

# The Inter-Media Agenda-Setting Influence Of Social Media Activism On Egyptian News Sites: A Case Study Of Violence Against Women (Vaw)

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## ABSTRACT

*This study has three main aims which are to examine the first level of inter-media agenda-setting between social media activism & Egyptian news sites regarding VAW issues, to determine if there is a role for social media activism in setting the news sites' issue agendas & to identify news sources types used by news sites. The study conducted interviews with five Egyptian journalists and a content analysis over one month with high social media activism regarding VAW in 2022 between a purposive sample of posts on Facebook & Instagram and news from three popular news sites with different ownership types; Bawbat Al-Ahram, Al-Watan & Bawbat Al-Wafad. It applied rank order & cross-lagged correlation analyses along with Rozelle-Campell baseline. Findings show there is a kind of similarity between all issue agendas of the platforms and news sites in terms of rank order but there is a weak influence of social media activism regarding VAW issues on the Egyptian news sites' agendas. This can be illustrated by the no transfer of issue salience from Instagram to any of the news sites but there is a transfer of issue salience in one of the time spans only from Facebook to Al-Watan, private news site. However, journalists' mentioned that social media activism content can affect their news sites' agendas after this content meet certain conditions. Also, findings reveal that the most used news sources are external news sources especially security officials.*

**Keywords:** Egyptian News Sites, Inter-Media Agenda-Setting, Social Media Activism, Violence Against Women.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social media activism can be considered as a communicative process which unites larger audience to cause certain political or social change because of its interactive features. Its importance relies in that information can go viral on social media platforms in fractions of second which makes it more effective to cause change than any other forms (Chan and Park 2019).

Since the 2011 uprising, when Egyptian women posted Facebook videos about the sexual harassment incidents that they experienced in Al-Tahrir Square, social media activism in Egypt has focused not only on political issues, like the social media activism that took place during the period of the 2011 and 2013 Egyptian Revolutions, but also on social issues, particularly violence against women (VAW). Then, a new important wave of social media activism on Facebook & Instagram related to VAW issues in Egypt can be explicitly noticed since the "Martyr of Chivarly" case

that took place by the end of 2019. Since this case till nowadays, it is noticed how social media activism has continued to tackle different VAW issues and cases in Egypt (Abaza 2022). For instance, many social media activism pages, groups & hashtags activism are launched by Egyptian citizens with the primary goal of having a strong and more fully voiced online Egyptian Feminism that raises awareness & attracts the citizens' & media's attention to end VAW in Egypt.

This prevalence & power of social media activism content focusing on various VAW issues & cases in Egypt, leads to creating an agenda for the public who expects media to focus on the same issues that are important to them. This establishes a daily challenge for Egyptian journalists and their news sites regarding to what extent they can let social media activism affects their agenda-setting and which sources they should use while reporting about VAW.

### 1.1. Research Problem

Numerous previous studies (Wang 2016; Vargo and Guo 2016) focused on how traditional media agendas affect public agendas and digital media agendas, or vice versa, as well as how external news factors in terms of traditional news sources like politicians, public officials, etc. influence traditional media agenda-setting. Additionally, political issues are used as case studies more than other issues in the majority of previous studies looking into how social media activism affects media agenda-setting. These are the main focus of previous studies, despite the fact that nowadays, women's issues, particularly VAW, are receiving huge attention, like political issues, from Egyptian society, the media, and social media. It is also noted how social media activism tries to have different crucial roles, like prioritising the issues on the media's agendas, to end VAW in Egypt. Therefore, more attention should be given to VAW issues in terms of investigating the impact of social media activism issue agenda on Egyptian news sites' agendas.

### 1.2. Research Significance:

This study's value lies in the fact that, though Egypt is a suitable place to look into this topic because there are many news sites and many people use Facebook and Instagram to engage in VAW activism as a way to affect the public's, media's, and government's

agendas, few studies are done in Egypt or in Arab countries about the first level of inter-media agenda-setting between the platforms and the news sites regarding VAW issues. Moreover, this study examines the topic from a different angle by examining it from Egyptian journalists' perspectives, unlike most of the previous studies that examined this topic using content analysis only. In addition, this study fills a gap in the body of literature by focusing on the impact of various digital media agendas on one another because of the dominance of digital media on the media landscape, especially in Egypt, which is currently consumed by audiences' more than traditional media that previous studies focused on more.

### 1.3. Research Objectives:

The study's main aim is to investigate the first level of inter-media agenda-setting effect of social media activism on Egyptian news sites regarding VAW issues. Thus, the objectives are:

1. Examining whether there is a similarity of VAW issue agendas between social media activism in terms of Facebook & Instagram and Egyptian news sites.
2. Determining if there is a role for social media activism in setting the news sites' issue agendas regarding VAW issues.
3. Identifying news sources types, whether they are external or internal news sources, used by Egyptian news sites while reporting about VAW issues.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is divided into two main sections which are Facebook and Instagram usage in Egypt and Traditional newspapers & digital news sites in Egypt.

### 2.1. Facebook & Instagram Usage in Egypt

With having 46 million users visited Facebook in April 2022, Egyptian users move up to the ninth position among those who used this platform the most (Kemp 2022). According to a survey done on social media usage by Egyptian journalists, the majority of them

rely on Facebook then other platforms because it allows them to follow the public agenda and the progression of events, obtain information, image, videos & breaking news and gauge public opinion (Nassar 2019). According to a Statista analysis in 2022, by December 2021, Instagram with 15.9 million users is the platform that Egyptian people utilised the most after Facebook (Galal 2022). This is also confirmed by a research done by El-Rabhon, which is an online marketing agency specialized in social media field (Nour 2021). This demonstrates how Facebook & Instagram are the most influential platforms in Egypt, where the study is conducted.

### **2.1.1. VAW & Social Media Activism Role in Egypt:**

VAW is described as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations 1993). VAW has seven main issues with sub issues which are domestic violence, which includes economic, emotional, physical and psychological, femicide, sexual violence, which includes sexual harassment, rape and rape culture, human trafficking, female genital mutilation, child marriage and digital violence, which include cyberbullying, doxing and non-sexting (UN Women n.d.).

