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## **Cyberfeminism in Egypt: A computer-mediated discourse analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Cyberfeminism refers to integrating technology and feminism. Unlike face-to-face encounters where men usually dominate the communication, the absence of physical and auditory aspects in computer-mediated discourse provides more space for women participation as it blurs gender visibility. As such, cyberspace is considered a welcoming space for women to “challenge male authority” and achieve gender equality. The power of cyberfeminism lies in the fact that it disseminates the message across geographical boundaries. In cyberfeminism, the content is created and disseminated by women to reach segments of society that used to be unapproachable. The present study investigates cyberfeminism in Egypt by conducting a computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) of “Women of Egypt” Facebook page. CMDA investigates four levels of language, namely, structure, meaning, interaction as well as social behavior. The study seeks to highlight the characteristics of cyberfeminist discourse in Egypt and how it empowers women and helps them in highlighting their achievements and countering “patriarchal authority”.

**Keywords:** computer mediated discourse analysis, cyberfeminism, Egypt, Facebook, women of Egypt

### **1. Introduction**

Cyberfeminism refers to the integration of technology and feminism (Rai, 2017, p. 5). As defined by Consalvo (2002), it is a term coined by Plant in 1994 to refer to “the work of feminists interested in theorizing, critiquing, and exploiting the Internet, cyberspace, and new-media technologies in general” (para. 1). Similarly, Rai (2017) defines cyberfeminism as “an ideology created by users on virtual world, it is a movement raised and managed by users of virtual media with a bend of feminism” (Rai, 2017, p. 5). Cyberspace is considered a “welcoming space” for women to disseminate their ideology as women write the content themselves, control the discussions and post it on the cyberspace.

Unlike the first wave of feminism that focused on woman suffrage and the second wave that called for equal rights for women, cyberfeminism grew out of the third wave and was different as it is accessible to everyone regardless of color, race, ethnic background, status, language, or region (Rai, 2017). It addresses many crucial issues such as gender inequality, empowers women to be cyber activists (Kanai & Dobson, 2016), and helps them “self-sustain amid the diversity of male-dominated discourse that controls technology use” (Lestari et. al. 2020, p.

281). It creates a feminist online space that counters gender dominance and shows that digital media can be used by women to express their opinions and build a virtual community. As such, it attracts the attention of women from various fields and different walks of life (Lestari et. al. 2020, p. 282).

Whereas face-to-face conversations are usually dominated by men, the absence of physical and auditory aspects in computer-mediated discourse blurs gender visibility and thus provides more space for women participation as it blurs gender visibility (Danet, 1998). Social media websites have caused “substantial and pervasive changes” in communication (Kietzmann et al., 2011) as they give space to participation and feedback from the audience in a way that removes the barrier between media and audience where everyone can comment or add to the posts (Rai, 2017).

The emergence of feminism started as a movement all over the world that aimed at countering “subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their gender” (Mohanty & Samantray, 2017, p. 328). Feminism focuses on analyzing gender identity through shedding light on women's self-identity. Similarly, cyberfeminism counters men domination in cyberspace and aims at incorporating women in technology to change the negative stereotypes about women and pave the way for “female emancipation” by granting women the opportunity to communicate, interact and share information on the internet to “reframe themselves within existing social structure” (Kuah-Pearce, 2008, p. 11).

Since the internet is considered a tool for “contemporary social struggles” as it offers space for participation and expression of one’s point of view, it opens space for “mobilization of the various discursive communities” that are not characterized by “the hierarchy of social and political relations” (Costa, 2019, p. 66). In cyberfeminism, women strive to occupy their virtual space to continue their struggle that was started in the past with the first and second wave of feminism. Therefore, cyberfeminism evolved fast and encompassed various problems and different fronts (Lalonde 2012, as cited in Costa 2019, p. 69).

The analysis of digital discourse includes the investigation of various aspects such as the features of Interactive Multimodal Platforms (IMP) (Newon 2011; Sindoni 2014; Herring & Demarest, 2017), online advocacy campaigns by women action groups (Chiluwa, 2021), as well as intertextuality in written posts (Yang & Lee, 2022). Another aspect of digital discourse that has attracted scholars is that of Emojis. Stockton (2015) considers Emojis a type of a “new language”, while Miller et al. (2021) argue that their meaning is not always clear and thus they cause ambiguity and may lead to misunderstanding.

Feminist cyberactivism during the Arab Spring is tackled by Radsch and Khamis (2013) who investigated how cyberactivism is used by young women to participate in changing the political and social status quo during the Arab Spring Revolution and enact new model of leadership and empowerment. Using social media platforms, young women were able to voice their demands and deliver their message across geographical borders. In a similar vein, Tazi and Oumlil (2020) deal with the “fourth wave of feminism” in the Arab Region. Unlike the present study that focuses on Egypt, Tazi and Oumlil (2020) compare three Arab countries during the Arab Spring Revolution, i.e. Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon.

