

The Role of Social Media Networks in Enhancing Political Change Amongst Adolescents in Egypt: A Survey¹

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Abstract

The rate of growth of internet usage and specifically social media networks is dramatically increasing year after year. By the end of 2010, the total number of Facebook users in Egypt reached 6,837,860, 8.5% of the population. Almost 17% of Facebook users range between 13-17 years old³. Egypt has lately experienced a strong political revolution, where the internet - and specifically social media - played the role of the hero. Protest groups were formed and co-ordinated on social media networks, with members of the public invited to participate in protest against the government.

This study investigates the online usage habits of the Egyptian adolescents with a focus on social media networks – specifically Facebook. The study sheds light on the role played by Facebook in enhancing adolescents' attitudes towards political and social changes currently occurring in Egypt. A random sample of 200 adolescents aged between (12-

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³ <http://www.socialbakers.com/Facebook-statistics/egypt>

18 years old) who use the internet and have a Facebook account, was selected and invited to complete a structured questionnaire. Data was analysed using SPSS.

The area of children's and adolescents' use of social media is rarely researched in Egypt as it is relatively a new phenomenon. The results are expected to create a profile of social networking for adolescents in Egypt and the role played by them through social networks to enhance political and societal change in Egypt.

Key words: adolescents, social media networks, Egypt, Facebook.

Facebook - as a social networking site - is illustrative of the major characteristics of Web 2.0 technologies, as it involves information sharing and communication between different users (Madge et als, 2009). The term "social networks" has different connotations in academic literature. Some researchers use it to mean "socially interactive technologies" such as instant messaging and text messaging, while others use it to describe the networks that offer fast-paced, inexpensive, online communication, allowing youth to socially interact (Bryant et als, 2006). The nature and quality of activities conducted on social media networks have also been discussed by researchers. Chang and Cheng (2004), found significant differences between online and offline relationships, as online relationships are characterized by less depth but on the other hand, provide extra connections outside participants' existing social networks. This simply means more relationships but less bonding. Other researchers found that social media networks are used by people who are not willing to communicate in face to face interactions (Sheldon et al, 2009). This research focuses on Egyptian adolescents, their perception and attitudes towards social media – specifically Facebook. It also examinies the role played by social networking sites during the Egyptian revolution in January 25, 2011.

Children, Adolescents and Social Media Networks

Researching adolescents and social media networks requires us to employ network thinking to understand the social experiences of young people and how they influence young people's behaviour. Combining the

areas of adolescents and social network sites provide a fresh way of investigating and interpreting the links among people, objects and ideas. It also allows an examination of social structures that extend beyond the immediate group in the local setting to incorporate larger patterns of relationships (Cotterell, 2007).

Children, adolescents and adults differ in their usage of media and in their evaluation of how the media influence them. They all like to apply the third person effect when it comes to media influences: adults perceive that the younger the other person is, the stronger the effect the media will have on him; adolescents claim that only “little kids” imitate what they see on TV. Adolescence as a stage of cognitive development, on the other hand, is often characterised as a time of challenge and turbulence, as young people are faced with increasing independence and growing self-discovery. One of the main features of adolescence is the great challenge an adolescent faces in forming their self identity. There is growing evidence that adolescents use the internet to experiment with their identities (Madge et al, 2009). Adolescence is also a period of increasing independence and having more time away from parents. A third feature of adolescence as a stage of cognitive development is that adolescents are risk takers; they face tough decisions regarding activities and experiences to go through, such as smoking and sexual activities and they are willing to experiment with these in a reckless way as a form of asserting independence from parents. A fourth feature of adolescence is the importance to them of peers, as they spend a great deal of time with friends and place a high value on these relationships (Strasburger et als, 2009).

Communications and information technologies are transforming our world, therefore social media networks can be explained through the changing structure of human society. Human groups are valuable as knowledge creators. In the business environment of a multinational organization, Cohen and Prusak (2001) suggested the following principle: “if you want people to connect, to talk, to begin to understand and depend on one another, give the places and occasions for meeting, and enough time to develop networks and communities”. This is exactly what social media networks offer adolescents - a place to connect, understand and meet.

Social media networks compete with other sources of media to satisfy the needs of people to make new discoveries. As part of this need, they usually experiment with their own self-image, manipulating their online personification to fit stereotypes around them. That is why they try on new images by changing their profile appearance to match the image they want to project (King, 2009). Social network sites enable individuals to play an active role in the socialization process and to construct their own identity (Urista et als, 2009).