In the context of VAW, Egypt placed 108 out of 162 countries in 2019 in terms of gender inequality, including various factors where one of them is violence acts (Salem and Ebrahim 2022). According to the Central Office for Public Mobilization & Statistics in 2021, it was determined that mental violence affected Egyptian women between the ages of 18 to 64 at a rate of 22.3%, physical violence at 11.8% and sexual violence at 6.5% (Mamdouh 2021). According to team of Edraak Foundation for Development & Equality (2022), statistics on VAW cases in Egypt were doubled from 2020 to 2021.

In light of these statistics and others that show how women suffers from different types of VAW in Egypt, social media advocacy over VAW has become dominant among Egyptian citizens, governmental and NGO women organisations. There are many popular campaigns launched in Egypt recently like

"HarassMap" in 2010, "Birah A'mn" in 2011, "Tadwein" in 2014, "Superwomen" in 2017, "Speak UP" in 2020 & "Assault Police" in 2020, etc... Through these initiatives & others and the high rate of usage of VAW hashtags activism, it can be noticed how the Egyptian society interact to a great extent with them as an attempt to end VAW. Hashtags activism used on social media ranged from general issues to specific cases. Hashtags activism about VAW issues are like (#Me\_too, #We\_believe\_in\_survivors, #Law\_against\_domestic\_abuse, #SpeakUp, #Save\_the\_next\_victim, #Violence\_against\_women). Even specific cases in Egypt have been tackled to raise awareness about general issues through talking & having discussions on social media platforms about them. They are widespread by using hashtags like (#Justice\_for\_Naira\_Ashraf, #Justice\_for\_Shaimaa\_Gamal, #Take\_Action\_Against\_Mabrook\_Attia, #Save\_Amal\_Maher, etc...).

### **2.2. Traditional newspapers & digital news sites in Egypt:**

Newspapers are categorised based on a variety of characteristics. Ownership is one of them where a newspaper is classified as private, partisan, or state-owned depending on who owns it. The National Press Authority is in charge of state-owned newspapers like Al-Ahram, Al-Akhbar, and Al-Gomhurya are all owned by the government. The Supreme Council for Media Regulations is in charge of regulating private newspapers like Al-Masry El-Youm, Al-Watan, and other contemporary newspapers (Amin and Allam 2022). However, they enjoy a certain level of freedom of expression since they are reliant on advertising revenues and aren't regulated by the government (Badr 2021). The last type is partisan newspapers, like Al-Wafd, are owned by political parties. They were having a significant impact since they were able to criticise the government. However, this is no longer the case due to its reliance on the government as well as its party for funding, which allows the government to censor some of its content (Allam 2018).

Digital editions of Egyptian newspapers are freely accessible online. The majority of Egyptian newspapers make advantage of having accounts/pages on social media platforms beside news sites and mobile applications. This enables readers to access their news quickly and easily. All of this

contributes to a decline in the consumption of printed newspapers. This can be re-assured as according to Statista (2022), the quantity of distributed Egyptian newspapers both domestically and internationally has been declining where in 2015, there were 561 million copies while 539 million in 2019. Also, Statista (2022) expected that online newspapers, magazines and their revenues will increase by billion dollars from 2017 to 2027. This shows how digital presences for newspapers are considered more effective to reach audience comparing to printed versions. However, factors affecting setting the issue agendas, which is the first level of the inter-media agenda-setting, of print and digital newspapers are similar to some extent, which is illustrated in the upcoming subsection & theoretical framework chapter.

### **2.2.1. Social Media's Issue Agenda Impact on Media Agenda-Setting:**

The study tries in this subsection to review previous studies that are concerned with the first level of inter-media agenda-setting between social media and newspapers/ news sites. In this context, a Turkish study examined the inter-media agenda-setting between Twitter & news sites by using cross-lagged correlation analysis with Rozelle-Campbell baseline. It applied a comparative content analysis during the visit of the Turkish President to Pakistan in 2020 on a purposive sample of news stories from three reputable Turkish news websites and tweets. Results showed a bi-directional effect and similarity between agendas where political problems covered in Twitter agenda & news sites agendas are synchronised. On the other side, it was revealed that most political parties, authorities, etc. used Twitter as a potent tool to break news stories, which prompted news sites to report its content (Qaisar and Riaz 2021).

Some of the previous studies done in this research area took women issues as case study like a study that investigated UK newspapers coverage of the first 6 months of #MeToo hashtag usage and its effect on their agendas. It applied a content analysis over the 6 months on a purposive sample of 3450 that use "#MeToo" in 9 major newspapers in the UK. Findings show that although there is a great influence of #MeToo issues and frames on the newspapers' agendas, there is a significant variation in how #Metoo

issues were covered by newspapers based on ideological alignments, editorial policy, and ownership (De Benedictis , Orgad and Rottenberg 2019).

During a 2-week period, a Ghanaian study investigated the inter-media agenda-setting between Instagram, Twitter, and five Ghanaian news sites. It conducted a content analysis on a simple sample of trending news stories on news websites, tweets on Twitter, and posts on Instagram as well as interviews with two news editors. The results of cross-lagged correlation along the Rozelle-Campbell baseline showed that the agenda of Twitter has an impact on the agendas on Instagram and news websites. Findings show that newspaper editors were instructed to regularly monitor the platforms for breaking news stories because there are many sources present on them. They were also instructed to pay attention to social media trends because they reflect public interest with caution to verify its information. Results also revealed that platforms play a significant effect in how journalists choose what news to report on (Agyei 2019).

Another study tried to investigate the Instagram effect because it's an emerging platform. This study examined whether candidate posts on Instagram during the 2016 US presidential campaigns affected the agendas of newspapers. It performed content analysis on postings from six candidates' accounts and news from four well-known newspapers in the USA over six months, using agenda-setting and inter-media agenda-setting theories. The top issues on the newspapers' agendas and some of the candidates' Instagram posts are similar, according to cross-lagged correlation findings. Results demonstrated that there was a weak transfer of issue salience from Instagram's agenda to newspapers' agendas (Towner and Munoz 2017).

