

العنف الموجه إلى المرأة في المسلسلات الرمضانية الإطار النظري للدراسة هو نظرية المعرفة الاجتماعية لباندورا

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ملخص: ركزت هذه الدراسة التي استخدمت طرق بحث كمية ونوعية على العنف الموجه إلى الجنس الآخر، وخاصة من قبل الرجل إلى المرأة. قام الباحث بالتحليل الكمي والنوعي لأفضل خمسة مسلسلات مصرية لرمضان 2012 وفقاً لاستبانة عامة. شملت عينة الدراسة 150 حلقة، واستخرج ثم حل عدد من المشاهد المختارة للعنف الموجه إلى الجنس الآخر، إضافة إلى تحديد من قام بالعنف، وسبب استخدام العنف، وطبيعة الموقف العنفواني. افترضت الدراسة أن هناك وعياً للعنف تجاه المرأة؛ مما سيخلق مشاهد أقل في المسلسلات لهذا النوع من العنف. ولكن وجدت الدراسة أن كمية العنف الموجه للمرأة مازال عالياً نسبياً. وقد وجدت الدراسة أيضاً أن أغلبية هذا النوع من العنف. يبدأ من الرجل تجاه المرأة، ومن أهم استخداماته شكل من أشكال العقوبة أو نتيجة لغضب الرجل. واستخدم العنف في عدة مشاهد كجزء من المشاهد الكوميديّة؛ مما يؤدي إلى الخلط بين جدية العنف كأفة اجتماعية والكوميديا كوسيلة ترفيهيّة.

المصطلحات الأساسية: رمضان 2012، العنف تجاه المرأة، نظرية المعرفة الاجتماعية، نظرية الاعتماد على وسائل الإعلام.

The Holy Month of Violence: The Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence in Egyptian Television Series during Ramadan 2012

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Abstract: In this multi-method study of gender-based violence, the author analyzed 150 episodes of the five most watched Egyptian series during the 30 days of Ramadan 2012. It was followed by a textual analysis of selected and evident scenes of gender-based violence from the five series. The study coded for the prevalence of violence and gender-based violence, both in verbal and non-verbal forms, as well as the context in which the violence took place (reason for using violence and gender of perpetrators). This research assumed that the increasing awareness toward violence in the media, gender-based violence would be less appearing in television programming. To the opposite, the study found gender-based violence to be highly visible in today's media content. In the Egyptian series of Ramadan 2012, the author found that a great majority of gender-based violence were perpetuated by men. The main reasons for the violence were mere anger and as a form of punishment. The study also found that the justification for the violence did not matter whether the perpetrator or the victim was at fault. The use of humor trivializes gender-based violence and its consequences on consumers who watch these television series.

Keywords: Ramadan 2012, Television drama and series, Gender-based violence, Social cognitive theory, Media system dependency

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Introduction

Media violence has been extensively researched for several decades. Many scholars have studied its nature and effects and have left a wealth of scholarship on this matter (Gerbner, et al., 1980; Greenberg, et al. 1980; Potter & Ware, 1987; Smith et al., 2002). As Smith, Nathanson and Wilson (2002) have indicated, the academic interest in studying media violence for the last decades reveals that violence in the media, and in television in particular, can highly contribute to aggressive behavior in viewers. Also, gender-based violence, an extension of media violence, has received a similar scholarly attention (Capella et al., 2010; Basile & Saltzman, 2009).

However, the majority of these studies focus on American television programming whether they are about violence (Smith et al., 2002) or gender-based violence (Gilpatric, 2010; Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). The current study takes a different approach and extends it further. Not only does it investigate gender-based violence in a different region with different television programming, but also during a time of the year with the highest television viewership. This study investigates the prevalence and context of gender-based violence in Egyptian televised series that were aired during the Muslim month of Ramadan. Several factors demonstrate the significance of this research study. Among them is the lack of empirical studies on gender-based violence in Egyptian series in general and during the month of Ramadan in particular. Also, the fact that Egyptian series and films are widespread both in Africa and the Arab world, they make Egypt an interesting case of study both for Africa and the Middle East. Another significant factor is the relationship between what people watch on television and the media content, on one hand, and the potential media effects on people, on the other. Using a population of 150 episodes from the five highest Egyptian series in terms of viewership, the purpose of this research study is to quantitatively identify gender-based violence in the Egyptian series of Ramadan 2012 and qualitatively analyze the context of the violence in terms of the perpetrator of the violence, the reason for violence and the subjects of the violence.