As evident from the above review, none of the previous studies tackles cyberfeminism in Egypt or highlights the feature of cyberfeminism discourse and its role as a means of emancipating women and enabling them to correct stereotypes and counter “male authority”, hence the need for the present study. The study addresses this gap by applying a computer-mediated discourse analysis of the Women of Egypt (henceforth WOE) Facebook page to highlight the strategies used by Egyptian women to “reframe their identity” in the new digital social structure. Statistics show that women “dominate” social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter (Rai, 2017). Women have used these online resources to create a channel of communication with the outer world through which they can speak their minds, increase their social status, and challenge male authority to achieve gender equality (Rai, 2017).

As such, the study addresses the following questions:

- (1) What are the characteristics of the discourse of cyberfeminism?
- (2) How does cyberfeminism in Egypt empower women in countering “male authority”?
- (3) What are the strategies used to achieve this?

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### **2.1. Research Design**

The study applies a computer-mediated discourse analysis to qualitatively investigate the discourse features of cyberfeminism and the strategies used to empower women to counter “patriarchal authority”. CMDA “applies methods adapted from language-focused disciplines such as linguistics, communication, and rhetoric to the analysis of computer-mediated communication (Herring, 2004, p. 2). CMDA is interdisciplinary as it includes analysis of language used in “electronic environments” that integrates both written and spoken language and thus, it creates “a language variety or a register of its own” (Altohami, 2020, p. 83).

The present paper applies CMDA at both the micro and the macro levels. At the micro level it examines the word-formation (Cherny, 1999), lexical choices (Ko 1996; Yates 1996), sentence structure (Herring, 1998), and code switching among bilingual speakers (Georgakopoulou in press; Paolillo, 1996, as cited in Herring 2004, p. 2). At the macro level the study investigates coherence (Panyametheekul, 2001), community (Cherny, 1999), gender equality (Herring, 1999) and identity (Burkhalter, 1999), as expressed through discourse” (as cited in Herring, 2004, p. 2).

In this study, CMDA is selected as it integrates various theories of discourse and computer-mediated communication so it can scrutinize both linguistic and non-linguistic elements of discourse (Herring, 2004, p. 4). This is vital as multimodality is a core feature of human communication (Norris, 2004) and digital communication is heavily multimodal as it integrates various semiotic modes (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2019, pp. 6,7).

CMDA studies online communication through a toolkit that investigates four linguistic levels: “structure, meaning, interaction management, and social behavior” (Herring, 2018, p. 25).

**Table 1:** CMDA toolkit (Herring, 2018, pp. 26, 27)

<b>Levels</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Phenomena</b>	<b>Methods</b>
<b>Structure</b>	Orality, formality, efficiency, expressivity, complexity, genre, etc.	Typography, orthography, morphology, syntax, discourse schemata, formatting conventions, etc.	Structural/ descriptive linguistics, text analysis, corpus linguistics, stylistics
<b>Meaning</b>	What is communicated? What is intended? What is accomplished?	Meaning of words, utterances (speech acts), exchanges, etc.	Semantics, pragmatics
<b>Interaction management</b>	Interactivity, timing, coherence, repair, interaction, etc.	Turns, sequences, exchanges, threads, etc.	Conversation analysis, ethnomethodology
<b>Social phenomena</b>	Social dynamics, power, identity, community, cultural differences, etc.	Linguistic expressions of status, conflict, negotiation, face management, play, discourse styles, etc.	Interactional sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, ethnography of communication
<b>Structure</b>	Orality, formality, efficiency, expressivity, complexity, genre, etc.	Typography, orthography, morphology, syntax, discourse schemata, formatting conventions, etc.	Structural/ descriptive linguistics, text analysis, corpus linguistics, stylistics

It is important to note that on social media websites, graphics became “semiotic devices” that convey “propositional content” (Herring, 2018). The study examines the use of graphical effects such as emoticons, emojis and animated gifs that express emotions. The study draws on Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle which assume that all participants abide by the maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relevance. Speakers may “flout” these maxims (Grice, 1975) and the violation of any of these maxims might be an instance of a certain ideology (Grundy, 2000, p. 76).

Since CMDA is multimodal, the study draws on Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). Following Kress and van Leeuwen, images are analyzed according to their representational, interactional, and compositional meaning. Representational meaning deals with the represented participants, the processes depicted as well as the attributes of the participants. The interpersonal meaning deals with the relationship between the visual, the producer and the viewer. This level of meaning probes into the presence or the absence of facial expression, the gaze, and whether represented participants are looking at one another, or at the viewers. The third aspect of meaning, compositional meaning, relates to the visual salience such as size, color, or visual framing as well as layout and the interplay between the visual and the verbal elements.