### **2.2.2. Social Media's Issue Agenda Impact on Media Agenda-Setting in Egypt:**

In this section, the study tries to review previous studies that are concerned with the first level of inter-media agenda-setting between social media platforms and media in the Egyptian context. The impact of social media activism on media coverage of women's issues has been the subject of some studies, including one

from Egypt that investigated how much Facebook posts about undocumented marriage and sexual harassment can influence the media agenda. It used theories of agenda-setting and inter-media agenda-setting. The study conducted a comparative content analysis on TV episodes discussing two trending Egyptian women's cases from a purposive sample of Egyptian women's TV shows, and Facebook posts using the cases' hashtags were also analysed at the same time. Interviews with three producers of these TV shows were also conducted. Findings revealed that both traditional and social media sources are used. It was discovered that prior to these two cases, the media didn't adequately cover these issues, as evidenced by the coverage they provided after these cases gained widespread attention on social media. It found that there's a transfer of issue salience from the Facebook agenda to the media agenda (Oda 2018).

Another study investigated the impact of social media on newspaper terrorist coverage over two years and which news sources were used. It employed the agenda-setting theory, interviewed journalists from three newspapers with different ownership, and conducted content analyses on news articles from them and hashtags on Twitter related to the same topic. Results showed that while there are many elements, including editorial policy, ownership type, political regimes, and news sources, that influence shaping newspapers' agendas, ownership type and political regimes are more effective in shaping the agendas. It was discovered that the primary news sources were official sources after concentrating on which sources had an impact on establishing the agenda. Due to this, social media has little impact on determining the news agendas of newspapers (Saleh 2018).

Another study tried to identify the influence of news sources, such as social media, in setting the agendas of newspapers and journalists while covering economic topics. A survey and interviews with a purposive sample of Egyptian journalists working for Egyptian newspapers with various ownership types are conducted. The study applied agenda-building and gatekeeping as its theories. In building their agendas, businesspeople, government officials, other newspapers, and websites are playing a significant role, according to the findings. Social media platforms,

however, are playing the least significant role—to the point that it can be mentioned that they have no role at all, without difference in outcomes across different ownership types (Shahin 2016).

Another study examined this topic from the perspectives of Egyptian journalists to identify to what extent journalists depend on social media as a news source besides its effect on shaping the agenda. It conducted interviews and a survey with 100 journalists working in crime and investigation sections using quota sampling. It utilised agenda-setting and gatekeeping theories. Findings show the majority agreed that social media has become an important source of local issues, or at least indicative of them, because of the freedom of expression that it guarantees, its high speed in distributing information, and the variety of opinions and topics it includes. The majority of the journalists highlight the risk of getting false information from social media. Findings also reveal that social media has a role in setting their agenda, and Facebook is the most influential one (El-Kady 2015).

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. *Agenda-Setting Theory:*

The theory presupposes that the media control how topics, after shaping and filtering them, move from the media agenda to the public one (McCombs 2004). The theory's underlying premises were questioned by a number of theorists. They contend that it presumes the public agenda must be influenced by media in a specific chronological order, while the public is not passive as the theory assumes (Fiske 1986). Concerning the level of salience transfer, it is assumed that there are two main levels: the first level is the transfer of issue salience, and the second level is the transfer of attribute salience (McCombs and Ghanem 2001). The first level indicates that the media affects the perception of the public by making specific issues more salient within its agenda to let them consider these issues as the most important ones. Second-level indicates that various attributes act as competitors for the attention of a broader topic.

Agenda-setting theory uses three variables to evaluate the salience in the agendas. They are prominence,

attention, and valence. Prominence is measured by the size of the news story compared to others or its place in the newspaper. Attention means the number of news stories written about certain issues compared to others, while valence is measured by the extent to which a certain tone or news value, like a rational or emotional one, is used when referring to certain issues (Kiousis 2004).

A fundamental question that always revolves around this theory is: which factors can play a role in setting the media agenda? McCombs and Reynolds (2009) stated that there are internal and external news factors, where the internal ones, like other media outlets or platforms, affect the media's agenda, while the external ones include many factors, and one of them is the traditional sources of news. Griffin also stated that other factors that can be added are ownership type and editorial policy. Nowadays, scholars move from investigating how media agendas are set by the public to investigating internal factors in terms of how the diffusion of digital media technologies like social media platforms can have an effect on setting the agenda of the media.

### **3.2. Inter-media Agenda-setting:**

Prior research had concentrated on how the agendas of the top newspapers affected the agendas of other newspapers and TV channels, where leading experts had assumed the presence of a homogeneous news agenda evaluated by gauging salience in dominant media outlets (Protess and McCombs 1991). This resulted in the creation of an inter-media agenda. It is seen as a subset of agenda-setting theory. The theory's fundamental assumption is that various media outlets can imitate each other's agendas (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2008). This demonstrates how various media agendas influence one another in terms of how other internal news sources set media agendas (Meraz 2011).

According to McCombs (2005), it is crucial to understand how many media agendas interact with one another in this digital media environment that the internet has produced. Due to this, academics have tried to focus on the mutual influence of traditional media and social media agendas during the past ten years, similar to the studies covered in the chapter above, in an effort to determine which agenda can

affect the other. However, the incoherent nature of the first level of the inter-media agenda-setting studies' findings that are mentioned in the previous chapter about the effect of social media agenda on media agenda urges establishing an investigation into the usage of this theory within a media landscape like the Egyptian one.

The study utilised these theories by examining the first level of transfer mentioned by them in terms of the transfer of issues salience from social media agendas to news sites' ones. It also utilised one of their variables, which is attention, to measure the issue's salience on both agendas. Moreover, it tries to answer the fundamental question raised by them, which is whether external or internal news factors affect setting the media agenda.

## **4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This chapter includes research questions, methodology & data analysis tool.