Ramadan and Television

During the Muslim month of Ramadan, Egyptian TV channels, as well as African and Arab, broadcast a variety of series that are popular in Africa and

the Middle East. Viewership of TV drama during Ramadan doubles (“Arab advisors group,” 2009). This is a period when many new series and programs are released and they are highly anticipated by the audience, increasing the viewership during the 30 days of Ramadan. In 2010 alone, over \$135 million were spent on the production of 50 Egyptian drama series, as reported by Aljazeera (“Ramadan soap opera,” 2013). Due to the current situation in Syria, Egypt encountered no competitor to its TV series market in Africa and the Middle East during Ramadan 2012. Ramadan season of 2012 is considered “one of the biggest in the history of Egyptian drama,» Dalal Hamzah of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union told Al-Shorfa news website (as cited in “Ramadan soap opera,” 2013). The combined production cost reached a record of 1.18 billion Egyptian pounds, which is around \$196 million (“Ramadan soap opera,” 2013). At the same time, advertising revenues dramatically increased in 2012 as well. Television companies across the region have enjoyed a 20% increase in advertisement revenues during Ramadan 2012 (Flanagan, 2012). The Egyptian media industry showed some positive recovery indicators since the Arab Spring, a period in which countries in North Africa and the Middle East witnessed political unrest and regime changes. These facts of high production, viewership, advertising spending and revenue in the Egyptian television industry during Ramadan 2012 add more value to this research study because of their effects on viewers on one hand, and on the television industry on the other.

In addition, much research has focused on media effects and the potential dangers associated with viewing violent content. It is important to measure just how much violence there is on Egyptian television during a month that is considered to Muslims sacred and a month of worship. In other words, while Ramadan should be a time of worship, many television shows do not conform to this sacredness. Rather, they heavily show programs that include violent and sexual content. In addition, Egyptian television shows, and many of them in Africa and the rest of the world, do not warn viewers about the content of the shows in case those who are watching might be susceptible to that content.

Verbal, Physical, and Gender-Based Violence

The definitions of violence are diverse and complex. However, many scholars agree that violence is not only or necessarily physical but also verbal.

Earlier definitions and studies viewed violence as a physical act of aggression. Gerbner et al. (1978) defined violence as an “overt expression of physical force, with or without weapon, against self or other, compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing” (p. 179). A more recent definition treats violence as an overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force and/or the actual use of such force intended to harm an animate being or group (Smith et al., 2002, p. 90). Some content analysis studies use physical acts of aggression as violence and disregard violent threats as a type of violence (Bridges et al., 2010, p. 1067), while other and recent studies emphasize the inclusion of verbal aggression as a type of violence (Beatty & Pence, 2010; Wigley, 1998). This study took the recommendation from previous research to also include non-verbal violence as a type of violence.

Existing research mainly tackles the effects of media violence. Numerous studies have investigated the impact of media violence on children and adults, modeling aggressive behavior, and other psychological consequences of watching violent acts (e.g. Huesmann & Taylor, 2006; Sparks, Sherry & Lubsen, 2005). According to media scholars, TV violence tends to boost fearfulness, frustration, distrust, desensitization, and pessimism (Bushman & Anderson, 2001). The focus of this research is narrower than many studies that have tackled media violence. As stated previously, not only does this research look at a different TV programming in a different region, culture, and religion, it also investigates gender-based violence during a time of the year with the highest television viewership, the Muslim month of Ramadan. Due to the fact that TV programming tends to shape viewers’ conceptions of reality, it is essential to measure the prevalence and context in which violent content is portrayed (Comstock, et al., 1978; Comstock & Scharrer, 1999). Estimations of the frequency of violent acts on mainstream TV programming have been consistently high (Gerbner, et al., 1994; Potter, 2003). For example, in the United States, the average rate of TV violence was twelve acts per episode in late 1990s (as cited in Kumar, 2003, pp. 24 -25). Little is known about the average rate of TV violence in other countries, especially in Africa and the Middle East.