Facebook not only allows users to meet people whom they do not know, but also allows users to shape and make their social networks visible to others and to expand their network. Young people use many forms of technology to communicate with one another, mobile text messaging, Blackberry messaging and emails. Adoption of such socially interactive technology is highest among children and adolescents, when compared to adoption rates of adults. Research results indicated that instant messaging is used by 74% of online adolescents in the United States compared with 44%

of online adults (Lenhart, Rainie and Lewis, 2001). In UK, research findings produced similar results (Livingstone and Bober, 2005). In the past few years, online social networks have become a mainstream social phenomenon used by everyone, not just children and teens. Facebook - specifically - has completely changed the way young people communicate. When comparing the design of Facebook to other social networks such as MySpace, we find that Facebook is highly private, with a members only policy. It presents one unified profile page or "wall" that cannot be changed, compared to the flashy and highly personalized nature of MySpace. As a social network, Facebook places people into "networks" defined by location, class, special interest, or even employer, which make it easier for users to find their existing friends online or even find people with similar interests in their area. In the United States, MySpace is mainly used by adolescents as a provider of music and videos. In addition, because of its highly customised nature, it is also used in experimenting with their self-image (King, 2009).

Risks

There is an ongoing debate on how to keep young Facebook users safe on the website. Different tools and advice have been distributed over the web to guide parents and guardians on how to protect their children from the dangers of Web 2.0. Among the recommendations is to limit the time children spend on the Internet, use software that allow parents to monitor their children's navigation on the net, continuously examining the child's friends list. The efforts to promote Internet safety are enhanced by different world organizations such as the European Union for child safety online-eNACSO and by private corporations. Research on risk associated with

children is often taken as a base to formulate policies of risk prevention. Adolescents and teenagers should learn to anticipate and cope with risk, to become resilient. A comparison survey conducted among children in three "high risk" European countries found that although the frequency of exposure to online risks is high, most children adopted positive action in the form of seeking help from friends, or more neutral action as ignoring the experience, thus excluding adult involvement. The research also found significant differences in coping with risk between different genders and age levels, pointing to differing ways in which youth manage risk themselves (Staksrud et al, 2009).

Another comparative study that researched media coverage of online risks for children in southern European countries found that perceptions of online risks are socially and culturally shaped, as they differ from one country to another (Mascheroni et als, 2010). Because these countries are geographically close to each other, they share some patterns and trends that influence social attitudes towards the issue of children and new media (ibid). Risk is defined as "the possibility than human actions or events lead to consequences that might harm the human being's value" (Klinke et al). Children as less amenable to parental mediation in the case of internet usage since they are considered worldwide as the "online experts" (Livingstone, 2008). Using such adult social networks became a major concern among researchers worldwide for several reasons. Social network sites consume a lot of children's time, provides them with a false sense of privacy, and they might become targets of scammers. Additionally, it impacts their

interpersonal and their social communication skills as well (Fodeman, 2009).

Facebook and the Egyptian revolution

The Internet is now characterized by network relations, shaped by broader and political shifts in the society. These network relations - in most cases - occur outside the family rather than within it, thus leading to more individualization than group collectivism. According to latest statistics on Facebook in Egypt, Facebook users have exceeded 7 million (7 855 820), with a penetration of population (9.76%). Most Facebook users are aged between 18-24 years old (40%), the second largest age group is 25-34 years old (29%). Adolescents aged from 13-17 come in the third category of Facebook users, reaching (17%). The majority of Facebook users are males (64%), compared with female usage (36%)⁴.

Social media networks have re-shaped the web. Political activists dream that this new structure will allow people to speak the truth freely, away from the power of regimes, and simply assume that social network sites will make people politically activated, which is not always the case. Technology and science can be best understood through their social context, as they are shaped by society and they reflect society's values back at us. Social media networks provide opportunities for anyone to showcase themselves as pseudo-celebrities through performances that are not necessarily "real", thus providing a platform for attention-seeking

⁴ www.socialbakers.com

populations (Boyd, 2008). On social network sites, people are exposed only to what their friends choose to share and if that content is valuable, it will be spread further through friend networks. As social networks allow people to share messages, it can be used as a tool to activate unmotivated groups (ibid). Normally, people seek to participate in public life for many reasons such as identity development, status negotiation and community preservation. Social media networks are considered by activists as a loud speaker that can reach many people through shared space on an unlimited scale.

In the case of Egypt, social media networks and young Egyptians played the role of heroes, paving the way for rebellion or revolution. In the English language a revolution is a replacement of an established government or political system by the people governed. A rebellion on the other hand means an open, organized and armed resistance to one's government or ruler, an uprising by the people whose purpose is to reform the system. This was what Egypt witnessed after January 25, 2011. Almost all media and Arab commentaries described the resignation of President Mubarak as a revolution, despite the fact that the country had been governed by the military for more than a year until a president was elected by the public. The young rebellious Egyptians viewed the Mubarak government as tyrannical, a blast from the past and a regime that was blocking the path to progress. They expressed their points of view strongly on Facebook. Online blogs and commentaries were very strong immediately before the revolution. One young lady representing a protest group called April Six Movement, Asmaa Mahfouz posted a video on YouTube one day before

January 25 calling for everyone to gather in the main square in Egypt and protest. She was later called “the voice of the revolution”⁵.