### **4.1. Research Questions:**

- 1- Is there a similarity between VAW issue agendas of social media activism in terms of Facebook & Instagram and Egyptian news sites?
- 2- Is there a role for social media activism in setting the news sites' issue agendas regarding VAW issues?
- 3- What are the news sources types used by Egyptian news sites while reporting about VAW issues?

### **4.2. Methodology:**

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. It conducted five in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of Egyptian journalists who worked on violence against women cases and wrote news on state-owned news sites; Al-Ahram, a partisan one; Al-Wafad; and a private one, Al-Watan. This shows that the selected newspapers are a representation of various newspaper ownership types in Egypt.

Regarding the quantitative method, the study conducted a comparative content analysis on social media platforms and news sites during the timeframe from June 20 to July 12, as there was high social

media activism regarding VAW during this period in Egypt. It developed two coding sheets: one for social media platforms and the other for news sites. The coding sheets included common categories to examine the first level of transfer of salience from social media agendas to news sites' agendas, which are summary, timeframe, and issue categories, while another category was added to the coding sheets of the news sites, which are news source types. The study's timeframe is divided into 4 time spans with 5 days, and between each of them there is a one-day time lag in order to enable the cross-lagged analysis adopted by this study. Thus, the study timeframe is as follows:

Table 1: Time frame of the study

Time Span number	Period
Time1	20 till 24 June
Time2	26 till 30 June
Time3	2 till 6 July
Time4	8 till 12 July

First, content analysis was done on the three mentioned news sites using a purposive sample of news that is published in Bawbat Al-Ahram's sections ("Social media w Fadaayat" and "Akhbar AlHawadas" (N = 134), Al-Watan's sections ("Al-Hawadas" and "EIMaraa w EIMonweat") (N = 232), and Bawbat AlWafad's section ("Al-Hawadas" and "Monwat") (N = 126). In the same context, a content analysis of a purposive sample of 238 posts published on Facebook pages and groups that are concerned with VAW issues and have high interactivity, which are SpeakUp, Tadwein, and Superwomen. Besides a content analysis on a purposive sample of 406 posts published on Instagram hashtags that were trending during the study's timeframe, the hashtags are "#EIONf\_Dad\_EIMraa, #La\_LLOnf\_Dad\_EIMraa, #Awkfo\_EIONf\_Dad\_EINasaa, # La\_LLOnf\_Dad\_EINasaa, #Amal\_Maher, and #Shaimaa\_Gamal".

### 4.3. Data Analysis Tool:

There are three variables used to gauge the importance of a media topic on an agenda. One of them is attention, which is used in this study because it measures the total number of times a particular issue

has been covered in the news within a given period of time. Taking into account the rapid and voluminous nature of social media platforms and news sites, the transfer of issue salience, which is the first level of transfer of inter-media agenda-setting, is quantified within the attention dimension.

The study utilises SPSS. At the first level of analysis, the study uses the rank-order technique. Then, cross-lagged correlation with the Rozelle-Campbell baseline technique is used to examine the transfer of salience from one medium to another over different time spans. The effectiveness of using this technique to observe the agenda-setting relationships that may exist between various media agendas over time was demonstrated by a number of inter-media agenda-setting studies (Qaisar & Riaz 2021; Agyei 2019; El-Awad 2017). According to Lopez-Escobar, Liams, MComms and Lennon (1998), the baseline is a number "below which any significant cross-correlation statistic would show the absence of an agenda-setting impact." In Rozelle & Campbell's (1969) formula, the baseline is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{PX1Y1 + PX2Y2}{2} \sqrt{\frac{(PX1X2)^2 + (PY1Y2)^2}{2}}$$

According to Lee, Lancendorfer and Lee (2005), cross-lagged correlation analysis allowed "casual interferences from correlational data to be made". Its main premise is that "if Media X causes Media Y more than Media Y causes Media X, then Media X at Time 1 correlated with Media Y at Time 2 (PX1Y2) value should be higher than Media X at Time 2 correlated with Media Y at Time 1 (PX2Y1) and also above the Rozelle-Campbell baseline value" (Campbell and Kenny 1999; Shahzad and Siraj 2020). The value also has to be higher than the Spearman (p) RHO (r) value, which is 0.05 or 0.01. In order to compare the observable movement and influence of agendas across different media during the timeframe, the study used this analysis. Six different cross-lagged correlations, to examine the transfer of issue salience, are based on the study's timeframe (1-2), (2-3), and (3-4).

## 5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This subsection illustrates the five interviews' findings with the purposive sample of the Egyptian journalists. Findings are divided into the following themes:

### **5.1. Usage of Social media as VAW news source:**

In terms of internal news sources, journalists' responses regarding the usage of social media activism as VAW news sources are the same in that they always monitor social media platforms, particularly Facebook, for news ideas that they search for information about from other sources. However, their responses are different in terms of which social media pages and accounts a journalist depends on. Two of them from Bawbat Al-Ahram and Bawbat Al-Wafad believed that journalists depended only on official pages and accounts like those of the National Council for Women, ministries, and other governmental women's organisations.

However, this doesn't neglect their confirmation that unofficial accounts on social media platforms can be used as primary sources, especially for breaking news about VAW crimes and campaigns. Moreover, they affirmed that using unofficial accounts' content is done after verification from traditional news sources or in cases where they know the owner of the account's credibility background.

### **5.2. Usage of Social Media as VAW news source comparing to other sources:**

All responses confirmed that traditional news sources, in terms of external ones, are used more than internal news sources while reporting about VAW issues. Also, they confirmed that the most important news sources are official sources such as courts and security sources because they are authentic and comprehensive.

In this context, Bawbat Al-Wafad journalist, Wagdy Saber said that "the reason behind relying on them is that they are the most verified and comprehensive sources as they include not only legal decisions but other new sources' words like the testimonies of victims, perpetrators, eyewitnesses, etc."

All journalists confirmed that other traditional news sources like perpetrators, victims, their families, eyewitnesses, etc. are needed, and their importance as sources comes in second place after official sources as they add depth and context to VAW news stories, as Bawbat Al-Ahram journalist, Sherif Abo-EIFadal said.