As for defining gender-based violence, a unified definition does not exist (Carpenter, 2006). Among the definitions are the following. “[Gender-based violence] refers to violence targeted to a person because of their gender, or that

affects them because of their special roles or responsibilities in the society” (Benjamin & Khadija, 1998). Gender-based violence is violence directed at an individual, male or female, based on his or her specific gender role in society (“Human Rights Watch,” 2002). It is also “the violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles” (“Women’s Caucus,” as cited in Carpenter, 2006). A growing body of scholarly literature emphasizes gender differences in violence portrayal on the TV screen. This study conceptualizes gender-based violence as physical and verbal acts of aggression against women or men because of their gender. Further operationalization of these kinds of violence is mentioned in the methodology section.

The majority of studies on gender-based violence that focus on Africa investigate the interrelationship between gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS (e.g. Onyejekwe, 2004; Pronyk, et al., 2006; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010), discarding the impact of media. Field studies in Egypt investigated the magnitude of domestic and gender-based violence, but they were not directly related to media content. In her study of married women in Minya, Egypt, Yount (2005) found that 27% of respondents reported being physically beaten by their partners. Among those, 4% reported they had severe beating to the extent that a doctor was needed (Yount, 2005). In a representative survey study of 5249 Egyptian married women, Afifi (2010) found that 29.4% of these women were exposed to physical violence by their male partners. Although these two studies did not investigate gender-based violence in a media content framework, we cannot rule out the possibility that this violence might partially be a result of constant media exposure. Elaiwah (1998) found that Egyptian drama series were watched the most among other television genres by Egyptian audiences. These findings indicate the importance of TV series in Arabic programming.

Few research articles that examine media-related violence in Africa tend to focus on South Africa only. For example, Centerwall (1992) concluded that the introduction of television in South Africa in 1975 and associated portrayal of aggression led to subsequent increase in homicide rates in the region. The researcher, however, did not consider any gender-related differences. Galant (2008) noted that news media in South Africa portray extensive violence on a daily basis (p. 8). He also added that exposure to gender-based violence in news media adds to the overall criminal situation in the country.

El-Sayed (2012) in her magazine article addressed the issue of gender-based violence toward women in the 2012 Egyptian comedy series *El Zoga El Rab'a/The Fourth Wife and Meraty fi Warta/My Wife is in Trouble*. The author was not only criticizing the number of violent acts in these two series but also the target's reaction toward this aggressive behavior. El-Sayed (2012) wrote

I know abuse and violence are common, but what amazes me is how it is portrayed [*in El Zoga El Rab'a*]. This isn't a tragic scene about domestic abuse that highlights the trauma women suffer when subjected to physical abuse. No, this is a comic scene. The women are actually laughing and running around and taking the lashing very, very lightly like it's a pillow fight at a sleepover (p. 2).

The only scholarly study that focused on the Egyptian Ramadan series was that of Al-Mahadin (2011). He examined **two** *Egyptian drama series* during the holy month of Ramadan 2010: *Zahra wa Azwajuha al-Khasma/Zahra and her Five Husbands and Ma Malakat Aymanukum/What your Right Hand Possesses*. However, the focus of Al-Mahadin's research was on constructing female sexuality and transgression. Only limited attention was paid to issues of gender-based violence in these two series. An earlier survey study by Jalal (2004), the researcher found that women in Egyptian drama are portrayed in a negative manner.

The literature review revealed that none of the existing studies investigate the prevalence and context of gender-based violence in African programs, particularly in the Egyptian series of Ramadan 2012. Also, departing from the belief that audiences depend on media to meet some needs and that the constant showing of violence and gender-based violence would make viewers more likely to accept them as natural to their daily discourse, they are also more likely to increase the learning of this kind of violence. Media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) would help demonstrate this process of learning.