Conceptual framework:

The advent of new media, with their ability to dissolve boundaries between telecommunications and broadcast industry, has changed what we expect from the media we use. Access to new technologies has changed and extended abilities for entertainment and information gathering, and media researchers require greater understanding of the personal and social reasons people have for using new media (West et al, 2007). The media theory of uses and gratifications states that people actively seek out specific media and specific content in order to generate specific results or gratifications. Blumler and Katz (1974) present a simple description for the gratifications approach as it concerns the social, psychological basics and the needs that result from it, which raises expectations of mass media or other sources, that leads specific patterns of media use to satisfy those needs. The four basic concepts that revolve around the approach are: firstly, an active audience which perceives and compares the abilities of the different media to achieve gratifications (Hassan, 1991). Secondly, since the theory is an extension Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it views social and psychological gratifications as the second step or higher level of motivation the audience seeks in order to satisfy their needs after being active in selecting and comparing different media. Thirdly, desired gratifications and achieved gratifications, since the gratification that the individual is searching for through mass media is not necessarily the same gratification he/she will get,

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgjIgMdsEuk

as it involves other variables as exposure and beliefs. Fourthly, expectations, which could be defined as the probability of satisfaction from mass media or in other words the gratifications the public look for (Hassan, op.cite).

The uses and gratifications approach stresses that social and psychological motivations can make people use a specific media for companionship or other gratifications as a substitute for face to face interaction (Sheldon et al, 2009). In other words, the basic assumption of the uses and gratifications approach is that the audience has specific needs and selects a specific media to use to meet these. McQuail and colleagues summarized audience needs and gratifications into four basic streams: diversion, which is defined as escaping from routines and daily problems; personal relationships, which involves substituting media for companionship; personal identity, which are alternative ways to reinforce individual values; surveillance, the collection of required information (West et al, 2007). The interactive nature of social media networks and the internet in general makes the uses and gratifications approach well suited for studying the phenomena of widespread use of social media networks among adolescents.

The uses and gratifications approach had been used by many researchers to explain why adolescents and adults use a specific media. Lucas and Sherry (2004) used it to explain differences in how young adult women and men participated in video game play. A uses and gratifications perspective has been specifically used to test the use of new media; Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) concluded that the theory provided an

important framework for studying new media and found that people have five primary motives for internet use, the most important of which was information seeking. Kaye and Johnson (2004) mentioned that the growth of the Internet has produced a renaissance in uses and gratifications theory as it allows researchers to go beyond discovering who uses the internet to examining why they use this medium. LaRose et al, (2004) found that people expect that Internet use will improve their lot in life in terms of specific social outcomes as social status and identity. This means that people may enhance their social status by finding like-minded others through the Internet and expressing their ideas to them. They also suggest that ‘perhaps the Internet is a means of constantly exploring and trying out new, improved versions of ourselves’ (Baran et al, 2003). The former suggestion specifically applies to the social networks, as it considered the way youth use such networks to express their identity and to enhance their sense of belonging to specific groups (ibid). The uses and gratifications theory services the discipline as a “perspective through which a number of ideas and theories about media choice, consumption and impact can be analyzed” (ibid).

Research that has used uses and gratification theory has grouped media gratifications into two categories: process and content. Process gratifications are associated with performance of the activity or usage of the medium, such as web browsing or creating content on ones’ profile page, whereas content gratifications depend on the acquired information (Kayahara and Wellman, 2007). Leung (2007) divided functions of the Internet into interpersonal utility functions such as relationship building,

social maintenance and social recognition, and entertainment and information utility functions. Matsuba (2006) classified Internet uses into mood management such as entertainment and information seeking, and social compensation such as gaining recognition or relationship building. In conclusion, the factors that were found in internet uses and gratifications research were varied as some researchers called them motives or motivations. These factors took several dimensions as information, convenience, social interaction, companionship, escape, relaxation or political guidance, while other researchers divided them according to expected and gained outcomes.

Research Questions

- What are the patterns of usage of Egyptian adolescents for internet in general and social media specifically?
- Are adolescents in Egypt aware of social media possibilities and risks?
- How adolescents in Egypt perceive risks associated with Internet usage in general, and social media in specific? And what do they do?
- How far do parents supervise their adolescents' Internet activities?
- What are the uses and gratifications of Facebook among Egyptian adolescents?
- What is the role played by social media in enhancing adolescents' participation in current events?