### **5.3. Social Media Activism Role in setting**

### **Egyptian News Sites' Issue Agendas:**

All journalists confirmed that sources have an effective role in setting news sites' agendas, but their responses varied in that most of them believed traditional news sources were more powerful than social media. However, all journalists affirmed that the social media activism that took place recently regarding VAW issues in Egypt has played crucial roles in influencing their news selections in terms of making them focus on issues more than other issues, as Bawbat Al-Ahram journalist, Mona Basha said.

In this context, Al-Watan journalist, Rafek Nasef, stated that when a VAW case becomes a trend on social media, this leads them to report about it, as this shows that there is public interest in the case, so they are keen to read news about it, which leads journalists to report about the case more than others, like the Naira Ashraf case, to increase the views on the news site, which will increase the ads and income.

Concerning the roles played by social media activism regarding VAW, they are varied from journalists' perspectives. Where Bawbat Al-Wafad journalist, Muhammed Tohamy, believed that its role was giving a space for Egyptian women to call for action and speak up, Abo EIFadal believed that it acts as a tool for raising awareness and creating a sense of responsibility by mobilising citizens to end VAW in Egypt. All of this leads journalists to consider it a public agenda and opinion indicator for them

### **5.4. Conditions that lead Social Media Activism affects Egyptian News Sites' Issue Agendas:**

Concerning its role's impact on setting their agendas regarding VAW issues, journalists stated that social media activism can influence their issue agendas after meeting some conditions. First, examine whether the editorial policy accepts publishing about these issues or not, as stated by Nasef. Second is whether there are any legal decisions that prohibit publishing about certain VAW cases, as took place in the Shaimaa Gamal case, where the court prohibited publishing news about it during a certain period, as stated by Abo-EIFadal.

Third is whether there is evidence about the issue that is widespread on social media, like in the Amal Maher



case, where there was social media activism regarding it but the Egyptian media neglected reporting about it because there is no proof for what is said on social media, as mentioned by Saber.

They also confirmed that after meeting these conditions, social media can influence the number of news articles published about certain issues in the same time or period that these issues are trending on social media, not in another period of time as these issues will get old and no more media coverage will be

available for them.

## 6. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The unit of analysis total number reaches 1,136 distributed as following; posts on Facebook (N=238) & Instagram (N=406) and news from; Bawbat Al-Ahram (N=134), Al-Watan (N=232) & Bawbat Al-Wafad (N=126). In this subsection, findings of rank order tables and cross-lagged panels are illustrated.

### 6.1. Issue Agenda Findings:

Table 2: The rank order of issue categories across different media

Medium Issues	Facebook	Rank	Instagram	Rank	Bawbat Al-Wafad	Rank	Bawbat Al-Ahram	Rank	Al-Watan	Rank
Femicide	180	1	247	1	90	1	86	1	172	1
Human trafficking	23	2	121	2	12	2	3	6	19	2
Economic violence	8	4	1	6	1	7	4	5	9	3
Emotional violence	0	10	0	7	2	6	4	5	8	4
Physical violence	1	9	0	7	1	7	5	4	8	4
Psychological violence	1	9	0	7	0	8	2	7	4	5
Rape	4	6	1	6	4	5	1	8	4	5
Sexual harassment	2	8	1	6	5	4	6	3	3	6
Honor killing	0	10	2	5	0	8	2	7	2	7
Non-consensual sexting	0	10	0	7	1	7	3	6	2	7
Cyberbullying	3	7	0	7	0	8	6	3	1	8
Rape culture	10	3	3	4	9	3	10	2	0	9
Doxing	0	10	0	7	0	8	0	9	0	9
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	6	5	0	7	0	8	0	9	0	9
Child marriage	0	10	0	7	0	8	0	9	0	9
General Violence against women issues	0	10	30	3	1	7	1	8	0	9
Total	238		406		126		134		232	

Table 2's rank order shows a kind of imitation in issue agendas between the platforms and the news sites, where the "Femicide" issue ranked first across all of them. Moreover, the "human trafficking" issue ranked second across all of them except Bawbat Al-Ahram, where it is ranked 6th. Regarding the third rank, there is imitation between Facebook and Bawbat Al-Wafad

regarding the "rape culture" issue, while there is imitation between Facebook and Bawbat Al-Ahram, where both have "economic violence" ranked as fourth.

It also shows an imitation in terms of the issues that took the lowest rank, as in the case of Facebook and

Bawbat Al-Wafad, whose common lowest issues in rank are "honour killing and doxing," Facebook and Bawbat Al-Ahram's common issues are "child marriage and doxing," and Facebook and Al-Watan's common issues are "child marriage, general violence against women issues, and doxing." Regarding the imitation between Instagram and the news sites in the lowest rank, as between Instagram and Bawbat Al-Wafad, the common issues in the lowest rank are "doxing,

cyberbullying, and psychological violence" Also, the common issues in the lowest rank between Instagram and the other news sites are "FGM, child marriage, and doxing."

This indicates that the imitation between the Facebook activism agenda regarding VAW issues and the Egyptian news sites is higher than the imitation between them and the Instagram activism agenda.