Violence, Media Dependency and Social Learning

Numerous theories attempted to explain the relationship between media, audiences and media effects. Among these theories are media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1976) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), or social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963). The author employed media

dependency and social cognitive theory to guide this research study. Both theories are very beneficial and complete each other to explain violence in media content and its implications. As the following section shows, media dependency theory indicates that audiences depend on certain media content to meet certain needs and goals while social cognitive theory explains how these audiences can learn from this content. Both theories have been applied in learning the relationships (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Lowrey, 2004; Hetsroni, 2008) and effects of mass media content, from action movies to reality television (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2010). These theories offer a vantage point from which to examine the relationship and influence of mediated content on audiences' attitudes and behaviors (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Bandura, 2004).

Media Dependency Theory

Media dependency theory, also known as media system dependency theory, combines elements of the uses and gratifications approach with those of media effects theories (Rubin & Windahl, 1986). The theory explains the relationship among audiences, media and the social system at large. People depend on the media in order to achieve some needs and objectives that are related to the social context. That dependence, however, is not equal toward all media because under some circumstances such as social change and during conflicts audiences depend on some media more than others (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Rubin & Windahl, 1986; Hetsroni, 2008).

Earlier studies on media dependency theory found that different media are used for different needs and objectives. Katz et al. (1973) found newspapers to be used the most to meet needs of strengthening information about society. Loges & Ball-Rokeach (1993) found dependency on newspapers increases for the goals of self and social understanding. Kippax & Murray (1977) found that television was used to meet ritualized habits such as time-consumption and entertainment. Dependency on the radio tends to increase most for the goals of action orientation such as seeking directions (Ball-Rokeach et al., 1999). Radio use was also increased during natural disasters and was correlated with a sense of community unification and the mobilization of volunteers (Hindman & Coyle, 1999).

This research finds media dependency theory very beneficial to elaborate on gender-based violence in Egyptian series during Ramadan. Dependency theory

helps explain the relationship between audiences and their use of the media and the needs and goals they acquire from media. As the studies above have shown, television clearly represents the medium of choice in various occasions, among others. Television possesses certain intrinsic qualities that span from natural disasters, threatening events to its immediacy, ease of use and the combination of visual and textual symbols (Lowrey, 2004; Hetsroni, 2008). Moreover, media dependency theory leads to media effects, which is where the social cognitive theory can help us explain the effects. Dependency theory is very integral to media effects because producers of media content are seen as more trustworthy and likeable and the audiences pay close attention to this content (Lowrey, 2004). This cycle of sending and receiving media content has the ability to influence attitudes and behaviors that eventually become normalized reality to audiences (Al-Obaidi, 2000; Lowrey, 2004). People are not immune from Ramadan series to be affected by them. As said previously, Ramadan is the most anticipated period in the Arab world where people wait on the latest TV series of their favorite star actors and actresses. A huge portion of time within the 30 days of Ramadan can be spent watching these series. Along with the drama comes the latest fashion and new looks that are anticipated by the public audiences to see which consequently increases viewership and the enhanced potential for media effects. This is where media dependency theory intervenes: people's reliance on the media to satisfy certain needs will increase during times of change. People's anticipation to watch the latest Ramadan series increases their dependence on these TV series to achieve this goal. This is in relation to Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur (1976), who identified several situations where audiences depend on media. Therefore, media dependency theory can explain what medium people depend on to meet a need, while social cognitive theory can help explain how audiences get affected by the media they use. The following provides an explanation of this theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

