

Adolescents' perception and Attitudes Towards Social Media Networks in Egypt

A Survey¹

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Introduction:

Facebook - as one of social networking sites- is illustrative of the major characteristics involved in web 2.0 technologies, as it involves information sharing and communication between different users (Madge et als, 2009).

The term "social networks", have different connotations in academic literature. Some researchers used it to mean "socially interactive technologies" such as instant messaging and text messaging, while others use it to refer to 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, it provide extra connections external to the 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 – Facebook in specific. It also touches on the role played by social networking sites during the Egyptian revolution in January 25, 2011.

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Children, Adolescents and Social Media Networks:

The research on adolescents and social media networks requires us to employ network thinking to understand the social experiences of young people and how it influence their behavior. Combining the areas of adolescents and social networking sites provide a fresh way of investigating and interpreting the links among people, objects and ideas. It also allows examining 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, as adults perceive that the younger the other person is, the stronger the effect of the media will be on him. Even Adolescents among themselves endorse a kind of third-person effect, claiming that only “little kids” imitate what they see on TV. Adolescence as a stage of cognitive development – on the other hand- is often characterized as a time of challenge and turbulence, as they are faced with increased independence and growing self-discovery. One of the main features of adolescence is the great challenge an adolescent faces to form an identity. There is a growing evidence that adolescents use the internet to experiment with their identities. Adolescence is also a period of increased 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 as smoking and sexual activities, and they are willing to experiment such activities in a reckless way as a form of asserting independence from parents. A fourth feature of adolescence is the importance of peers for them, 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 technology 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 business environment of a multinational organization, Cohen and Prusak (2001) came up with 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 need of the people to discover new things themselves. As part of this need, they usually experiment with their own self-image, manipulate their online personification to fit stereotypes around them. That's why they try on new images by changing their profile appearance to match the image they want to be (king, 2009). Social networking sites enable individuals to play an active role in the socialization process and construct their own identity (Urista et als, 2009).

Facebook not only allows users to meet other people whom they do not know, but it also allows users to shape and make their social networks visible to others, thus providing the opportunity to establish contact with strangers and expand their network.

Young people apply many forms of technology to communicate with one another, mobile text messaging, blackberry messaging and emails. Adoption of such socially interactive technology is the 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 U.S 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. No doubt, Facebook – in specific- 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 can't 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 U.S, MySpace is mainly used by adolescents as a provider of music and videos. In addition, because of its highly customized nature, it is also used in experimenting with their self-image (king, 2009).

"it is more for socializing and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work", this is how university students described their re-registration engagement with a university Facebook network. University students use Facebook for social reasons, not for formal teaching purposes, although it is sometimes used informally for learning purposes(Madge etals, 2009).

Risks associated with social media networks:

There is an ongoing debate on how to keep young Facebook users safe on the site. Different tools and advices have been spread over the web guiding parents and guardians on how to protect their children from the dangers of web 2. Among these advices is to limit the time children sit on the internet, use software that allow parents to monitor their children navigation on the net, continuously examining the child's friends list.

The efforts to promote internet safety is enhanced by different world organizations such as the e-guide of McAfee "A parents' guide to social networking sites"and efforts done by the European Union for child safety online- eNACSO. 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 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 different styles of how youth manage risk themselves (Staksrud et al, 2009).

Another comparative study analyzed 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. 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 (Mascheroni et al., 2010).

Risk is defined as "the possibility that human actions or events lead to consequences that might harm the human beings value" (Klinke et al). Children are 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 networking sites consume a lot of children's time, provide them with a false sense of privacy, and they might become targets of scammers. Add to this, it impacts their interpersonal and their social communication skills as well (Fodeman, 2009).

Research context: 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 about Facebook in Egypt – total 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 between 13-17 come in the third category of Facebook users, reaching (17%). Majority of Facebook users are males (64%), when compared to female usage (36%)².