## 2.2. Data selection

The study analyzes thirty posts from WOE Facebook page as a new venue for women activism. All the analyzed posts along with their links and photos are in the appendix. The analyzed posts were selected from the period of (November 2022 till March 2023). Only thirty posts are selected to avoid repetition as the same features are used time and again. This period is selected

as it marks an important stage where the page launched a campaign to raise the awareness of women regarding critical issues in the Egyptian society and they also started celebrating one hundred years of Egyptian feminism. WOE Facebook page was created in January 2016 and it has reached 863 K followers and 790 K likes (September 2023). According to the information provided in the “about” section on Facebook “it was created to empower women and advance gender equality; to change the perception of the West about Egyptian women and to revive the memory of the amazing women of the Egyptian suffragette movement”. WOE advocates and empowers women by featuring their stories. Women of all ages are invited to share their stories. WOE is not affiliated with any organization or campaign. It is a personal initiative to motivate women to stand up and fight for their rights. WOE sends a message for women to be ambitious and break any taboos holding them back, to walk in harassment-free streets and to enjoy a work environment with no gender discrimination.

WOE Facebook page is selected as it reflects the core issues that preoccupy feminists such as “violence against women, childhood sexual abuse ..., sexual harassment, the beauty myth, compulsory heterosexuality, women’s health and reproductive rights, equal opportunities for women in the workplace and the end of heteropatriarchal domination” (Kitzinger, 2000, p. 163). All these issues are dealt with on the social media and are discussed with all women not only those who have access to the so-called “reputable institutions”. As such, the dissemination of the message is achieved across geographical borders with no discrimination based on age, gender, color or social status.

### **2.3. Data analysis**

The data of the study is grouped into three categories: namely, empowering Egyptian women, celebrating feminism pioneers, and awareness campaigns. Posts are analyzed at the four levels; structure, meaning, interaction management and social interaction.

The first category of posts (Empowering Egyptian women) aims at celebrating Egyptian women achievements by highlighting their success stories to inspire other women to follow suit. It includes posts that offer tips for the workplace such as interview tips and tricks, online or offline development courses, honoring Egyptian women by celebrating their achievements, or showcasing their products. Empowerment is also achieved through countering stereotypes about beauty standards as well as correcting misconceptions about the true meaning of feminism and independent women. The thematic analysis of the category of posts reflects empowerment as they deal with myriad topics such as defying the ubiquity of patriarchal depiction of women as “physical objects” (Lestari, 2020, p. 281). For instance, post number 6 defies one of the widespread beauty standards in the Egyptian society which claims that a beautiful girl should have straight hair. The post shows an example of a girl that is passionate about her curly hair. She counters the dominant stereotypes about beauty standards in the Egyptian society and encourages Egyptian girls to feel confident and proud regardless of what people think of their hair.

The second category of posts celebrates 100 years of Egyptian feminism pioneers as the year 2023 marks the platinum anniversary of the Egyptian Feminism Federation established by Huda Sharawy in 1923. These bright examples include pioneers in various fields such as Dr. Zahira Hafez (1917 – 2002), a Pediatrician and Rheumatic Heart specialist, Lieutenant

Ibtisamat Mohamed, the first woman to join the armed forces in 1948, Dr. Soheir El Qalamawy (1911 - 1997), a University Professor, Journalist, and the founder of Cairo Book Fair, and Sameera Moussa (1917 - 1952), an Egyptian nuclear physicist who held a doctorate in atomic radiation and worked to make the medical use of nuclear technology affordable for all among others. These examples are all role models that prove that Egyptian women excelled in all fields and proved that they are brilliant and successful.

The third category of posts aims at raising the awareness of women and the entire society to important issues that are related to feminism such as the campaigns against child marriage, domestic violence, countering sextortion, manspreading, catfishing, phishing and creepshots. All these posts aim to raise the awareness of Egyptians regarding these crimes by warning them against the plots of hackers, directing them to resort to various channels of communication and encouraging to speak up and go to the concerned authorities. Moreover, some of these posts target the parents by raising their awareness and guiding them to believe their daughters and take actions to protect them without being afraid of the community or people's perception.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

As previously mentioned, the data of the study is grouped into three categories, and each one has its characteristics regarding structure, meaning, interaction management, and social phenomena.