The overarching assumption of the social cognitive theory is that people learn from the surrounding environment and apply what they learn. In regards to violence, this theory suggests that exposure to media violence stimulates violent behavior in real life as an effect. People learn not only through direct experiences but through symbolic environments, such as media portrayals (Bandura, 2002). Such observational learning consists of four sub-processes: attention, retention,

behavioral reproduction, and motivation (Smith, et al., 2004, p. 87). Previous studies showed that viewers tend to pay more attention to attractive perpetrators with whom they associate themselves (Huesmann, 2007; Bandura, 1994), to scenes where serious guns are involved rather than neutral objects (Carlson, et al., 1990; Berkowitz & LePage, 1967), and to the realism of violent acts that are being portrayed (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006, pp. 404 - 405; Geen, 1975). Attractive perpetrators, the presence of guns and realistic depictions of violence are more likely to encourage aggressive behavior. According to Smith et al. (2004), repeated exposure to violence in mass media can function as “a form of cognitive rehearsal,” which can facilitate retention and later result in behavioral reproduction of a violent act (p. 88). Finally, exposure to rewarded violent acts can increase the probability of aggression (e.g. Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). In regards to gender-based violence, if depicted relationships between males and females involve violent behavior, then such norms and behaviors may be adopted by viewers under a variety of circumstances (Capella, et al., 2010, p. 39). In the context of Egyptian films, Al-Obaidi (2000) found a high level of violence which is consumed by the public. All these contextual features impact viewers in their perceptions of media violence, including gender-based violence.

Social cognitive theory is beneficial to this study because previous research has shown the immense impact and role mass media content can play in people’s imitation of attitudes and behaviors. Gidwani, Sobol, Dejong, Perrin, and Gortmaker (2002) indicated there is a positive correlation between television viewing and the initiation of youth smoking. Also, Harrison and Cantor (1997) argued for a positive relationship between exposure to women’s magazines and women’s drive to be thin which is considered among women to be a positive consequence. Many studies concluded that exposure to images of sexual, physical or verbal violence can lead to acceptance of that violence in society (Al-Obaidi, 2000). Therefore, social cognitive theory is an established theoretical framework in the study of media effects.

Based on the literature review and the two theoretical frameworks, the author developed the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the prevalence of the gender-based violence in the Egyptian series of Ramadan 2012?

RQ2. What is the context of the gender-based violence in the Egyptian series of Ramadan 2012?

RQ2a. In terms of the gender of the perpetrator and the gender of the victim

RQ2b. The reasons or the justifications under which the violence took place

RQ2c. The matters or subjects under which the violence took place.

Both research questions will be analyzed quantitatively. However, it is important to closely analyze scenes of gender-based violence in order to provide detailed insights. Therefore, the textual analysis is used to further enhance the answer for the second research question.

Methodology

The author chose the highest five Egyptian series that were aired during Ramadan 2012 based on viewership ratings. The viewership ratings were based on a news report released by *Al-Jumhuriya* newspaper, one of the largest in Egypt, on October 3, 2012. The five highest Egyptian series were *Firgat Naji Attallah*, *Alzoja Alraba'a*, *Ma'a Sabq elesrar*, *Khotot Hamra*, and *Taraf Thalith* (Amin, 2012). Access to all of the episodes was online, mainly on YouTube as well as on blogs such as www.mazikadrama.com and www.panet.co.il. Each series has a 30-episode format, resulting in a total of 150 episodes. The author analyzed the entire population of 150 episodes that were broadcasted and watched every single episode in its entirety. The episodes ranged in length from 38 to 45 minutes.

Coding Protocol and Codebook

The author created a codebook. The measurement categories were based on a coding scheme developed by Greenberg et al. (1980) and Smith et al. (2002) to study the portrayal of aggression in TV programs. This scheme is mainly based on the PAT technique, as described in the National Television Violence Study (1998). PAT is defined as a violent exchange involving a perpetrator (P), engaging in a specific type of act (A), against a unique target (T). This technique allows for tallying the instances of violence by counting as a unique act each time the perpetrator, target/victim, or specific physical or verbal aggressive act changes during the course of the scene (Bridges, 2010, p. 1072). By measuring violence in the Egyptian series through the PAT technique, the analysis could provide

much detail about its nature, particularly gender-based violence⁽¹⁾. It uncovers details on the violent perpetrators, justification for the violence, violent means used, and the receivers of the violence. The unit of analysis is the violent act(s) during one scene both in verbal and physical forms which would also include the gender-based form.