Method

This research utilizes quantitative analysis through using a questionnaire directed at a sample of males and females adolescents living in Cairo in order to detect adolescents' attitudes towards social media- and Facebook in specific.

Time frame: Data was collected during July 2011, five months after the revolution started.

The questionnaire consists of four parts: representations of different media – how do they consider traditional and new media, in addition to perception of risks associated with Internet usage and forms of parental control. Part II: investigates uses and gratifications of Facebook. Part III: is about the social implications of Facebook in Egypt before and during the revolution. The final part includes demographics.

Analysis and findings

The sample size consisted of 215 adolescents, both males and females, classified according to the following table:

Sample Characteristics

Table 1

Sample according to age and gender	Males	Females	Total	
	N	N	%	N
12 – less than 14	21	9	14	30
14 – less than 16	65	42	49.8	107
16 – 18 years old	32	46	36.3	78
Total	118	97	100	215

The disproportionate number of males and females in the sample does not affect the outcome as it coincides with the statistics that males use the Internet more than the females.

Online usage habits in Egypt: The sample was asked to describe the different media they use, namely television, radio, Facebook, mobile phone and print media. They described the media as follows:

The description of Facebook among the different media adolescents use

Table 2

Media description	Television N	Radio N	Facebook N	Mobile N	Print media
The media that is too old	2	154	-----	-----	59
The media that is interesting	109	-----	55	48	3
The media that is cool	6	-----	180	27	2
The most boring media	10	94	-----	13	98
The media that forms a great part of my life	34	3	87	84	7
The media I prefer to other media is	21	-----	170	15	9

Radio (N=154), followed by print media (N=59) were described as the media that are too old. Television compared to other media was described as the interesting media (N=109), followed by Facebook(N=55). Facebook was also described as a media form that are cool (N=180), with a little preference for mobile phones. Adolescents chose Facebook as the media that forms a great part of their life (N=87), followed by mobile phones (N=84). Finally, Facebook was chosen as the most preferable media for adolescents (N=170).

Egyptian adolescents' internet usage:

Internet usage habits of Egyptian adolescents

Table 3

How often do you perform the following activities online?	Always		Sometimes		Rarely	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Meet new people	34	73	42	91	24	51
Make new friends	45	96	45	97	10	22
Say whatever I want	66	141	27	58	7	16
Play with friends	43	92	31	66	26	57
Upload and receive videos	57	122	30	65	13	28
Chat	83	178	13	29	4	37
Conduct research	29	62	42	91	29	62
Send and receive mails	54	117	39	84	7	14
Other activity	-----	-----	7	16	-----	-----

Adolescents mainly use the internet for socialization purposes such as chatting (83%), and expressing what they want to say (66%), they sometimes use the net to make new friends and meet new people (45,42%). They also use the internet for functional purposes such as uploading and receiving videos (57%), sending and receiving mails (54%) and sometimes they use it for educational purposes when doing research (42%).

Leisure activities take also a great deal of their internet usage, as the majority always used it for playing games with their friends (43%). Regarding hours of internet usage, almost one third of the sample mentioned that they are always connected, either through their mobile phones or through the DSL connection (31%). Adolescents hours of internet usage ranges between two and four hours a day, as (21%) use it for more than four hours, while a very close percentage, 20% mentioned they use it from two to four hours. This shows that internet forms a great part of their daily activities.

Cross tabulation results by age showed that the older the adolescents are, the more hours they spend on the internet, as the majority of 14-16

years old stated that they are always connected and they use the net between 2 and 4 hours. Older adolescents are also always connected and use it for more than four hours a day.

Social Networking:

Daily usage of Facebook

Table 4

Hours of Facebook usage	%	N
Less than one hour	13	28
About an hour	19	41
From two to three hours	20	44
More than three hours	43	93
I don't open my account on daily basis	4	9
Total	100	215

Most of the time they spend on the internet is devoted to Facebook, as 43% of the sample indicated that they spend more than three hours on Facebook, while 20% spend from two to three hours a day on the Facebook. The low percentage of respondents who don't use their account on daily basis confirms adolescents' heavy usage of Facebook. Cross tabulation results found gender differences in time devoted to social media networks, as males spend more time with Facebook when compared to females. The majority of males spend between two and four hours with Facebook. Some females spend more than three hours, while others spend about an hour using Facebook.

Perception of risk: The following section relates to online risk: exposure to risk, perception of risk, parental control and activities done to combat the risk. Forty five percent of the sample denied being exposed to undesirable websites during their internet navigation, while 55% confirmed that they are exposed to such sites or sometimes they are exposed to it.

The next question was about whether parents set any rules on internet usage. The majority of respondents (80%) stated that their parents do not set any rules. Those who reported that their parents objected or commented on their children’s patterns of internet usage, said that their parents warned them not to put their photographs on Facebook or speak with people they don’t know, or log on to impolite sites.