#### **3.1. Structure**

##### ***3.1.1. Formatting convention***

The formatting convention of the first category of posts is bilingual. The posts start with Arabic then the same text is written in English. The use of the English language indicates that the posts aim at delivering the message across language barriers to non-Arab audience. After writing the post in Arabic and English, real photos of the celebrated women are placed under the text with a caption that shows the name and the position of each one of them.

The second category of posts is also written in both languages, Arabic and English. They start by mentioning the name and the position of the pioneer feminist, then give the audience a glimpse of her achievements briefly in Arabic and in English. This brief text is followed by a clickable link that allows you to read the full article in Arabic and another one in English. The real photo of the celebrated figure is provided with the post.

The structure of the third category of posts is slightly different. These posts are written in Arabic only as they target Egyptian women and society. The register used is also different as some posters use nonstandard Arabic or colloquial language. Such posts do not use real photos, but they use cartoon drawings to express the idea.

##### ***3.1.2. Intertextuality***

“Intertextuality” is a term coined by Kristeva (1966) to “designate the various relationships that a given text may have with other texts” (as cited in Alfaro, 1996, p. 268). “Intertextuality” refers to “the interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to one another (as well as to the culture at large) to produce meaning” (Nordquist 2017: para. 1). Aboelezz (2012) defines intertextuality as “the reproduction of a text or its structure in a different context for a range of

purposes such as irony, parody, humour, reverence, etc.” (p. 1). She cites three types of “intertextuality”: “material intertextuality”, “structural intertextuality” and “constitutive intertextuality”. “Material intertextuality” depends on the repetition of signs such as the use of quotes or proverbs. “Structural intertextuality” lies in the relation between texts in terms of style, textual format, ideologies or writing conventions. “Constitutive intertextuality” occurs when a text adopts or borrows from the discourse conventions of a certain genre, style or register. Constitutive intertextuality is employed by WOE Facebook page, and it is linked to identity construction. The prepositional phrase “with pride” describes the identity of being Egyptian. This post and similar others honor Egyptian women by celebrating their achievements and showcasing their products using the hashtag (#Made with Pride in Egypt). Structural Intertextuality is also employed in post number 25 where the post adopts the discourse conventions of a dictionary to explain the meaning of the word /Sextortion/.

### 3.1.3. Structural analysis

Following Bauer (2000), the study distinguishes structural analysis and “semantic” one. The former includes the use of “emoticons, abbreviations, lexical items, word formatives (such as cyber-), syntactic patterns (such as passive voice), and quoting”. The latter includes speech acts and social phenomena such as “conflict and politeness” (Herring, 2004, p. 18).

There are many instances of using nominal forms in the analyzed posts. Normalization is used to “pack much information in few words” and to “render discourse more objective” (Altohami, 2020, p. 84). For instance, “منتجات صنعتت بفخر في مصر”, “products made with pride in Egypt”, “Hiyam Abd El-Samee’ an entrepreneur and owner of Kayan shop for textiles in Sohag”, “الست لطفية: عاملة نسج سجاد في مركز”, “Set Lotfia: Weaver at Ramses Wissa Weaving Center in Harania”, “حيي للشعر الكيرلي شغف - شغفي بالشعر الكيرلي فن”, “My Love for Curls is passion, my passion for Curls is Art”, “زينب حيدر صاحبة مشروع قضاقيص كعابيش”, “Zainab Haydar the owner of Qasaqis Kaabish”, “النسوية: لماذا هي مفهوم يثير الرعب؟”, “Feminism: A Terrifying Concept?”, “مئة عام نسوية”, “100 years feminism pioneers”, “زواج القاصرات جريمة”, “Child Marriage is a crime”, “Phishing”, “Sextortion”, “Manspreading”, “Creepshot”, “Catfishing”. As such, these examples show that nominalization contributes “to the informational load of a text” (Altohami, 2020, p. 84).

The use of adverbs is significant as they “carry much of the informational load of an utterance, indicating the place, time, manner and frequency of an action” (Altohami, 2020, p. 84). For instance, in post number 1 the adverb “soon” is used in “soon my name will be with those names”. The adverb “soon” indicates time and refers to the duration of time expected by the speaker. It also signals hope and optimism from the speaker who aspires to be a successful person soon. In post number 2 the prepositional phrase “with pride” is used as a descriptive modifier for the identity of being “Egyptian” as the post says “Made with pride in Egypt” to refer to the products made by Reham. Moreover, in post 3 the adverb “after” is used to mark temporal relationships in the title of the post that says “Artists Eman Ghanem start art project after 60”. The adverb aims at stressing the temporal aspect as it shows that it is never too late for women to start their own projects.