Social media networks have re-shaped the web. Political activists dream that this new structure will allow people to say the truth freely,

²www.socialbakers.com

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 its social context, as they are shaped by the society and they reflect the 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 populations to their thing (Boyd, 2008). In social network sites, people are exposed to only 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, anyone seeks to participate in public life for many reasons such as identity development, status negotiation and community maintenance. Social media networks are considered by activists as a bullhorn 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 hero role paving the way for rebellion or revolution. In 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, and that was Egypt witnessed after January 25, 2011. Almost all media and Arab commentaries described the resigning of president Mubarak as a revolution, despite the fact that the country was being governed by the military for more than a year till having an elected president by the public. The young rebellious Egyptians viewed Mubarak government as tyrannical of an old president, 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 sent a video on youtube one day before January 25 calling for everyone to

gather in the main square in Egypt and protest. She was latter called “the voice of the revolution”³.

Conceptual framework:

The advent of new media – with its ability to dissolve boundaries between telecommunications and broadcast industry- have 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 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) presented a simple description for the gratifications approach as it concerns the social, psychological basics and the needs that result from it, which raises expectations from 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: First, active audience who perceives and compares the abilities of the different media to achieve gratifications.(Hassan, 1991).Second, since the theory is an extension Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it views social and psychological gratifications 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. Lucas and Sherry (2004) investigated gender differences in video game use, through focusing on interpersonal needs and socially constructed perceptions of gendered game play. Therefore, psychological factors could be the motive for media use. Third, needed gratifications and achieved gratifications, since the gratification that the individual is searching for through exposure to mass media is not necessarily the same gratification he/she will get, as it involves other variables as exposure, beliefs. Fourth, expectations, which could be defined as probability of

³www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgjlGmDsEuk

satisfaction from mass media or in other words the gratifications the public look for (Hassan,op.cite).

Uses and gratifications approach stresses that social and psychological motivations can make people use a specific media for companionship or other gratifications as using it as a substitute to face to face interaction. (Sheldon et al, 2009). In other words, the basic assumption in uses and gratifications approach is that the audience have specific needs and they select a specific media to use mainly to meet these individual needs. 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 the different ways to reinforce individual values, and finally surveillance, collecting needed 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's (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 was information seeking. Kaye and Johnson (2004) mentioned that the growth of the internet has produced a renaissance in the uses and gratifications as it allows researchers to go beyond discovering who uses the internet to examining why they use this medium. LaRose et al, (2004), in their application of uses and gratifications perspective found that people expect that using the internet 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 net 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 truly applies to the social networks in specific, as it considered the way youth use such networks in order 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)

Researches that have used uses and gratification theory have 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 to a sample of males and females adolescents living in Cairo. This method is suitable to detect adolescents' attitudes towards social media- and Facebook in specific.

Time frame:

Summer holiday in both schools and universities was selected as the 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. Final part includes demographics

Analysis and findings:

Sample characteristics:

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

Table (1) Sample Characteristics

| 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 |

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The disproportionate number of males and females in the sample doesn't 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 select a description for the different media they use, namely television, radio, Facebook, mobile phone and print media. They described the media as follows:

Table (2)

The description of Facebook among the different media adolescents use

| 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 the 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).

Internet usage in Egypt by adolescents:

Table (3)

Internet usage habits of Egyptian adolescents

| 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 use it for playing games with their friends (43%).

As of 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 occupies 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 always connected too and they use it for more than four hours a day.

But how much time is devoted for social media networking?.

Table (4)
Hours of usage of Facebook

| 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 devote more than three hours to the 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 their 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 online 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 their exposure to undesired websites during their internet navigation, while (55%) clarified 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 stated that their parents objected or commented on their children's patterns of internet usage, stating that their parents warn them not to put their photographs on Facebook or speak with people they don't know, or log on to impolite sites.

Adolescents' evaluation of what they consider risky, is explained in the next table

Table (5)

What adolescents consider as risky actions

| 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 consider risky is talking to people they don't know (24%); the third thing they consider risky is relevant to the previous point which is 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, which indicates the nature of adolescents as they tend to make only one choice when they are asked to choose all that applies. The second choice for those who make a second choice was exposing to impolite websites (14%) and adding friends they didn't know (10%).

