability prospects of social media platforms. It is hoped that this research will guide future studies.

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