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How Do Saudi Young Women Express their Aspirations on Social Media Platforms: A Survey Research

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Abstract:

The study examines how Saudi young women express their aspirations through social media networks such as Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter. It focuses on four areas of interests: 1- Gender equality which includes Saudi young women's views on equality in job opportunities and employment in government and private sectors; 2- Freedom which includes freedom of lifestyle, traveling and education; 3- Independence which includes identity and the sense of individualism; and 4- Discussion of public issues which includes the right to vote and discuss public issues in society. The survey involves high school and university young women selected randomly and purposively in four cities in Saudi Arabia. The survey results show that that young Saudi women favor social media as a means of expressing their concerns on the four issues under study.

Keywords: Women Studies, Gender Equality, Freedom, Independence, Discussion of Public Issues, Saudi Young Women, Social Media use.

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Introduction:

Social media sites are increasingly gaining strong popularity across the globe. The International Telecommunication Union suggests, "Social media sites have become the most accessed websites by users in both developed and developing countries (ITU, 2014, p. 67). Saudi Arabia is witnessing exponential growth in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). It is among the top ten performing countries since 2010 in the ITU's ICT Development Index. The great increase in the use of the Internet relates to the popularity of social networking applications (Communications and Information Technology Commission CITC, 2014, p. 14).

Saudi society is considered as a conservative evolving society one where Islam and traditions are major components of culture. "Islam not only shape people's attitudes, practices, and behaviors but also shapes the way they see and do things and perceive their lives" (Alsaggaf & Williamson, 2004, p. 5). The cultural traditions include segregation between males and females. Most educational institutions provide separate divisions for males and females students. However, Saudi society is changing and access to the Internet has expanded by the end of the 1990s. Since then, the number of Saudi internet users has been on the increase (Guta & Karolak, 2015, p. 81). In 2018, the number of interest users in Saudi Arabia represented more than 75% of the country's population (Global Media Insight, 2018). Saudi young women favor blogging because it is "a place to express themselves, often anonymously, in a way that would not be possible in other public forums" (Otterman, 2007, p.124). This is evident in the number of Saudi blogs created by women, which is 50% of the total number of Saudi blogs (De Vriese, 2012, p. 96). Women bloggers in Saudi Arabia are young, aged on the average between 18-30 years old, and educated (De Vriese, 2012, p.98). The way Saudi express their aspirations on social media is overlooked by previous studies. There is paucity on this topic, which is manifested by searching on scholarly websites such as Google Scholar, EBSCO, and Oatd.org using keywords such as Saudi Women's aspirations on social media. There is a significant gap in the literature in this area as not a single study was found focusing specifically on this topic. The available studies on social media in the Gulf area investigated other subject matters. Razan,

for example, investigated the effect of Saudi youth's participation in social networks on their physical activity (Razan, 2016, p. 77). The study included Saudi youth aged between 15 and 24 and investigated their use of Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and the effect of their participation on their decision regarding practicing physical activities. By using a mixed methodology, the study concluded that online participation affects the youth's participation in physical activities, and the overall activity of young people is affected by Islamic teachings. The study also revealed that traditions and customs prevent women from participating actively in physical activities. Guta and Karaolak (2015) examined how Saudi women use social media for self-expression, but it did not focus on their aspirations. They conducted in-depth interviews with seven Saudi young women between 20 and 26 years old. Significantly, it revealed that Saudi women feel protected online and are more likely to discuss cultural restrictions imposed on them.

Theoretical Framework:

This research is informed by relevant communication theories. These theories are media system dependency theory, persuasive communication, frame analysis, and feminist theory. Media Systems Dependency theory (MSD) was introduced by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) to investigate the reason why media have different cognitive and behavioral effects on individuals. The theory encompasses a number of psychological, social, and systemic perspectives. The theory focuses on the relationship between mass media, audiences and social entities. It states that people become dependent on media to get the information they need to make decisions, to understand the social norms and trends, to engage in meaningful and effective social interactions, or to escape from their stressful and troubling life. In this way, media plays a central role in people's awareness of the world's major issues such as energy crisis, wars, crises, etc., which makes media able to generate specific attitude among the public (Mehrad & Yousefi, 2018, p. 68). MSD also suggests that in communities where information sources are limited and low pluralism prevails, mass media's influence is powerful. Contrarily, in communities with multiple sources of information other than mass media, people's dependency on mass media to make decisions is less (Ball-Rokeach & Defleur, 1976, p. 87). The Media system dependency