Table 3: The rank order of issue categories across the platforms over the timeframe

Issues	Facebook (timeframe)				Instagram (timeframe)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Femicide	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Human trafficking	2	2	4	4	2	2	3	4
Economic violence	3	4	3	3	1	6	4	4
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	4	3	5	4	4	6	4	4
Rape	5	3	5	4	4	6	4	3
Emotional violence	6	5	5	4	4	6	4	4
Physical violence	6	4	5	4	4	6	4	4
Psychological violence	6	4	5	4	4	6	4	4
Honor killing	6	5	5	4	4	5	3	4
Sexual harassment	6	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
Rape culture	6	4	2	2	4	4	3	4
Child marriage	6	5	5	4	4	6	4	4
Cyberbullying	6	4	3	4	4	6	4	4
Non-consensual sexting	6	5	5	4	4	6	4	4
Doxing	6	5	5	4	4	6	4	4
General Violence against women issues	6	5	5	4	3	3	2	2

Table 3 shows that in terms of Facebook, "femicide" and "economic violence" issues existence remains constant across all the timeframes, but "femicide" ranked first throughout the whole timeframe and "economic violence" ranked third in time spans 1, 3, and 4, while ranked fourth in time span 2. Regarding the second rank across the time spans, it goes as follows: "human trafficking" in time span 1, "rape culture" in time spans 3 and 4, and "physical violence" in time span 2. It also highlights that "economic violence" ranked fourth in time span 2, which shows a similarity

with Al-Watan in time span 3, which is noticed in the following table. It also shows that in terms of Instagram, "general violence against women issues and Femicide" appearance remains constant over the whole timeframe, where "femicide" ranked first while the other one ranked third in time spans 1 and 2 and fourth in time spans 3 and 4. Moreover, the "human trafficking" issue, like Facebook, remains constant over timeframe except in time span 4, where in time spans 1 and 2, it is ranked 2nd and in time span 3 as third.

Table 4: The rank order of issues categories across the news sites over the timeframe

Issues	Bawbat Al-Wafad (timeframe)				Bawbat Al-Ahram (timeframe)				Al-Watan (timeframe)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Femicide	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rape culture	2	4	6	3	2	4	4	5	5	6	5	5
Human trafficking	3	2	3	3	5	2	3	5	2	2	5	5
Economic violence	3	6	6	3	3	4	4	4	2	4	4	2
General Violence against women issues	3	6	6	3	6	4	4	4	5	6	5	5
Emotional violence	4	5	6	2	5	3	3	4	4	3	5	2
Physical violence	4	6	4	3	4	4	2	4	3	5	2	5
Psychological violence	4	6	6	3	6	3	3	5	5	4	3	5
Honor killing	4	6	6	3	4	4	4	5	4	6	5	5
Sexual harassment	4	1	2	2	6	4	2	2	5	5	3	5
Rape	4	3	6	3	6	4	3	5	2	6	5	5
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	4	6	6	3	6	4	4	5	5	6	5	5
Child marriage	4	6	6	3	6	4	4	5	5	6	5	5
Cyberbullying	4	6	6	3	6	4	4	1	5	5	5	5
Non-consensual sexting	4	5	6	3	6	4	3	3	5	6	5	2
Doxing	4	6	6	3	6	4	4	5	5	6	5	5

Table 4 shows that despite the similarity in terms of rank order of issues between the platforms and the news sites in the same time spans, there are various differences from one time span to the other one following it. However, there are a few similarities in this context. First, in terms of Bawbt Al-Wafad, the "femicide" issue is ranked first over the whole timeframe. Also, "rape culture and human trafficking" issues existence somehow remains constant, where the first one ranked second in time span 1 and fourth in time span 2, while "human trafficking" ranked first in time span 2 and third in time spans 1 and 3. Second, in terms of Bawbt Al-Ahram, "femicide, human trafficking, and economic violence" issues existence somehow remains constant over timeframe, where the first one ranked as first over the whole timeframe, the second one ranked as second, third, and fifth in the

following time spans, respectively: 2, 3, and 1, while the third issue ranked as third in time span 1 and fourth in time span 4. In terms of Al-Watan, the "femicide" issue existed at first rank over the whole timeframe. However, there is an obvious similarity between Al-Watan in time span 3 and Facebook in time span 2. In time span 2, the following issues ranked from second to fourth, respectively: "human trafficking, "emotional violence," and "economic violence." In time span 3, the following issues ranked from second to fourth, respectively: "physical violence, psychological violence," and economic violence."

This indicates that there may be a cross-lagged correlation effect between Facebook and Al-Watan from one time span to another, but no effect for Instagram can be indicated.

## 6.2. News Sources Types Findings:

Table 5: The rank order of issue categories across different media over time spans

News Sources Types	Al-Watan		Bawbat Al-Ahram		Bawbat Al-Wafad	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Security source.	102	1	71	1	44	1
Victims.	37	2	21	4	6	7
Perpetrators.	37	2	30	2	17	4
Victims' Family.	37	2	12	7	19	3
The court.	36	3	23	3	3	9
Facebook	33	4	19	5	19	3
Public figure.	23	5	5	10	19	3
Eye witness.	22	6	14	6	15	5
TV	19	7	9	8	29	2
Twitter	16	8	3	12	8	6
Instagram	14	9	4	11	8	6
Victims' Friends.	10	10	0	15	6	7
Victim's Lawyer.	7	11	5	10	4	8
Other Internal News Factor.	5	12	4	11	8	6
Experts.	4	13	6	9	0	12
Perpetrators' Family.	4	13	1	14	0	12
Perpetrator's Lawyer.	4	13	1	14	2	10
Perpetrators' Friends.	2	14	0	15	0	12
NGO representative.	2	14	2	13	1	11
Religious leaders.	2	14	3	12	4	8
Other Traditional news sources	2	14	3	12	8	7
Governmental organization representative.	1	15	3	12	3	9
News agencies.	1	15	0	15	1	11
Independent Feminist.	0	16	0	15	2	10
Newspapers.	0	16	0	15	2	10

Table 5 shows that on all news sites, traditional news sources are used more than internal ones, especially when it comes to social media platforms. In this context, security sources are ranked first on all news sites, while starting from the second rank, sources are varied. It also shows that Facebook is the common platform that exists in the top 5 ranks of all the news sites, where it is ranked 3rd on Bawbat Al-Wafad, 4th