The analysis of the corpus shows that present simple tense is used extensively in the posts to

indicate factuality. Examples of the use of present tense include “*Reham Youssef Creates Amigurumi Items from Recycled Material*”, “*Artist Eman Ghanem starts art project after 60*”, “*My love for curls is passion*”, “*Fourteen Egyptian Women on Forbes List of Most Powerful Businesswomen in the Middle East*”.

## 3.2. Meaning

### 3.2.1. Lexical semantics

It can be noted that WOE Facebook page uses professional jargon to show how women are emerging as powerful social actors. Empowering Egyptian women is achieved through the use of technical terms referring to cyber sexual abusive acts such as “*sextortion, phishing, creepshots, catfishing and manspreading*”. The use of such words proves that Egyptian women have technological expertise and are not technophobic. All these technical terms are used to raise the awareness of Egyptian women and warn them against such abusive online behaviors. Some of these terms are explained on the post simply to make it easy for lay readers to grasp the meaning, while others are explained inter-semiotically through the image in the poster. “Sextortion” refers to “a type of dating scam which involves exchanging pictures and videos with a target. Then blackmailing them later in return for money or some other type of currency” (Sextortion, 2024). “Phishing” means “the practice of tricking Internet users (as through the use of deceptive email messages or websites) into revealing personal or confidential information which can then be used illicitly” (Phishing, 2024). “Creepshots” refers to any photograph of a person taken without having acquired permission (Creepshot, 2018). Catfishing refers to the phenomenon of internet predators that fabricate online identities and entire social circles to trick people into emotional/romantic relationships (over a long period of time) (Catfishing, 2024).

In addition to using technical terms that refer to the different types of abuse that women might be exposed to on cyberspace, another term used to criticize the behavior of some men in the public space and raise awareness of women in resisting such a practice that signals authority is the term “Manspreading”. “Manspreading” which refers to the act or practice by a man of sitting with the legs spread wide apart (as in a public seating area) in a way that intrudes on the space of others (Merriam Webster Dictionary). This is a neologism as manspreading might signal dominance and authority.

### 3.2.2. Register

Analyzing register is revealing as it can be a means of “stance-taking” (Bassiouney, 2012). Register is used to assume a certain identity and impose a different one on others. For instance, using Standard Arabic indicates power as it is the register used by officials and states leaders, while using any dialect denotes that a speaker is loyal to his speech community and is highlighting his “local identity and belonging” (Michel, 2013, p. 41).

Following the classification of various registers of Egyptian Arabic by Badawi (2012), the first and second categories of posts use Modern Standard Arabic (henceforward MSA) which is the second level, while the third category of posts uses Middle Standard Colloquial (henceforward MSC) which is the fourth level.



The predominance of MSA in the first and second categories of posts can be noted. The use of MSA signifies “women empowerment” as this is the register used by officials and states leaders. This is a clear indication of women’s refusal of the patriarchal authority as men used to take active roles in the society and exploited language in a way that empowers them. Moreover, it represents an act of reclaiming the access to language resources and to power, authority, and legitimacy (Bassiouney, 2012, p. 87). Also, it delivers a message that women can be powerful social actors. Examples include: فوربس تختار 14 سيدة مصرية ضمن قائمتها لأقوى 100 - سيدة أعمال الشرق الأوسط - Fourteen Egyptian Women on Forbes List of Most Powerful Businesswomen in the Middle East - ريهام يوسف تصنع منتجات - Riham makes products - إيمان غانم - Artist Iman Ghanem Starts her Art Project After 60 - فنانة تشكيلية بدأت مشروعها الفني وتقيم أول معارضها - Hyam Abd El-Samee’ an entrepreneur and the owner of Kayan workshop - هيام عبد السميع رائدة أعمال وصاحبة ورشة كيان - All you want to know about Interviews: Tips and Tricks - النسوية لماذا هي مفهوم مرعب؟ - Feminism: A Terrifying Concept? - الرجال الذين يتزوجون نسويات هم الأسعد - Men who get married to feminists are the happiest.

In addition to the use of lexical items that belong to MSA in the first and second categories of posts, the third category uses lexical items that belong to MSC such as تتصرفي ازاي، افهمني، برضو اوعي متدعش ربنا يشفيني عشان أنا مش عيان، بلاش تضغطي على الروابط، كل واحد بقى في ايده تليفون بكاميرا، تردي عالمجرم اللي بيبترك، المباحث حتوصل للمجرم، مش ذنبك، ازاي بيتم اختراق الحساب، وعلشان نقدر نشرح للبنات ونفهمهم لازم نبدأ من الأول.