theory can now be extended to include social media because the theory focuses on social system and the media system, and both are combined in the use of social media. In light of MSD, social media fulfills many needs for Saudi young women, they provide Saudi women with the opportunity to observe opinions of other people, gives them a sense of importance through their posts and interactions and provide them with space to escape from the stress of everyday life. Persuasive Communication also informs this study. Miller defines persuasive communication as any message that is intended to shape, reinforce, or change the responses of other(s). the message is comprised of three parts: a clear position, arguments and facts (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981, p. 96). The position can promote a particular issue (such as tax increase), or a suggested action (e.g., blood donation). The arguments provide reasons for adopting the position and facts add support to the argument – all of which lead to persuasion. Persuasion can affect a person's mental, which may result in a change in behavior (O'Keefe, 2016, p. 103). Persuasive communication entails two or more parties engaging in a discourse (Perloff, 2010), where perceived trustworthiness and credibility of the parties influence the success of persuasion techniques (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Modern persuasive communication is composed of verbal, non-verbal and imagery components (Gass & Seiter, 2014; O'Keefe, 2016). It involves "a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice" (Perloff, 2010, p. 12). The context must be considered in formulating the verbal message in order for the latter to be able to affect the receiver. Mohammadi, Park, Sagae, Vinciarelli, & Morency (2013) stated that studies showed that the means of communication influence the persuasiveness of the message. For example, Frandsen (1963) found that videotaped messages are more persuasive than audiotaped messages and writing messages are the least persuasive. Normally, subtle cues related to face-to-face communication affect the persuasiveness of communication (Gass & Seiter, 2014). This theory relates to this study in that Saudi young women use social media to express their points of view and defend their stands, which normally is a type of persuasive communication. Frame Analysis is another theory introduced by Erving Goffman in 1974 indicating that all individuals constantly classify, organize, and interpret their life experiences to make

sense of them. The schemata of interpretation, which are called frames, make people able "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" (Goffman, 1974, p.21) events or information. (Goffman, 1974, p. 8) suggests that when individuals attend to any current situation, they face the question: What is it that's going on here? Whether asked explicitly, as in times of confusion and doubt, or tacitly, during occasions of usual certitude, the question is put and the answer to it is presumed by the way the individuals then proceed to get on with the affairs at hand". According to Goffman, human behavior is a presentation of oneself to others. He likens individuals to actors standing on the stage where all people adopt certain performances with the sole aim of making impressions on audiences. They determined five devices defining the uses of frames: metaphor, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987). Accordingly, it can be concluded that the framing theory is concerned with the way people construct the stories they tell about the world. It is the way the individual chooses to talk about an issue (Johannessen, 2015, p. 32). The framing analysis theory is relevant to the current study in that Saudi young women communicate via social media by telling stories or responding stories, which includes framing. The users normally frame the information they present to affect the audience in a certain way. Finally, Feminist Theory relates to feminist scholars' concerns because media are venues for significant ideological dialogues (Kearney, 2012, p. 44). The main aim of all feminist studies is to explore, understand, and challenge gender implications. The relationship between feminist theories and media is focused on the way feminist issues are raised, promoted, and discussed in mass media. The feminist theory relates to the current study because feminist media studies pay significant attention to how the gender issue is represented in media, a main concern for the current study.

Research Problem:

The use of social media in Saudi Arabia has become a social phenomenon that needs scientific analysis to obtain deep insights about the changes social media are making in Saudi community, specifically among Saudi young women. The focus of the current study is to investigate how Saudi women express their aspirations on social media in four main

areas: gender equality, freedom, independence, and discussion of public issues. Gender equality is the unequal valuing of the roles of women and men. It can be defined as the "equal treatment of women and men in laws and policies, and equal access to resources and services within families, communities, and society (WHO, 2009, p.102). In Saudi Arabia, women face real challenges in achieving equality at home, in the workplace and in educational, health and leadership positions (Inglehart & Norris, 2003, p. 74). The concept of women freedom in Saudi society is complicated because of male guardianship, which affects women's chances for example to get a high education or education in another country (Hamdan, 2005, p. 34). Women's independence entails that they are empowered to achieve personal and collective growth that enable them to break from dependency on males and have control over their own lives socially and financially (Nagendra, 2008, p.72). Women discussion of public issues is limited. However, Saudi women have recently started to have acquired a stronger sense of discussion of public issues due to the recent reforms taking place in the country. The present study seeks to uncover how a sample of Saudi young women express their aspiration on these issues through social media plateforms.