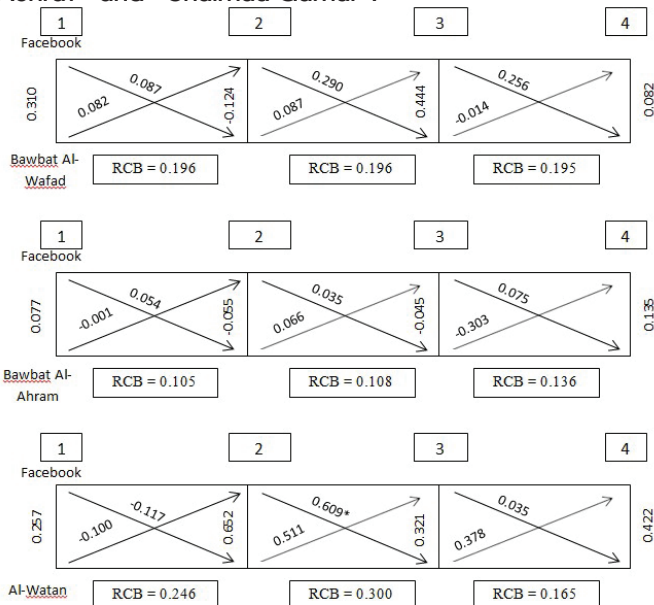
on Al-Watan, and 5th on Bawbat Al-Ahram. Regarding the 2nd rank, only Bawbat Al-Wafad used an internal news source, which is TV, while the other news sites used external news sources like perpetrators, victims, and victims' families. Unlike Bawbat Al-Wafad, which used Facebook as the third-most-used news source, the other two sites used the court. The table also shows that experts, independent feminists,

governmental and non-governmental organisations, religious leaders, newspapers, and news agencies are in the lowest ranks.

### 6.3. Cross-lagged Correlations with Rozelle-Campbell Baseline Findings:

This technique assumption enables the study to identify the influence of each of the two platforms' agendas on each news sites' agendas over the timeframe.

In this context, Figure (1) shows that there is no influence of Facebook's activism agenda on any of the news sites' agendas except for the cross-lagged correlation between Facebook in time span 2 and Al-Watan in time span 3, where its value is ( $r = 0.609$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), which shows that Facebook's agenda in time span 2 influences Al-Watan's agenda in time span 3. The common issues between Facebook and Al-Watan in both time spans explain why this happened: in time span 2 on Facebook, the "femicide" issue got rank one and "physical violence and economic violence" got rank four, while in time span 3 on Al-Watan, the "femicide" issue as well got rank one, "physical violence" got rank two, and "economic violence" got rank four. Moreover, it's crucial to mention that, through the findings of the summary category, which is part of the code sheet and is coded by giving the VAW case discussed in any issue the name that is known on social media, there are common popular cases during these two time spans, which are "Naira Ashraf" and "Shaimaa Gamal".



\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05

Figure 1: Cross-lagged correlations between Facebook & news sites agendas over the timeframe

In the same context, Figure 2 shows that there is no significant influence of Instagram's activism agenda on any of the news sites' agendas. This is justified by the fact that although there are common issues of "rape, rape culture, and femicide" between Instagram and the news sites throughout the whole timeframe, the ranking of these issues is the same in similar time spans, not in different following ones that affect each other.

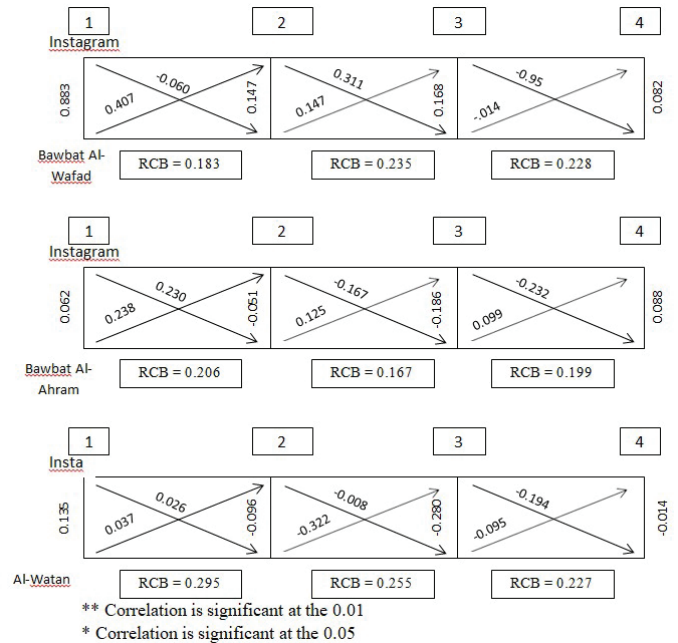


Figure 2: Cross-lagged correlations between Instagram & news sites agendas over the timeframe

## 7. DISCUSSION

### 1. Is there a similarity between VAW issue agendas of social media activism in terms of Facebook & Instagram and Egyptian news sites?

This study's finding confirms the assumption of the inter-media agenda-setting theory, where it finds that there are similarities in the rank order of issues on the two platforms' agendas and the Egyptian news sites' agendas in the same time span. It also shows that having a trending VAW case on social media and public interest shown towards it has a great role in creating these similarities.

This finding can be justified by the interviews' findings, where all journalists stated that social media activism that took place recently regarding VAW issues in Egypt

has played crucial roles that influence their news selections by making them focus on issues more than others. In other words, when a VAW case becomes a trend on social media, this leads them to report about it more than others to increase the views on the news site, which will increase the ads and income, like the Naira Ashraf case, as it shows that there is public interest in reading about this case.

This study's finding is approved by some of the previous studies' findings (Qaisar and Riaz 2021; Towner and Munoz 2017) in terms of the similarity between the issues discussed on the two platforms' agendas and the Egyptian news sites' agendas. Moreover, according to Agyie (2019), public interest is considered a key to having similar issues between agendas, and editors in his study approved that they are asked by their newspapers to monitor social media stories and report about them as they reflect public interest.

## **2. Is there a role for social media activism in setting the news sites' issue agendas regarding VAW issues?**

Despite similarity in agendas noticed by the issues rank order, the cross-lagged correlations findings prove that the first level of inter-media agenda-setting influence of social media activism agenda on Egyptian news sites' agendas is weak in terms of the weak role of Facebook activism agenda in setting the Egyptian news sites' issue agendas, where there is only one effect of Facebook in one time span on Al-Watan in another time span and no role for Instagram. This shows that Facebook has more effect than Instagram and that private ownership's agenda is the only one affected. Findings also show that journalists have some conditions that enable them to report or not about VAW cases on social media.