What adolescents consider as risky actions

Table 5

What I consider risky could be:	%	N
Talking to people I don't know	24	51
Meeting with people from the internet	14	31
Exposing to impolite websites	49	106
Adding friends I don't know	13	27
Total	100	215

Almost half of the sample (49%) considered logging to impolite websites could be the most dangerous act they may face while they are navigating the internet. The second act they considered risky is talking to people they don't know (24%); the third act relates to meeting with people from the Internet (14%). Adolescents were asked to mark all that applies to the previous question. Almost two thirds (69%) made only one choice. Those who make a second choice selected exposure to impolite websites (14%) and adding friends they didn't know (10%).

The next question was whether the respondents have ever been exposed to dangerous websites. Half of the sample (50%) mentioned that sometimes they accidentally accessed them, while 36% denied that they ever got into such sites. The next table explains the actions they usually take when they are faced with such sites.

Strategies followed by adolescents when facing dangerous websites

Table 6

What do you do when you face a dangerous website:	%	N
Seek the help from friends	14	31
Ignore the experience	47	101
I pass it to my friends	6	14
I ask my parents someone older about it	3	6
I don't think too much about it	7	16
I thought it was funny, I thought it was cool	1	2
It upsets me and wish I haven't seen it	21	45
Total	100	215

The majority of the sample, (47%), took a neutral strategy by ignoring the whole experience. Twenty one percent of respondents highly perceived the risk and admitted that it influenced them, stating "it upsets me and I wish I haven't seen it". Only 7% had a perception of risk as they did not think about it. Those who have a risk taking attitude passed on details of the dangerous sites to their friends (14%), and they thought it was funny and cool (1%). From this, we conclude that adolescents are aware of risk, they are sometimes exposed to dangerous websites but they tend to adopt different strategies to cope with risk, mostly a neutral strategy by ignoring the whole experience.

Perceptions and attitudes: The place of Facebook in the lives of adolescents and their attitudes towards it was checked through Likert statements. Taking into account respondents' ages, and in order to get precise results, the researcher put neutral at the end of the scale, and simplified the scales used throughout the questionnaire to include on a three point scale: agree/disagree/neutral.

Perceptions and attitudes towards Facebook

Table 7

Statement	Agree		Disagree		Neutral	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Facebook is my way to express individuality	44	94	37	79	19	42
Facebook is an important part of my social life	46	99	30	64	24	52
Facebook helps me know more friends and join groups	69	148	17	36	14	31
Facebook is the daily routine in my life	53	113	25	54	22	48
My parents object to my having a Facebook account	24	51	63	136	13	28
I open Facebook when doing my homework	41	89	43	92	16	34
My Facebook page simply express me	46	98	33	72	21	45
Facebook gives me power to say what I can't say in person	50	108	39	85	10	22

Adolescents view Facebook as a means of expressing their individuality, since the majority agreed to the first statement (44%, N=94). This is also confirmed through the statement "My Facebook page simply express me", since 46% (N=98) agreed with the statement. They also consider it an important part of their social life (46%, N=99). The importance of Facebook in increasing the number of friends and participating in groups was highly stressed since two thirds of the sample agreed to the third statement (69%, N=148). Facebook is also considered to be a daily routine for them (53%, N=113). Most of the respondents disagreed with the statement "My parents object to my having a Facebook account" (63%, N=136), confirming a previous finding that parents usually have low supervision on their children's internet activities. Forty one percent of the sample stated that they open Facebook when doing their homework, while a similar percentage (43%) disagreed with the statement. So, they may be using Facebook as a channel to escape from the hours of study. For them, Facebook provides them with a motivation to digitally express what they can't say in person (50%, N=108).

Uses and gratifications: the following section describes the uses of Facebook among adolescents, through describing all the possible uses of social media networks on a three point Likert scale: always, sometimes and rarely.

Based on the review of literature, the uses of social media networks revolve around the following themes. First: using it as a channel of personal communication; to stay in touch with others; using it instead of face to face interactions; to express emotional feelings. Second: using Facebook as a means to spend leisure time, or escape from obligations. Third: functional uses of Facebook, such as posting photos and monitoring comments on it sending and receiving messages, and updating personal profile.

Fourth: using Facebook for social interactivity purposes, that could take forms of connecting with old friends, maintaining existing relationships, sexual attraction and social comparisons. Finally: using social media networks as a market place to buy and sell products and services, to follow advertisements and make buying decisions and so on.