Research Questions:

The research questions of the current study are based on the four main concepts: gender equality, freedom, independence, and discussion of public issues. These include a) how do Saudi women express their views through social media on gender equality in job opportunities and employment, b) how do they express their views about freedom of expression, lifestyle traveling and education, c) how do they express their views about independence regarding identity and sense of individualism and f) how do they express their views about discussion of public issues as the right to vote, participation in elections and discussing major issues in their society.

Main Concepts:

The current study revolves around four main concepts: gender equality, freedom, discussion of public issues cal participation, and independence.

Gender Equality:

The concept of gender equation includes basic components: equitable access and use of resources, equitable participation, and safety or freedom from violence (Rolleri, 2012, p. 23). The operational definition of the concept refers to equal job opportunities for both males and females.

Freedom:

Freedom is an essential principle in a liberal society which refer to free flow of ideas and information without external constraints. It involves equality of women through law, empowerment of women and the elimination of gender-based stereotypes (Edström & Svensson, 2014, p, 14). The operational definition of the concept refers to freedom of expression, life style, traveling and education.

Independence:

The concept of independence includes the right to making decisions and to enjoy the freedom of speech. When women enjoy independence, it means that they have the power to define herself independent of the others (Nagendra, 2008, p.21). The operational definition of the concept relates to identity and the sense of individualism.

Discussion of public issues:

The concept refers to women participation in local elections and parliamentary representation. The operational definition relates to the right to vote, participation in elections and the ability to discuss social issues.

Literature Review:

Although there is no previous research on Saudi women's expressions through social media, a number of studies were conducted on the importance of social media in the Middle East including Saudi Arabia and the role of Saudi women in the society. The major focus of these studies was the modern ways Arab young people used social media during major events (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011, p. 29). It is evident that social media

have provided people with greater opportunities to initiate collective actions. Some studies focused on how digital societies form opinions and attitudes (Baron, Abokhodair, & Garrido, 2013, p. 51). While these studies show the role played by social media in the life of Arab youth, they also uncovered a number of practices and complexities regarding privacy and perceived identity in digital environments. Social media is growing enormously all over the Arab region, thus leading to significant changes in users' perception and usage of social media. Saudi Arabia is relatively conservative with regards to women's freedom as compared to other Arab and Muslim societies. However, Saudi women have been trying to acquire a powerful voice while maintaining their physical invisibility through social media (Arebi, 1994, p. 45). The growing popularity and significance of social media are due to the users' social needs (ITU, 2011, p. 61). Users are comfortable with the idea of sharing their passions and preferences freely and letting others engage with them in this regard (Lai & Turban, 2008, p.27). Users also control how they present themselves in online interactions, thus enabling introvert people to express themselves more comfortably (Chayko, 2008, p.46). Social media platforms enable users to communicate with other people more freely than off-line. A prominent example of the powerful role played by social media in the lives of Saudi women is the "Women2Drive" campaign, which contributed to the new law allowing women to drive. Salem and Mourtada (2011) examined the role of social media in Arab women empowerment and found that social media is a great tool for women's empowerment (Salem & Mourtada, 2011, p.54). Al Saud and Khan (2013) conducted a survey on the role of social media in brand development in Saudi Arabia and found that most of the respondents showed that they believe in the ability of social media to promote brands, which reflects that social media affects users' opinions and behavior (Al Saud & Khan, 2013, p.57). Salem and Mourtada (2011) conducted a survey on participants from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE and found that the societal and cultural barriers placed on Arab women are the main barriers facing women. They also concluded that both men and women use social media mainly for networking, accessing information and employment opportunities and activism. The study also showed that the respondents viewed social media and an important medium toto improve women's role in the legal, economic and social aspect of society.