The codebook defined and operationalized violence and gender-based violence in the following way: “an overt depiction of a credible threat of physical force and/or the actual use of such force intended to harm an animate being or group” (Smith et al., 2002, p. 90). This definition does not disregard the fact that violence is also verbal and not only physical. Physical violence is the use of force with or without a weapon (Gerbner, et al., 1978) and takes the forms of pushing, throwing something, twisting arm, slapping, punching, kicking, dragging, trying to strangle or burn, threatening or attacking with a knife or a weapon (Afifi, 2010), beating, shoving, chasing, poisoning and shooting (Al-Obaidi, 2000). Verbal violence is the incidence or event that mainly uses language to cause a threat or harm and takes the forms of teasing, swearing, joke-making, name-calling, yelling, insults, threats, facial expressions and criticism (Beatty & Pence, 2010; Al-Obaidi, 2000; Wigley, 1998). Therefore, the codebook measures for violent acts in both forms, as it has been done by previous research. As for gender-based violence, it is the violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and their special roles or responsibilities in society (“Women’s Caucus,” as cited in Carpenter, 2006). Measuring for this kind of violence was done by following two steps: identifying the violent scene as in the PAT technique, and deciding whether or not it was a gender-based type of violence.

Two coders, who are fluent in Arabic, coded a subsample to test the codebook. The codebook was pretested on a subsample of 18 episodes, which was 12% of the episodes. Using Krippendorff’s Alpha coefficient of reliability, inter-coder reliability was determined at 0.91, which indicated substantial agreement between the coders. Modifications on the codebook were made in order for the coders to have a better understanding of the coding process and achieve the goals of the analysis.

(1) The codebook included the following PAT measures and measures borrowed from Greenberg et al. (1980) and Smith et al. (2002): identify the violent scene, identify the perpetrator, indicate the form of violence (verbal or physical or both), if verbal, what is it (use list to identify)? If physical, what is it (use list to identify)? Identify the victim, the justifications under which the violent act took place (use list to identify).

Findings

Quantitative Analysis

First, the study assessed the prevalence of violence in general and gender-based violence in particular in the five Egyptian series. In terms of the number of violent acts and gender-based violent acts (RQ1), Table 1 shows that there are an average of 3.9 violent acts per episode and 1.9 gender-based violent acts per episode. Violent acts exceeded those of gender-based nature (309 and 282, respectively), while the verbal acts of gender-based violence highly exceeded the physical acts (253 to 29, respectively). Therefore, general acts of violence were more dominant than gender-based violence but verbal gender-based violence was more dominant than physical violence.

As the table also shows, some series have much higher scenes of violence than others and this can be attributed to the genre of the series that ranged between drama, comedy and suspense. However, the highest series with violence in general and gender-based violence in particular was *Alzoja Alraba'a*, a series that is considered by many a comedy. It would be expected that drama and action genres, such as *Khotot Hamra* and *Taraf Thalith*, would have more violence. But it was the comedy that had the most violence and gender-based violence. The discussion section elaborates on this finding.

Table 1
Titles of Series and Acts of Gender-based Violence

Series Title	Acts of Violence	Acts of Gender-based Violence	
		Verbal	Physical
<i>Firgat Naji Attallah/Naji Attallah Team</i>	64	3	2
<i>Alzoja Alraba'a/The Fourth Wife</i>	203	141	11
<i>Ma'a Sabq elesrar/Premeditated Murder</i>	121	69	6
<i>Khotot Hamra/Red Lines</i>	47	11	3
<i>Taraf Thalith/Third Side</i>	156	29	7
Total	591	253	29

Table 2 shows the details of the perpetrator and the victim of the gender-based violence (RQ2a). As the table shows, males were the dominant perpetrators of the violence toward females than vice versa (265 to 17, respectively). In terms of the type of violence, males dominantly used verbal violence than physical (238 to 27). respectively).