Using Facebook for personal communication purposes

Table 8

Statement	Always		Sometime		Rarely	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
I use Facebook to keep in touch with friends	51	110	27	58	22	47
I use Facebook instead of SMS or phone or email	37	79	37	79	25	57
Instead of talking to someone, I just use the Facebook	32	69	31	66	37	80
I use Facebook to congratulate my friends	49	106	37	80	13	29
I use Facebook to make plans with my friends	49	105	37	80	14	30

Adolescents substitute personal communication and face to face interaction by digital communication via Facebook. This usage was strongly confirmed through the choice of always use it to statements that

express personal communication purposes as keeping in touch with friends (51%), using Facebook instead of instant messaging, phone or mail (37%), using it to congratulate their friends on their birthday and to make outing or other activities plans with friends (49%).

Using Facebook as a pleasurable way to spend time

Table 9

Statement	Always		Sometime		Rarely	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
I use Facebook to waste time	58	124	25	54	17	37
Using Facebook is enjoyable	55	119	26	55	19	41
I use Facebook when I don't want to study	25	53	45	96	31	66

Facebook was also found to be used as a way to spend leisure time, as they always use it to spend their time (58%), sometimes use it when they don't want to study (45%), and they always enjoy spending time with Facebook (55%).

Uses of Facebook

Table 10

Statement	Always		Sometime		Rarely	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
I log on to Facebook to see my photo comments	31	66	34	73	35	75
I use Facebook to check and send messages	45	97	29	62	26	56
I use Facebook to post photos in my album	54	116	27	59	19	41
I log on into Facebook to update my profile	54	117	26	56	20	42

The facilities and the interface of Facebook form a part of the uses of Facebook, as they always like to upload their photos in their personal album (54%), and sometimes see comments on it (34%). They always like to communicate via messages either posted on their walls or sent individually (45%), and also check their profile and always update it (54%).

Using Facebook for social interactivity purposes

Table 11

Statement	Always		Sometime			
	%	N	%	N		
Facebook is the best way to contact friends who are away	76	163	14	31	10	21
I use Facebook to look at pictures of my friends	56	121	13	27	32	76
I like to know who knows who on Facebook	39	83	35	75	26	57
I use Facebook to look at the profile of someone I find attractive	52	112	24	52	24	51
I use Facebook to know what others are doing	44	94	32	68	25	45
I use Facebook to see if others are doing better or worse than me	33	70	24	52	42	91
I get ideas about what everyone is watching about current events through Facebook	59	128	19	42	21	45

Social interactivity purposes include different forms of interacting with others in the network, connecting with old friends, maintaining existing relationships with friends, sexual attraction that can take the form of reading the profile of the person or checking his/her photo album to know more about him/her and social comparisons or curiosity to know the news of others to compare it to personal news. As results indicate, adolescents always use social media networks for socializing with old and existing friends (76%,56%), followed by sexual attraction (52%) and social comparisons (44%) through curiosity to know what others are doing and knowing what everyone say or watch about the current event (59%).

The final use of Facebook was as a marketplace for conducting business, to sell products, or make purchasing decisions. Social traditions in Egypt do not allow adolescents to be independent, separate from their families or start earning their own money - as the case with adolescents in other parts of the world - until they finish their university education. This specifically applies to A/B social classes who constitute the sample of this

research. That is why the response to statement "Facebook enables me to sell or buy stuff" was not highly acknowledged by them as (57%) of the sample mentioned that they rarely use it for selling stuff or making buying decisions, while 14% mentioned that they sometimes use it for this purpose.

Social media networks and the revolution in Egypt: Social media networks activated political change in several parts of the world, most recently in the Middle East. Turning the silent mass into active participants has occurred through group formation. Although political participation is usually activated by young adults and university students, the case in Egypt was a bit different. It started when a young adults' group formed on Facebook, and quickly expanded among adolescents in schools. It was a great surprise to see twelve and fourteen year old boys and girls heading to squares and demonstrating with adults. Although the Internet was disconnected for about a week during the revolution, as soon as the service was back, adolescents were active in forming groups and contributing despite their young age. They played a significant role in cleaning and re-painting the streets after the revolution and joining adults in guarding streets to maintain security and protect citizens from burglars in absence of the police service.

Results showed that almost half of the sample (49%, N=105) mentioned that they were members of groups through Facebook. When respondents were asked to mention the number of groups they joined via Facebook, answers were varied: 16% (N=35) said they were members of between one and three groups, while 23% (N=49) stated that were members

of between four to ten groups. Other respondents mentioned that they are part of too many groups, so they were tabulated as more than ten (10%, N= 18). Thirty six percent of the sample mentioned that they joined a group when the invitation came from a friend in their list, or when the name of the group expressed the activity it was made for (17%). One third of the sample (34%) mentioned that they were not interested in joining groups on Facebook.