Methodology:

The study is a survey research which is common data collection method used to describe trends or to determine individual opinions about an issue (Creswell, 2012, p.18). The survey consists of three sections: The first focuses on examining how respondents perceive the effect of social media on society. The second examines the perception of the respondents regarding the concepts of gender equality, freedom, independence, and discussion of public issues. The third focuses on the demographics of the respondents such as gender, age and educational level. The questionnaire consists of nominal and multiple-choice questions based on a 5-point Likert scale. The sample consists of 100 Saudi young women selected from one university and two high schools in Jeddah. The sample is a purposeful non-random sample. The researcher received 80 questionnaires in return. The sample members have been recruited randomly based on their feasibility and availability. The survey was developed by Monkey Survey Website and distributed online. The data was analyzed using SPSS program.

Findings:

Sample General Characteristics:

The majority of the sample are between the age of 15 and 20 (42%) followed by those who are between 21-25 years (29.5%) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Sample Age Distribution

Age:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-20	37	42.0	42.5	42.5
	21-25	26	29.5	29.9	72.4
	26-30	11	12.5	12.6	85.1
	Over 30	13	14.8	14.9	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The sample consists of postgraduate students (28.4%), undergraduate students (54.5%) and secondary students (14.8%) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Sample Educational Level:

Educational Level:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	University	48	54.5	55.8	84.9
	Postgraduate	25	28.4	29.1	29.1
	Secondary	13	14.8	15.1	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

The major of the sample resides in Jeddah (87.5%) followed by Riyadh (5.7%) and Dammam (4.5%) (see Table 3)

Table 3: Sample Place of Residence

Place of Residence:					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Jeddah	77	87.5	89.5	89.5
	Riyadh	5	5.7	5.8	95.3
	Dammam	4	4.5	4.7	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

Sample Communication Behavior:

The majority of the respondents (89.8%) have been using social media for more than 5 years. The other (10.2%) of respondents have also been using the social media for more than 4 years. This suggests that female Saudi young women start using social media at the early age at high school and continue to do so at the university (see Table 4)

Table 4: Frequency of Social Media Use (Years)

Frequency of Social Media Use					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5> years	79	89.8	89.8	100.0
	4> years	9	10.2		
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

The majority of the respondents (98.9%) use social media on daily basis. This high percentage suggests respondents' dependency on social media. The category of Saudi women who use social media several times a month is very small only 1.1% (see Table 5).

Table 5: Frequency of Social Media Use (Days & Months)

How often do you usually use social media?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	87	98.9	98.9	98.9
	Several times a month	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

The largest category of respondents uses Snapchat (82.56%) and Instagram (74.42%) whereas Twitter is used by 60.47% and a relatively small percentage of respondents use Facebook 17.44%. (see Table 6).

Table 6: Frequency of Types of Social Media Use

What types of social media do you often use?		
Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Sanpchat	82.56%	71
Instagram	74.42%	64
Twitter	60.47%	52
Facebook	17.44%	15
Other (please specify)		17
	Answered	86
	Skipped	2

Main Research Questions Results:

The majority of respondents disagree with using social media to advocate traveling without mahram (40.9%) while only 17% agree. 21.6% of respondents are neutral on the subject which may suggest that they are in a transitional period. The feminist theory would argue that women in such a case still need more awareness of their rights and that the use of social media seem to move opinions in the direction of equal opportunity to travel alone (see Table 7).

Table 7: Frequency of Social Media Use to Advocate Gender Equality such as Traveling without 'Mahram'

I use social media to advocate gender equality such as traveling without mahram.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	36	40.9	40.9	88.6
	Do not know	19	21.6	21.6	47.7
	Agree	15	17.0	17.0	26.1
	Strongly Disagree	10	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Strongly Agree	8	9.1	9.1	9.1
	Total	88	100.0	100.0	

The respondents firmly believed that they use social media to advocate gender equality in job opportunities and employment. The majority (15.9+39.8=55.7%) agreed that they use social media to advocate gender equality in job opportunities and employment. The feminist theory would argue that social media use by women raise awareness and promote gender equality in employment. The percent of women who are neutral (22.7%) and disagree (12.5%) suggests that a sizable percent of women are still in

the transitional period and may still be affected by the traditional perception of women as home takers rather than job seekers or holders. (See Table 8).