The use of colloquial language is significant as the third category of posts aim at raising the awareness of the entire Egyptian society to several critical issues, so MSC is used as it is usually regarded to be the authentic voice of “the people”. It is also more accessible to readers, hence its effectiveness in convincing them. This is clear in posts number 4 and 7. Even though the entire post is written in MSA, the quotations said by entrepreneurs Hayam and Zainab are written in MSC to show that this is the authentic voice of the women themselves. Hayam says: "نفسى مشروعى أنا بحاول أغير نظرة خوف المجتمع المحافظ تجاه خروج", while Zaynab says "البنات في الصعيد للعمل والسفر". Thus, when the Facebook page wants to engage the public, colloquial language is used, but when the page wants the message to go beyond geographical borders, MSA and/or English are used.

Since speakers produce “fluctuating meanings in relation to how powerfully they are positioned within a range of competing discourses” (Baxter, 2003, p. 10). Egyptian women on WOE Facebook page used different levels of language as well as English to recreate their identity as powerful social actors on the cyberspace as they master MSA, MSC and English.

### 3.2.3. Pragmatics

#### 3.2.3.1. Speech acts

The third category of posts performs several illocutionary acts and employ direct and indirect speech acts. Direct speech acts are used in post 21 to achieve the function of commanding as it induces the audience to combat minor marriage by calling the assigned number for reporting such cases as the post reads, “Call 16000 to Report Violations Against Minors in Egypt”. In post 22, directive speech acts are used as the post aims at raising the awareness of the people

to the rights of people with special needs. This post performs the act of ordering as it instructs the audience to talk normally with people with special needs without gazing with pity at them. It also performs the act of requesting by asking the people not to invoke God to treat people with special needs because they are not sick. Likewise, in post 23 the verb “unite” is used to call for ending violence against women. The verb “unite” is also used to induce people to take action together to combat violence against women and girls. Directives speech acts are used in post 24 as the verb “call” is used to give women instructions in case of being subjected to domestic violence. Furthermore, posts 25, 26, 27, 29, 30 perform the function of directives and warnings as they all order women to unite to end all sorts of sextortion and warn them against the various ways through which hackers may target their victims or solicit information from them.

Indirect speech acts are also employed in post 21 as the post is warning people against minor marriages by stating that this marriage is considered a crime. Similarly, post 23 utilizes indirect speech act as it says, “It’s time to color the world orange”. This is an indirect speech act as it calls for ending violence against women as orange symbolizes a brighter future, free of violence. It is therefore used as the color of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (UNESCO website). Moreover, post 28 warns women from the so-called manspreading which is considered one form of sexual harassment or a form of imposing ‘male authority’.

### 3.3. Interaction management

The analysis of the corpus shows that the first and the second categories of posts trigger more comments, shares and interaction, unlike the third category of posts that aims at raising the awareness of the people. The three tables below (see table 2, 3, and 4) show the number of likes, shares and comments of each post in the analyzed corpus (all these numbers are retrieved in March 2023).

**Table 2:** The number of likes, shares and comments of the first category (Empowering Egyptian women)

Post No.	Likes	Share	Comments
1	2.4 K	1. 8 K	234
2	85	11	20
3	182	38	27
4	189	37	27
5	159	21	7
6	40	1	1
7	282	31	25
8	27	6	1
9	12	3	15
10	1.5 k	217	699
<b>Total</b>	<b>4876</b>	<b>2165</b>	<b>1056</b>

**Table 3:** The number of likes, shares and comments second category (Celebrating feminism pioneers)

Post No.	Likes	Share	Comments
11	123	32	15
12	30	6	0
13	63	5	5
14	30	5	2
15	378	77	31
16	72	9	3
17	278	127	9
18	115	38	13
19	64	18	11
20	300	53	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>1453</b>	<b>370</b>	<b>123</b>

**Table 4:** The number of likes, shares and comments of the third category (Awareness campaigns)

Post No.	Likes	Share	Comments
21	198	21	32
22	8	1	0
23	16	1	3
24	91	24	23
25	7	6	1
26	15	6	0
27	16	6	2
28	306	67	96
29	11	3	0
30	17	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>158</b>

The first category of posts has received the highest interaction. All the posts that celebrate the success of powerful women such as post number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7, have almost the same pattern of interaction. The comments congratulate these successful women on their success and show how the commentators feel proud of them. “congratulations”, “well done” /أحفاد كيليو باترا/

[grandchildren of Cleopatra], /حاجة تشرف/ [congratulations] /الف ألف مبروك/, [This is really great honor]. Some other comments show that other women are looking up to those successful women and aspire to be like them one day. One comment reads [*my name will soon be beside these names*] /في يوم من الأيام اسمي هيكون /, [one day my name will be here] /إن شاء الله قريباً اسمي جنبهم/ موجود. While other comments encourage someone to be like those successful women as it says: [My heroine, I wait for you to be in this list] /بطلتي أنتظرك في تلك القائمة/, [May I see your name in this list soon] /يارب أشوف اسمك في القائمة دي قريب إن شاء الله/, [Soon you will be among those names Hannoudy In shaa Allah] /قريب تكوني وسطهم ياهنودي/, [God willing next time your name will be here] /ان شاء الله المرة الجاية اسم حضرتك معاهم/.