The next question asked which activities they knew about or had joined through a group formed in Facebook. Respondents were asked to mark all that applies. Since most of the respondents marked between two and three points, the SPSS counted up to three choices. Results shows that the activities most adolescents participated in were: cleaning the streets – that was done by boys and girls (38%), guarding the streets and participating in public committees (24%) - an activity done by only boys, followed by charity work (19%) as joining NGOs that conduct charitable activities as collecting clothes for the poor, visiting orphans, collecting money. The following statements shed light on the role played by Facebook during the revolution. It used Likert statements on a three point scale.

The role played by Facebook during the revolution in Egypt

Table 12

Statement	Agree		Disagree		Neutral	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Facebook made me know what is politics	57	123	19	42	23	50
Since the revolution, I use Facebook more than before	50	108	43	93	6	14
I open Facebook to know the news of revolution	53	113	29	62	19	40
I enjoy watching videos about revolution sent to me through Facebook	59	126	30	65	11	24
I follow thread of comments shared by friends about revolution	54	116	31	66	15	33
Facebook encouraged me to participate in political change	45	97	19	42	35	76
Facebook made me do things I would never thought I can do	50	107	33	71	17	37
Facebook gave me the feeling I am important person in society	53	113	32	68	16	34
When I pass a message about the revolution, I feel I have a role	43	93	33	70	24	52
I am interested to follow the Facebook pages that brought the revolution	43	92	36	77	21	46

The largest percentage of the sample agreed with the statement that indicates it is Facebook that taught them what politics is (57%); that through Facebook, they watched videos about the revolution (59%), they liked to read the comments friends wrote on the wall about the revolution (54%). The events they followed through Facebook and the activities they could join gave them the feeling that they were not young children anymore, but important and mature members in their society (53%). Half of the sample (50%) indicated that political events made them use Facebook more often than before, and made them participate in activities they have never done before such as cleaning the streets or demonstrating. Forty three percent of the sample indicated that just forwarding a message about the revolution, or spreading a call made them feel they had a role in enhancing the events in their country. As active Facebook users, they liked to follow the news posted on Facebook protest groups that were formed months before the revolution, such as the page of “we are all Khaled Said”, a 28 year old man

who was beaten to death by police in Alexandria for participating in a protest group over the internet.

Discussion: The high penetration of Facebook, and the role it plays in the lives of adolescents makes it a relevant topic of discussion and scientific research. It is now proven that social media networks constitutes an important part in the lives of adolescents, as they consider it an interesting and cool media. They use the internet to express themselves away from any parental supervision. In Egypt, the introduction of DSL services had lead to increase in computer literacy and in hours spent on the internet among the different social classes. However, Egyptian society is not fully aware of the risks that are associated with internet usage by children and adolescents, as most of the sample admitted that they are exposed to undesired websites when they navigate the Internet. Although Egyptian parents do not set any rules regarding their children's internet usage, adolescents understand what is considered risky over the net and they take a neutral strategy when facing risks by just ignoring the whole experience. Social media networks are for them a means of self expression and social interaction with others and it is a pleasurable way to spend leisure time. They use Facebook for different personal and social communication reasons. Facebook played a role in creating the spirit of protest in Egypt. It was social media networks that attracted adolescents to be part of this massive change, and encouraged them to contribute to change despite their young age.

Future research: This paper presents a descriptive survey of uses and gratifications of Facebook in Egypt. The research was conducted on a

limited sample of adolescents aged between 12-16 years old, in a limited number of high class districts in Cairo, the capital city. Research needs to be geographically expanded in order to encompass a variety of economic and social classes of adolescents, specifically with the increased use of the Arabic language on Facebook and of the new informal language in instant messaging and blackberry messaging that uses numbers and abbreviations. Social media networks offer a rich area for research across different disciplines, while more research is needed to design policies that would safeguard children at different stages of cognitive development. Finally, cross cultural studies of social media networks can shed light on social and cultural differences in internet usage and social communication patterns in different societies.

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Questionnaire

We are conducting a questionnaire on Facebook in Egypt. If you have a Facebook account, and aged between 10 and 16, we would appreciate if you answer the questionnaire. Thank you for your help.

Q A1 Here are the different forms of media and entertainment that we have in our life: Television - radio – Facebook- magazines, newspapers.

Please complete the following sentences using the media mentioned above (you may put more than one answer in the space provided

1. The media that I consider very old is
2. The most interesting media is
3. The media I call cool is
4. The most boring media is
5. Forms a great part of my life.
6. I prefer to spend my time using Than

QA2 Below are the different activities you may use the internet to do it: please state whether you always do each activity on the net, or sometimes you do it, or you rarely do it.