Table 8 : Frequency of Social Media to Advocate Gender Equality in Job Opportunities and Employment

I use social media to advocate gender equality in job opportunities and employment.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	35	39.8	40.2	56.3
	Do not know	20	22.7	23.0	79.3
	Strongly Agree	14	15.9	16.1	16.1
	Disagree	11	12.5	12.6	92.0
	Strongly Disagree	7	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The respondents use social media to advocate gender equality in employment in government and private sectors (14.8+35.2= 50%). The feminist theory in similar line would argue that the social media use by women promote awareness of gender equality in the matter. The percent of respondents who are neutral (21.6%) seems to suggest that a relatively moderate number of women are still in the transitional stage between the old and the new perceived role of women in society. (See Table 9).

Table 9: Frequency Use of Social Media to Advocate Gender Equality in Employment in Government and Private Sectors

I use social media to advocate gender equality in employment in government and private sectors.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	31	35.2	35.6	50.6
	Do not know	19	21.6	21.8	72.4
	Disagree	18	20.5	20.7	93.1
	Strongly Agree	13	14.8	14.9	14.9
	Strongly Disagree	6	6.8	6.9	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The respondents use social media to raise awareness among young women about their right to be treated as equal to men (11.4+44.3=55.7%). 14.8% of respondents say they do not know. The respondents who disagree (22.7+5.7=28.4%) is about a third which suggest that they are women who still hold to the old perception of themselves or they are not yet convinced on the subject. The feminist theory may struggle with this outcome as social media may not always able to alter previous cultural or traditional perceptions of women's role in society. (See Table 10).

Table 10: Frequency of Social Media Use to Raise Awareness among Saudi Women about Right of Equal Treatment

I use social media to raise awareness among Saudi women about their right to be treated as equal to men.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	39	44.3	44.8	56.3
	Disagree	20	22.7	23.0	94.3
	Do not know	13	14.8	14.9	71.3
	Strongly Agree	10	11.4	11.5	11.5
	Strongly Disagree	5	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The respondents use social media to encourage young females to enjoy freedom in all life aspects (36.4+8.0=40.4%). 22.7% of the respondents have indicated that they do not know which suggests that some women are hesitate about the aim of using the social media. (26.1+5.7=31.8%). (See Table 11)

Table 11: Frequency of Social Media Use to Encourage Saudi Women to Enjoy Freedom in all life Aspects"

I use social media to encourage Saudi women to enjoy freedom in all life aspects.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	32	36.4	36.8	44.8
	Disagree	23	26.1	26.4	94.3
	Do not know	20	22.7	23.0	67.8
	Strongly Agree	7	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Strongly Disagree	5	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents encourage Saudi women to enjoy freedom of expression at home and work (9.1+44.3=53.4%). Those who don't know represent 22.7% which may suggest that they are in a transitional stage between traditions and modernity. The ones who disagree represent (18.2+3.4=21.6%) which suggest that young women may be divided on the subject even when the majority use social media to advocate freedom at home and work. (See Table 12).

Table 12: Frequency of Social Media Use to Encourage Saudi Women to Enjoy Freedom of Expression at Home and Work"

I use social media to encourage Saudi women to enjoy freedom of expression at home and work.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	39	44.3	45.3	54.7
	Do not know	20	22.7	23.3	77.9
	Disagree	16	18.2	18.6	96.5
	Strongly Agree	8	9.1	9.3	9.3
	Strongly Disagree	3	3.4	3.5	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents encourage Saudi women to enjoy freedom of lifestyle, traveling and education (38.6+19.3=57.9%),). Those who don't know represent 18.2% which may suggest that they are in a transitional stage between traditions and modernity. The ones who disagree represent (20.5+2.3=22.8%) which suggests that young women may be divided on the subject even when the majority use social media to advocate freedom of lifestyle, traveling and education. (See Table 13).

Table 13 : Frequency of Social Media Use to Encourage Saudi Women to Enjoy Freedom of Lifestyle such as Traveling and Education.