In fact, these comments and the active interaction with the posts show that WOE Facebook page has succeeded in achieving its goal as stated on their page which is “to motivate women to stand up and fight for their rights ... to be strong and confident ... and break any taboos holding them back”. As evident from the analyzed comments above, many girls and women express their aspiration to be like these successful women and look up to them as role models to be followed.

Some comments breach the maxim of relevance as they mention in their comment irrelevant replies. One comment says that women who are successful in their career are usually unsuccessful wives, while other 3 comments tackle the idea that none of those successful women are wearing Hijab. The comments say, [It is really strange that none of them is wearing Hijab] /مفيش سيدات أعمال محجبات؟/, [And no one is wearing Hijab] /غريبة قوي مفهمش واحدة محجبة/, [There are no businesswomen who are wearing Hijab?]. These comments breach the maxim of relevance as the post aims at celebrating the success stories of Egyptian women regardless of their appearance, race or color, while the comments deal with fact that none of them wear Hijab.

One of the distinctive features of the interaction on WOE Facebook page in the first category of posts is the use of graphical effects such as emoticons, emojis, animated gifs that express emotions of approval as the comments are used to congratulate the successful women on their success. Below are some examples of these graphical effects used:



These examples prove that on social media graphics became “semiotic devices” that convey “propositional content” (Herring, 2018). The meaning of these graphics is clear as they are accompanied by written text to express the intended meaning.

It is worth noting that post number 10 triggered a large number of comments (i.e. 699 comments) and incited many arguments among the commenters. This post empowers women in a different way as it calls upon men to get married to feminists. The post says that those who get married to feminists are the happiest. Some comments praise the idea while many others are sceptical about it or even criticize it. An example of the comments that support the idea is



marriage in a way that affects marital relations. These comments read, /أتمنى يكون حقيقي/ [I hope this would be real /شكرا لمساعدتكم على تقليل النسل واستمراركم في الحملات الشرسة والتحذير الشديد /, /من الزواج عندك حق أصبح خطر يهدد المجتمع مش بهزر على فكرة having offspring and your continuous fierce campaigns to warn people against marriage you are right marriage is becoming a danger that threatens the society, I am not kidding].

A striking number of comments can be noted under post number 28 which deals with the phenomenon of "Manspreading". Some comments criticize the practice of manspreading and consider it an improper practice, while others refuse to accept the idea and believe that this is a normal practice of men due to their biological or physical nature. For instance, comments read, /فعلا قلة ذوق / [In Egypt this is considered poor upbringing], /في مصر تدرج تحت بند قلة الرباية/ [This is improper as if he is sitting on his own sofa at home]. Some comments stress the importance of launching awareness campaigns such as the following: /هيئة المترو أطلقت حملة للتوعية ... هذا هو ما ينقصنا... حملات توعية في كل المجالات... مينفعش نسيب الناس هي واخلاقها [The Metro Authority launched awareness campaign...This is what we need... awareness campaigns in all fields ... we cannot let people behave according to their conduct without raising their awareness]. Some comments refuse the idea itself altogether and see it as not suitable in Egypt "This is in Europe not in Egypt", /عادي يعني مش شرط يكونوا قاصدين يضايقوا / [This might be normal behavior not meant to annoy others], /اتقوا الله كفايا بدع / [Fear God, enough innovations], /لو مش عاجبكوا قاعدة الرجاله عندكوا جزء مخصص للسيدات في المترو اقعدوا فيه/ [If you do not like the way men sit, go to the part that is allocated for women in the Metro].

### 3.4.Social phenomena

#### 3.4.1. Identity and solidarity

Identity is "something one does, not something one has" as it is "achieved, maintained and damaged through interaction" (Blumer, 1969). The identity of Egyptian women is a recurrent theme on WOE Facebook page. The name of the page reflects the identity in Arabic and English "Women of Egypt" in English and "سيدات مصر" in Arabic. Thus, all the posts appear with this same identity and some posts are stressing this idea more by adding a hashtag to empower Egyptian women. This reflects the importance of identity as a tool for "speech action" (Roach, 2021).

The use of "markers of solidarity" to engender group membership can be noted. For instance, in-group/out-group language is operationalized structurally as the uses of first-person plural pronouns ("we" and "us"). The video of the page is titled "Together We Are Strong. Together We Make a Difference" and the use of the inclusive pronoun "we" can be noted in the video. Moreover, the logo of the page WE can be read as "we" to show solidarity.