Table 2
Perpetrator and Type of Gender-based Violence

Perpetrator of Gender-based Violence		Type of Gender-based Violence	
		Verbal	Physical
Male	265	238	27
Female	17	15	2
Total	282	253	29

The author also coded for the justifications under which the gender-based violence took place (RQ2b.). In other words, it coded for the reason for using the gender-based violence. Although previous research has not provided a list of exclusive categories, the author used some categories that were found in previous studies (Smith, Nathanson & Wilson, 2002; Turner, et al., 2004) in addition to adding “Other, specify” in the codebook. The author also found some of these categories in this study. As Table 3 shows, gender-based violence took place during situations that emphasized anger, personal gain, feel of shame, punishment (for assumingly misdeeds), and revenge. The author collapsed some categories to avoid redundancy. “Protection of life” and “Not justified” were the least coded categories. However, despite the different genres of the series, the reasons for the gender-based violence were similar⁽²⁾.

(2) The types of the physical violence were in the forms of causing pain to the victim by using natural means such as fists and in the form of sexual abuse (harassment or violence). the threat to use force, punish, insults and name calling were among the content where verbal violence was used.

Table 3
Types and Numbers of Gender-based Violence

Types of Verbal Gender-based Violence	Number of Scenes of Gender-based Violence
Punishment	204
Anger	43
Personal Gain	21
Protection of Life	11
Not Justified	3
Total	282

The overall findings for the highest five Egyptian series in terms of viewership during Ramadan 2012 provided evidence to indicate that (a) there was a high prevalence of violence in general and gender-based violence in particular in the five series (an average of 1.9 incidents per episode); (b) the great majority of the gender-based violence was perpetuated by males toward females; and (c) the justifications for committing the gender-based violence ranged dominantly between punishment and anger. Thus, a conclusion can be made that gender-based violence is highly practiced on mainstream Egyptian programming that were shown during Ramadan 2012 where viewers are highly susceptible to learn aggressive behavior through the observation of media role models, especially from men toward women.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis aims to show further details of the context in which the gender-based violence took place. First, to find *Alzoja Alraba'a/The Fourth Wife* to have the highest gender-based violence scenes is a surprising finding for a comedy show. It would be expected to have *Taraf Thalith/Third Side* to have the most violence and gender-based violence since this show tends to reflect the lives of Egyptian gangs. The following analysis explains selected scenes that demonstrate gender-based violence.

Alzoja Alraba'a/The Fourth Wife – “Pleasurable Violence”

This is a television show that talks about a businessman who is polygamous and likes to keep marrying.

In a scene where the polygamous husband finds out that his three wives rebelled against his orders, he comes to his home fiercely entering. He violently calls for his first wife, who happens to be the most experienced and knowledgeable, and runs after her in an attempt to punish her physically. The wife keeps running away from him with constant giggles despite the physical punishment she is susceptible to. While chasing the wife, the polygamous husband kept shouting and threatening for taking severe actions. Sound effects were added to the scene but the effects gave the impression of a comical scene rather than a serious attempt from the husband to physically abuse his wife.

Ma'a Sabq Elesrar/Premeditated Murder – “She is my Wife and I’m free to do anything to her”

This show discusses the life of a successful female lawyer who goes through plots by her enemies to have her fail.

In a selected scene that demonstrates gender-based violence, a husband and a wife go through an argument where the wife leaves her marriage home to her parents'. With facial expressions that demonstrate sheer anger, the husband breaks in his in-laws' house. He grabs her hand strongly in front of her parents, and a very short but loud argument takes place between the four: the husband, wife, and her parents. In the concluding remarks of the scene, the husband shouts angrily: “She is my wife and I’m free to do anything to her.” The wife, who appears to be in total subordination to his verbal abuse, waits for the parents to defend her. The parents attempt to calm down the furious husband by suggesting that they should both go home and discuss their misunderstanding in a peaceful manner, not in a violent way.

Taraf Thalith/Third Side – “I’m a man and you have to listen to what I say”

This show discusses the lives of three friends who happen to be thugs. They work on illegal matters for those who hire them.