I use social media to encourage Saudi women to enjoy freedom of lifestyle such as traveling and education					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	34	38.6	39.1	58.6
	Disagree	18	20.5	20.7	97.7
	Strongly Agree	17	19.3	19.5	19.5
	Do not know	16	18.2	18.4	77.0
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The respondents are split on this question. More than a third of respondents (28.4+9.1=37.5%) view that the social media does not provide more freedom than real life which may suggest that the respondents express in social media what they can express in real life or that they refrain from expressing in social when they cannot express in real life. Still, a third of respondents (23.9+12.5=36.40%) view that social media provide more space for freedom than real life, a fact which is in line with general expectations about the role of social media in society. Those who are in the transitional stage represent 23.5 of the respondents. (See Table 14).

Table 14: Frequency of Social Media Use to Prove that Saudi Women Enjoy more Freedom of Expression on Social Media than in Real Life"

I use social media to prove that Saudi women enjoy more freedom of expression on social media than in real life.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	25	28.4	29.1	90.7
	Agree	21	23.9	24.4	37.2
	Do not know	21	23.9	24.4	61.6
	Strongly Agree	11	12.5	12.8	12.8
	Strongly Disagree	8	9.1	9.3	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents agree that they use social media to advocate independence for Saudi young women (36.8+20.7=57.5%). About a fifth of respondents disagree (19.3+1.1=20.4%) and 21.6% remain neutral. The latest percent seem to suggest a segment of Saudi young women still in the transitional period between tradition and modernity and where opinions are not yet clearly established. (See Table 15).

Table 15: Frequency of Social Media Use to Advocate that Saudi Women should Enjoy Independence in all Aspects of Life"

I use social media to advocate that Saudi women should enjoy independence in all aspects of life.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	32	36.4	36.8	57.5
	Do not know	19	21.6	21.8	79.3
	Strongly Agree	18	20.5	20.7	20.7
	Disagree	17	19.3	19.5	98.9
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents agree that they use social to advocate that Saudi women should enjoy independence the way they define their identity (31.8+12.5=44.3%). A third of respondents is neutral (31.8%) while 21.6% disagree. (See Table 16).

Table 16: Frequency of Social Media Use to Advocate that Saudi Women should Enjoy Independence regarding Identity

I use social media to advocate that Saudi women should enjoy independence regarding identity.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	28	31.8	32.2	44.8
	Do not know	28	31.8	32.2	77.0
	Disagree	19	21.6	21.8	98.9
	Strongly Agree	11	12.5	12.6	12.6
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents use social media to advocate that Saudi women should enjoy independence as reflected in their sense of individualism (36.4+14.8=51.2%). About a third of respondents (29.5) is not sure while 28 % disagree. This way young women develop their sense of individualism resonates with framing analysis theory which is concerned with the way people construct the stories they tell about the world. It is the way the individual chooses to talk about an issue. Other studies viewed framing as presenting information in a special context in order to highlight specific elements of the topic to obtain the person's greater attention and care. (See Table 17).

Table 17: Frequency of Social Media Use to Advocate that Saudi Women should Enjoy Independence regarding their Sense of Individualism

I use social media to advocate that Saudi women should enjoy independence regarding their sense of individualism.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	32	36.4	36.8	51.7
	Do not know	26	29.5	29.9	81.6
	Disagree	15	17.0	17.2	98.9
	Strongly Agree	13	14.8	14.9	14.9
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents use social media to help Saudi women to be independent from males (33.0+11.4=44.4%). The independence of women from male is one of the conventions of feminist theory in that the social media are venues for significant ideological dialogues where it may help Saudi women to be independent from males. More than a third of respondents (30.7+4.5=35.2%) disagree while 19.3% are neutral indicating that they are probably in the transitional stage where old traditions are declining, and the new ones are not adopted yet. (See Table 18).

Table 18: Frequency of Social Media Use to Help Saudi Women to be Independent from Males

I use social media to help Saudi women to be independent from males.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	29	33.0	33.3	44.8
	Disagree	27	30.7	31.0	95.4
	Do not know	17	19.3	19.5	64.4
	Strongly Agree	10	11.4	11.5	11.5
	Strongly Disagree	4	4.5	4.6	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents use social media to raise women awareness about their right to be independent (42.0+13.6=55.6%). The framing analysis theory is relevant to the current study in that people communicate via social media by telling a story or responding to a story, all of which is part of a framing discourse. About a fifth of respondents (19.3+2.3=21.6%) disagree while another fifth (21.6%) is neutral. (See Table 19).