### 3.5. Multimodality

Representational meaning deals with the represented participants, the processes depicted as well as the attributes of the participants. The interpersonal meaning deals with the relationship between the visual, the producer and the viewer. This level of meaning probes into the presence or the absence of facial expression, the gaze, and whether represented participants are looking at one another, or at the viewers. The third aspect of meaning, compositional meaning, relates to the visual salience such as size, color, or visual framing as well as layout and the interplay

between the visual and the verbal elements.

As for the analysis of images, most of the represented participants in the first category of posts are all looking at the audience with a proud gaze. All the photos are taken from close-up shots with all the represented participants smiling and looking to the front as if there is a direct interaction between them and the audience. In posts 3 and 8 the represented participants are looking up as if they are looking to the bright future that awaits them. The two represented participants who are not looking at the audience are in posts number 4 and 6. In post 4, the represented participant is looking at sewing machine as she is passionate about her start-up project, while post 6 shows the represented participant looking at her curly hair in a passionate way that defies the “patriarchal pre-imposed” beauty standards. Long shot is only used in post number 9 as the post aims at showing various images of women with different outfits to demonstrate that the concept of feminism is not restricted to a certain category of women.

Analyzing compositional meaning reveals that the orange color is used in post 23 to induce the audience to “color” the world orange to end violence against women as orange is the color of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (UNESCO website). Moreover, all the posts that deal with the various cybercrimes committed against women are also colored with orange to indicate that they belong to the same category of violence against women. Posts number 25, 26, 27, 29, and 30 are good examples that attest to this.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The study proves that WOE used the internet as a site for “contemporary social struggles” and succeeded in mobilizing myriad discursive communities in Egypt that do not have social or political hierarchy. Egyptian women used cyberspace to create a channel of communication with the outer world through which they can speak their minds and challenge male authority to achieve gender equality. It proves that cyberspace made it possible for women to disseminate their ideologies. Cyberfeminism in Egypt dealt with the same issue that preoccupy feminists all over the world as it tackled the issue of violence against women, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and gender equality. A distinctive feature of Egyptian cyberfeminism is the celebration of pioneer feminists and the awareness campaigns that were launched on the cyberspace to provide support for women who are subjected to any kind of sextortion, phishing, sexual abuse or domestic violence. As such, cyberspace is no longer regarded as a “masculine space”. Egyptian cyberfeminism has succeeded in mobilizing the memory of Egyptian women and rebuilding its own historical and discursive thread. This is achieved by using different strategies at the four levels of analysis; namely, the level of structure, meaning, interaction management, and social phenomena.

The findings show that social media provided women with a voice that could defy patriarchal authority and stereotypes. Through cyberfeminism, WOE managed to reach national and international audiences and communities of people as well as marginalized groups of women who did not have a voice. As such, Egyptian women used cyberspace to “reframe their identity” within existing “social structure”.

Since cyberfeminism is a powerful way that enables women to challenge patriarchal authority, the study recommends conducting similar research on cyberfeminism in other countries in the

Middle East to compare the findings and see whether there are similarities or differences in the strategies used and the topics discussed. Studies can also be conducted on other Facebook pages in the West to highlight the differences in the discourse and the techniques used by women in the West.

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## Appendix 1

## Category 1: Empowering Egyptian women

1. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/520931083502305>



2. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/532308942364519>



3. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/531168035811943>



4. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/491062239822523>



5. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/489838616611552>



6. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=478305221098225&set=pb.100067562539063.-2207520000.&type=3>



7. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/477970867798327>



8. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=460954179499996&set=a.436309901964424>



9. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=459337219661692&set=a.436309901964424>



10. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/537228711872542>



**Category 2: Celebrating feminism pioneers**

11. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/493172826278131>



12. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/494502922811788>



13. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/493868676208546>



14. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/493241149604632>



15. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/519149360347144>



16. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/538751758386904>



17. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/538235238438556>



18. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/537683435160403>



19. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/537139091881504>



20. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/535516752043738>



Category 3: Awareness campaigns

21. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/482946480634099>



22. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=471226151806132&set=a.436309901964424>



23. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=465389875723093&set=a.436309901964424>



24. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=458669873061760&set=a.436309901964424>



25. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/517832843812129>



26. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/pfbid02DZKcaKoU2sL9zLih66nndjBVKChAC2KE6UL3rSiuwswJunMaGv6ebM2Mted9d5sNI>



27. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/532077959054284>





28. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/529342792661134>



29. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=533458718916208&set=a.436309901964424>



30. <https://www.facebook.com/thewomenofegypt/posts/536111158650964>