Activity	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1. meet new people	1	2	3
2. make new friends	1	2	3
3. know the news of my friends	1	2	3
4. say whatever I want	1	2	3
5. play with my friends	1	2	3
6. upload and receive videos, pictures and comments	1	2	3
7. chat	1	2	3
8. conduct research	1	2	3
9. Send and receive emails	1	2	3
10. Other activity, please specify	1	2	3

QA3 In an average day, I use the internet for:

1. Less than an hour
2. From 1-2 hours
3. From 2-4 hours
4. More than 4 hours
5. I am always connected

QA4 How much time do you devote for Facebook in an average day?

1. Less than one hour
2. About one hour
3. From two to three hours
4. More than three hours
5. I don't open my account on daily basis

QA5 Have you ever been exposed to undesired images or content over the net?

1. Yes
2. Sometimes
3. No

QA6 When you use the internet at home, do your parents or other adults set any rules regarding internet use or content?

1. Yes, such as
2. no.

QA7 What I consider **risky** and may harm me could be: (Mark all that applies)

1. Talking to people I don't know
2. Meeting with people from the internet
3. Exposing to impolite websites
4. Adding friends I don't know
5. Other please specify.....

QA8 Have you ever got into websites that you think it is dangerous or inappropriate?

1. yes, most of the time
2. sometimes, by chance I got into them
3. No, I never got into such websites

QA9 If yes or sometimes, what did you do – how did you manage this risk?

1. Seek help from friends
2. Ignore the experience
3. I pass it to my friends,
4. I ask my parents or someone older about it,
5. I didn't think too much about it
6. I thought it was funny, I thought it was cool
7. it upset me and I wish I haven't seen it

Part II: uses and gratifications of Facebook.

The following statements are about Facebook. Please state whether you agree or disagree with each statement:

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Facebook is my way to express my individuality	1	2	3
I consider Facebook an important part of my social life	1	2	3
Facebook helps me know more friends and join groups	1	2	3
Facebook is a daily routine in my everyday life	1	2	3
My parents object to my having a Facebook account	1	2	3
I open my Facebook account when doing my homework	1	2	3
My Facebook page is how I am, it simply express me	1	2	3
Facebook gives me power to say what I can't say in person	1	2	3

B2. The following statements are about why do you use Facebook, please indicate how often do you use Facebook for each statement:

Statement	always	Some-times	often	rarely	Not at all
I use Facebook to keep in touch with family and friends.	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook instead of SMS or the phone	1	2	3	4	5
Instead of talking to someone face to face, I just use Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to congratulate, wish “happy birthday” or say good luck to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to make plans with my friends	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to waste time	1	2	3	4	5
Using Facebook is enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook when I don’t want to study	1	2	3	4	5
I log onto Facebook to see my photo comments	1	2	3	4	5
I log onto Facebook to check and send messages	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to post photos in my album	1	2	3	4	5
I log onto Facebook to update my profile	1	2	3	4	5
Using Facebook is the best way to contact friends who are away.	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to look at pictures of my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to know who knows who on Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to look at the profile of someone I find attractive.	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to see if others are doing better than me	1	2	3	4	5
I use Facebook to see if others are doing better/worse than me.	1	2	3	4	5
I get ideas about what everyone is watching about current events from Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
Facebook enables me to sell or buy stuff.	1	2	3	4	5

Part III: Social implications of Facebook use - Egypt:

QC1 Are you member of a group on the Facebook?

1. Yes, I am a member in Groups (say number of groups)
2. No, I don't like joining groups

QC2 What makes you accept to join the group (please give no. 1 to the most important factor and 5 to the least important factor)

1. When the invitation comes from a close friend
2. When the name of the group is expressive
3. When message and or /video is interesting
4. When I feel that the group already started activities
5. When I want to do something for my country
6. I am not interested in groups at all.

QC3 Since the beginning of this year- after January 25th , what activities have you knew about or joined through the Facebook: (mark all that applies)

1. Organizing strikes and objections
2. Cleaning the streets
3. Participating in public committees
4. Charity work
5. Signing for petitions
6. Sharing videos and spreading comments on the wall

7. Posting images, messages.
8. Other activity, please specify

QC4 Since the revolution of January 25th,

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
Facebook made me know what is politics	1	2	3
I use Facebook more frequently than before	1	2	3
I open Facebook to know the news of revolution	1	2	3
I enjoy watching videos about the revolution sent to me through Facebook	1	2	3
I always follow the thread of comments shared by friends about the revolution	1	2	3
Facebook was the only media that encouraged me to actively participate in political change.	1	2	3
Facebook made me do things I would never thought I can do	1	2	3
Facebook gave the feeling I am an important person in my society	1	2	3
When I pass a message or an objection about the revolution, I feel I have a role	1	2	3
I am interested to follow the pages that brought the revolution as Khaled Said, April 6	1	2	3

QD1 Age:

1. 10 -12 years old
2. 12 -14 years old
3. 14 -16 years old

QD2 Gender:

1. Female.
2. Male.