Table 19: Frequency of Social Media Use to Raise Women's Awareness about their Right to be Independent

I use social media to raise women awareness about their right to be independent.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	37	42.0	42.5	56.3
	Do not know	19	21.6	21.8	78.2
	Disagree	17	19.3	19.5	97.7
	Strongly Agree	12	13.6	13.8	13.8
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents use social media to help Saudi women freely practice their right to vote in elections (34.1+12.5=46.6. Feminist studies have discussed matters like power, culture, voice, agency, hierarchy, and representation in media practices and discourses and this study supports assumptions about the role of social media in raising social awareness. 28.4% of respondents are neutral and (21.6+2.3=23.9%) disagree. (See Table 20).

Table 20: Frequency of Social Media Use to Help Saudi Women Freely practice their Right to Vote in Elections

I use social media to help Saudi women freely practice their right to vote in elections.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	30	34.1	34.5	47.1
	Do not know	25	28.4	28.7	75.9
	Disagree	19	21.6	21.8	97.7
	Strongly Agree	11	12.5	12.6	12.6
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents use social media to encourage Saudi women to run as candidates in elections (27.3+15.9=43.2%). Those who are neutral represent 28.4% and those who disagree represent (25+2.3=27.3%). (See Table 21).

Table 21: Frequency of Social Media Use to Encourage Saudi Women to Run as Candidates in Elections

I use social media to encourage Saudi women to run as candidates in elections.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	24	27.3	27.6	43.7
	Do not know	25	28.4	28.7	72.4
	Disagree	22	25.0	25.3	97.7
	Strongly Agree	14	15.9	16.1	16.1
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

The majority of respondents use social media to advocate Saudi women's role in decision making at home, work and discussing social issues according to highest number of respondents (40.9+15.9=56.8%). About a fifth of respondents disagree (17+3.4=20.34%). This suggests that there is a segment of women reluctant to engage in such matters either because of the influence of traditions or that they do not view social media as the best medium for such advocacy. (See Table 22).

Table 22: Frequency of Social Media Use to Advocate Saudi Women's Role in Decision Making at Home, Work and Social Matters.

I use social media to advocate Saudi women's role in decision making at home, work and social issues.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	36	40.9	41.9	58.1
	Do not know	18	20.5	20.9	79.1
	Disagree	15	17.0	17.4	96.5
	Strongly Agree	14	15.9	16.3	16.3
	Strongly Disagree	3	3.4	3.5	100.0
	Total	86	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.3		
Total		88	100.0		

The respondents seem to be split on the use of social media to encourage women to be active participants even though a slight majority agree (34.1+1.4=45.5%). More than a third of participants are neutral on the subject (33%). Those who disagree represent (18.2+2.3=20.5%). This indicates that while the respondents favor such engagement, but others are reluctant to do either because the environment is not as ready for such participation or that the issue is still a sensitive issue in a traditional but fast changing environment where old habits persist while new one not well adapted yet. (See Table 23).

Table 23: Frequency of Social Media Use to Encourage Women to be Active Participants in Pubic Discussions

I use social media to encourage women to be active participants in public discussions					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	30	34.1	34.5	46.0
	Do not know	29	33.0	33.3	79.3
	Disagree	16	18.2	18.4	97.7
	Strongly Agree	10	11.4	11.5	11.5
	Strongly Disagree	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		88	100.0		

Conclusion:

The different Social media platforms as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook has become an essential aspect of everyone's life; Saudi young women are not different in this regard. The popularity of social media has many reasons, among of which it enables people to discuss issues and to express points of view with minimum limitations. Saudi culture is generally conservative even though it is rapidly evolving. This may imply that young females may be reluctant to speak their minds freely. The study suggests otherwise in that Saudi young women use social media to express their views on four major issues: gender equality, freedom, independence and discussion of public issues.

Saudi young women discuss issues regarding their aspirations on social media relatively very openly and freely, which has a significant effect on the society and the culture. The results answer to research questions as follows.