These conditions can be illustrated by analysing the one effect and the no-effect that take place. Regarding the one effect found, it can be justified by the interviews' findings, where all journalists confirmed that having a trending topic on social media, like the Naira Ashraf and Shaimaa Gamal cases that were trending on social media in those time spans, leads to the transfer of the issue to their agendas as it increases their readership and income. Regarding the

non-transmission of issues taking place in the rest of the cross-lagged correlations, it can be justified by the fact that some cases like "Amal Maher" and "Eman Ershad" were trending on the platforms during the timeframe but were neglected by the news sites. This can be justified by the journalists' response stating certain conditions to follow in order to enable social media to affect their agendas, which are whether the editorial policy accepts publishing about these issues or not, whether there is any legal decision that prohibits publishing about certain cases as took place in Shaimaa Gamal's case, and whether there is evidence about the issue that is widespread on social media like the Amal Maher case to prove that it's right. Other conditions are whether the editorial policy accepts publishing about these issues or not; is there any legal decision that prohibits publishing about certain cases, as took place in the Shaimaa Gamal case; and is there evidence about the issue that is widespread on social media, like in the Amal Maher case, to prove that it's right.

In the context of previous studies, some studies prove the weak role of social media in setting news sites' agendas (Shahin 2016; Saleh 2018), but other studies show that the platforms have a role in setting the media's issue agenda (Qaisar and Riaz 2021; De Benedictis, Orgad and Rottenbery 2019; Agyei 2019; Oda 2018, 60–70). According to Towner and Munoz (2017, 484–499), having similar rank order is not the key to proving the effect of one platform's agenda on another. They illustrated that the number of cross-lagged correlations that proved the effect has to be higher than the number of those that proved no effect. This is found in this study, where, in the Facebook case, only one cross-lagged correlation value proved the effect compared to eight that proved no effect. In the Instagram case, there is no correlation that proves the effect, unlike Towner and Munoz's (2017) finding that proves a weak transfer of issue salience from Instagram to news sites' agendas.

The finding illustrated by this study to be the reason behind the no-effect, which is that sometimes social media gives attention to some issues neglected by mainstream media, is also approved by other studies (Rogstad 2016). Similar to the study's findings that show some conditions that can lead media not to report about trending VAW cases, other previous

studies found that journalists always have concern about verifying social media information in terms of finding evidence about it (Agyei 2019; El-Kady 2015). Moreover, the significance of the editorial policy's role is found to be a reason in a similar previous study (De Benedictis, Orgad and Rottenberg 2019; Saleh 2018), where it was mentioned that ownership type has an effect on enabling the transmission of issues from social media to the media's agenda. This can be found in this study, where only private news sites are weakly affected, unlike state-owned and partisan ones.

### 3. What are the news sources types used by Egyptian news sites while reporting about VAW issues?

Similar to the previous study by Shahin (2016), which states that traditional sources like government officials, security sources, etc. are used more as news sources when reporting about VAW issues, this study's quantitative and qualitative findings reveal that journalists depend on traditional news sources, especially official sources like security sources and courts, more than internal news sources in terms of social media platforms. Journalists justified this by stating that official sources are authentic and comprehensive. They also stated that there is a need for other traditional sources like eyewitnesses, victims, etc. to give context and depth to VAW news stories.

Regarding social media usage as news sources, content analysis showed that the most used platform is Facebook, which is similar to the journalists' responses, like the previous study's (El-Kady 2015) finding. This can also be justified by the statistics mentioned earlier, which show that Facebook is the most used platform in Egypt, so it's logical that journalists depend more on it as a news source compared to other platforms. Similar to some recent studies (Agyei 2019; Qaisar and Riaz 2021), this study's findings show that the main reason for journalists to monitor the platforms as news sources is that all official and traditional news sources can be reached through social media, and they are now the main sources for breaking news. Journalists use their ideas and information, but only after verification from authentic ones, especially if it's published by an unverified account. This reveals the usage of both types of news sources, similarly to

Oda's (2018) findings.

## 8. CONCLUSION

This study bridged the gap in the literature in three ways. First, it examined the first level of inter-media agenda-setting in the Egyptian context, which hasn't received enough investigation by previous studies that focused on examining this topic in foreign countries, and the study finds that there is similarity between the agendas of the study's samples. Second, it investigated the role of Facebook and Instagram in setting digital news sites' agendas, unlike previous studies that focused on the effect of social media agendas, especially Twitter, on traditional media agendas or traditional media agendas effects on each other, and found that there is a weak effect for social media platforms in setting digital news sites' issue agendas. The study illustrated the conditions that enable the platforms to affect the media's agendas. Third, it takes social issues in terms of VAW issues as its case study, which wasn't given enough focus by previous studies that focused on political cases while examining this topic. The study also found that private newspapers are the only ones affected. It also highlighted that the main source that journalists use while reporting about VAW is security sources. Social media is also used, especially Facebook, but the least used sources are experts and independent feminist.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of this study's findings, it's recommended that future research be directed towards more investigation of inter-media agenda-setting in Egypt in the context of social issues, for example, by taking a specific trending VAW case on social media like "Naira Ashraf", which is found by this study to be widespread among Egyptian users on Facebook and Instagram, to examine the effect of social media on media agenda.

Some of the limitations of this study were that it couldn't examine the effects of other social media platforms that are also used to a great extent by Egyptian society. Thus, more investigation should also be given to examining the effects of other platforms, like TikTok, on setting the media agenda in Egypt. Another potential direction of research is to investigate

how journalists can meet professional and ethical standards while using social media as a source of news about VAW issues, where social responsibility theory can be applied. In addition, investigating the effect of adopting certain sources of news about VAW, like

experts and independent feminists, to help change society's wrong norms and attitudes towards VAW is needed since they are the least used sources by the news sites.

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