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The next question was whether the respondents have ever been exposed to dangerous websites. Half of the sample (50%) mentioned that they sometimes by chance they get into 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.

Table (6)

Strategies followed by adolescents when facing dangerous websites

| 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%) take a neutral strategy by ignoring the whole experience. Twenty one percent of the sample highly perceived the risk and admitted that it influenced them, that's why they chose the statement "it upsets me and I wish I haven't seen it". Only (7%) had a low risk perception as they didnot think about it. Those who have a risk taking attitude as they pass the dangerous sites to their friends are (14%), and they thought it was funny and cool (1%). From this, we conclude that adolescents are aware of risk, they sometimes are 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 towards social media networks:

The place of Facebook in the lives of adolescents and their attitudes towards it was checked through Likert statements. Taking into account the ages of the sample 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.

Table (7)

Perceptions and attitudes towards Facebook

| 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 perception of Facebook is also confirmed through the statement "My Facebook page simply express me", since (46%, N=98) agreed to 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 objected to the statement "My parents object to my having a Facebook account", (63%, N=136), which confirms a previous finding that parents usually have low supervision on their kids internet activities.

Forty one percent of the sample stated that they open Facebook when doing their homework, while a similar percentage (43%) disagreed to

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 of social media networks:

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 or using it instead of face to face interactions, express emotional feelings.

Second: using Facebook as a means to spend leisure time, or escape from obligations.

Third: functional uses of Facebook, through using the different utilities inherited in the characteristics of Facebook as posting photos and monitoring comments on it, or as 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.

Table (8)

Using Facebook for personal communication purposes

| Statement | Always | | Sometimes | | 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%).

Table (9)

Using Facebook as a pleasurable way to spend time

| Statement | Always | | Sometimes | | 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%).

Table (10)

Utilities and up keeping uses of Facebook

| Statement | Always | | Sometimes | | 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%).

Table (11)

Using Facebook for social interactivity purposes

| Statement | Always | | Sometimes | | Rarely | |
|---|--------|-----|-----------|----|--------|----|
| | % | N | % | 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 society as 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 usage of Facebook was using it as a marketplace for conducting business and a marketplace to sell products, or on the other hand, making purchase 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's why the response to statement "Facebook enables me to sell or buy stuff" was not highly recognized 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 by young adults' group formed on the Facebook, and expanded soon in schools among adolescents. It was a great surprise to see 12 and 14 years old boys and girls, heading to squares and demonstrating with adults. Although 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 great role in cleaning and re-painting the streets

after the revolution. They were sharing with adults guarding streets to maintain security and protect citizens from burglars, in absence of police service.

Results showed that almost half of the sample (49%, N=105) mentioned that they are members in groups through Facebook. When respondents were asked to mention the number of groups they joined via Facebook, answers were varied: (16%, N=35) mentioned that groups are between one and three groups, while (23%, N=49) stated that the number of groups they are in ranges 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). The next section explains the reasons that made them accept invitations to join a group.

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 to join groups on Facebook.

The next question in this part asked about activities they knew about or 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 most activities 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 provide charity 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.

Table (12)

The role played by Facebook during the revolution in Egypt

| 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 indicate that it is the 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 write 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 protest Facebook groups that were formed months before the revolution, such as the page of "we are all Khaled Said", who was a 28 year old guy, died because he was beaten to death by police people in Alexandria after being arrested for participating in a protest group over the internet.

Discussion:

The high penetration of social media networks – specifically the 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 hours spent on the internet among the different social classes. However, the 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 net. Although Egyptian parents do not set any rules regarding their children 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 for them are 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.

The 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 give a hand in change despite their young age.

Limitations and recommendations for future research:

This research presented 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, so it needs to expand the sample geographically to encompass a variety of economic and social classes of adolescents, specifically with the increase in usage of Facebook in Arabic Language and the spread of new informal language in instant messaging and blackberry messaging that uses numbers and abbreviations.

Social media networks are rich area for research across different disciplines as sociology, psychology, political science. More research is needed to guide in designing policies that would safeguard children in 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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