The majority of respondents use social media to advocate gender equality in job opportunities and employment in Saudi society, which may mean that they are not satisfied in their work positions and are willing to advocate equal chance in work place.

The majority of respondents assert that they use social media to encourage Saudi young women to enjoy freedom of lifestyle such as travel, education even when they are restricted by the customs and traditions. A relatively small segment of the respondents agree that they use social media to prove that Saudi women do not enjoy more freedom of expression on social media than in real life also they use social media to prove that social media helps women to express themselves more freely in real life.

The majority of respondents said that they use social media to advocate that Saudi young women should enjoy independence in different aspects of life including identity and sense of individualism. The respondents assert that they use social media to help Saudi women to be independent of males and to raise women's awareness about their right to be independent. A relatively small segment of respondents use social media to help Saudi women freely practice their right to vote in elections or run as candidates in elections.

Different theories have informed the study's conclusions. The study has shown dependency of respondents on social media on many issues as stipulated by media dependency theory. The theory states that people become dependent on media to get the information they need to make decisions, to understand the social norms and trends, to engage in meaningful and effective social interactions, or to escape from their stressful and troubling life. Social media provide Saudi women with the opportunity to observe the behavior and opinions of other people in the social environment. It also gives them a sense of importance especially when their posts and interactions receive many "likes" and "shares" on social media platforms,

which makes them feel that they are playing a meaningful and significant role in society. Persuasive communication, which entails the utilization of verbal messages to affect attitudes and behaviors, explain the fact Saudi young women try to express their points of view and defend their stands, which is a type of persuasive communication even when direct face to face communication is absent.

The framing theory is with the way people construct the stories they tell about the world. The respondents tell their stories and normally frame the information they present to affect the audience in a certain way. Feminist theory which advocate the status of women in society as gender equality, freedom and independence lend support to the study's conclusions in that the majority of respondents use social media to advocate women's issue in general.

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كيف تعبر الشابات السعوديات عن طموحاتهن من خلال وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي: بحث مسحي

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ملخص البحث:

تبحث الدراسة في كيفية تعبير الشابات السعوديات عن تطلعاتهن من خلال «الإنستغرام، سناب شات، تويتر والفايسبك.» ويشمل موضوع الدراسة أربع وسائل أساسية، لكل مفهوم عدد من العناصر على النحو الآتي: 1) المساواة بين الجنسين، وتشمل ما يأتي: أ. كيفية تعبير الشابات السعوديات عن آرائهن حول المساواة بين الجنسين والمساواة في فرص العمل والتوظيف. والمساواة في التوظيف في القطاعين الحكومي والخاص. 2) الحرية، وتشمل كيفية التعبير عن آرائهن حول حرية التعبير ونمط الحياة مثل السفر، والتعليم، ... إلخ. 3) الاستقلال، ويتضمن كيفية التعبير عن آرائهن حول الهوية وإحساسهن بالفردية. 4) المشاركة في الحياة العامة، وتشمل كيفية التعبير عن آرائهن حول حقهن في التصويت والمشاركة في الانتخابات ومناقشة القضايا الرئيسة في المجتمع. من أجل تحقيق الهدف من الدراسة، تم استخدام استبانة وإرسالها إلى مائة طالبة (في المرحلة الجامعية والمتوسطة). بلغ عدد المشاركات في تعبئة الاستبانة ثمانيًا وثمانين طالبة. وأوضحت نتائج الاستبانة أن الشابات أظهرن قلقا فيما يتعلق بالمساواة بين الجنسين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، ومع التطور المتسارع في جميع أنحاء العالم، تحاول الشابات السعوديات أيضًا تحقيق مكانة عالية في مجالات الحياة كافة. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الشابات السعوديات يعتبرن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي منبراً للتعبير عن أنفسهن. يعتبر هذا المنبر وسيلة مثالية للنساء السعوديات لمناقشة وجهات نظرهن الشخصية والاجتماعية من خلال محاور: المساواة بين الجنسين، والحرية، والاستقلالية والمشاركة في الحياة العامة.

الكلمات الدالة: دراسات المرأة، الطموح، الحرية، الاستقلال، المساواة بين الجنسين، المشاركة في الحياة العامة، الشابات السعوديات، استخدام شبكات التواصل الاجتماعية.

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