In a scene where one of the three gangster talks with his beloved soon-to-be-fiancé, he explains his frustration toward his beloved for leaving the

house for work. His girl admits that their relationship is not a promising one and the potential of a break-up is possible. Therefore, the reason why she works is to maintain her financial status and plan for an unpredictable future. The man suddenly grabs her hand and twists it. Part of what he says in this particular scene is, "I'm a man and you have to listen to what I say." Causing immense pain to the woman who promises him to leave the job and stay home if they, at least, get engaged. The man releases her hand and leaves the woman, heading to an unidentified place.

Analysis

Among the many scenes that demonstrate gender-based violence, these three selected scenes provide a current discourse in the relationship between men and women in Arabic television and drama. What can be drawn from these three scenes is a clear subordination of women when they are treated by men. The constant showing of such scenes indicates a presumed reasoned and justified violence by men toward women. In the words of social cognitive theory, the repetition of such scenes makes media female consumers accept the idea and gradually take the subordination of women as a natural outcome for their being born as women. In the words of media dependency theory, the immense dependency and viewership of these series by Arab audiences during Ramadan would have a greater level of affect toward media content which would consequently have a greater probability of message effects, intended or unintended.

The scenes above show that women naturally take male aggression as a normal part of men's nature or resign to their being the receivers of such aggression, with men the initiators of it. This finding supports previous studies where Al-Mahadin (2011), for example, describes the act as an "epistemic aggression." Al-Mahadin indicates that "epistemic aggression" is when women are treated like property in which violence toward them is a routine practice for being subjects." The two scenes "she is my wife and I'm free to do anything with her" and the statement "I'm a man and you have to listen to what I say" demonstrate clearly Al-Mahadin's point.

The scene from *Alzoja Alraba'a/The Fourth Wife* reveals a current discourse on television of how women are treated. There have been similar scenes in different Arabic series and films that were repeated constantly, which can be

called here “pleasurable violence” where women receive the male violence with a smile on their faces. This kind of scenes is not new in Arabic television and has been repeatedly shown. Among the series that had similar scenes is *Aelat Alhaj Mitwali-Alhaj Mitwali Family*, which was shown in 2002.

As defined earlier in the study, violence is the overt expression of physical force (Gerbner, et al., 1978) or a credible threat to use force (Smith, et al., 2002). The purpose of using that violence is causing pain to the receiver, both psychological and physical. What can be seen in the “pleasurable violence” scene is opposite to what violence is in reality. Violence is the total opposite to what this scene is trying to portray. It is an act of pain, force and harm but the scene contorts the truth about violence and shows it as pleasure, non-pain, and natural. This is in addition to the sound effects in the background that project the scene as a humorous one. This scene demonstrates verbal and physical violence that is based on gender, where the male partner is assumed to have the right to cause pain to his female partner. Although the scene ended without causing physical pain, it was full of verbal violence. Verbal violence results in psychological effects, which in the long term could be more serious than the one inflicted by physical wounds (Aaltaral, 1998 as cited in Al-Obaidi, 2000).

Discussion

This study investigated the prevalence of gender-based violence and analyzed the context in which it appeared in the Egyptian series of Ramadan 2012. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur’s media dependency theory and Bandura’s social cognitive theory can help us predict or draw the following conclusions. Viewers are more likely to learn violence and gender-based violence from media portrayals. It can promote, and even engrave, the idea that males are allowed to initiate violence toward women, regardless of the justification. This conclusion has been supported by previous research where the media in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were found to sympathize with men who commit domestic violence toward women and even honor crimes (Halim & Meyers, 2010). Also, verbal violence is highly practiced almost in every single episode as it was mentioned previously. In Egypt, Ramadan has become TV sweeps month (Waxman, 2003). Because Ramadan is considered the time of the year where millions of Muslims watch television, viewers are highly attentive and

are more likely to retain the gender-based violence, which is very well in tandem with media dependency theory. And according to the social cognitive theory, increased attention and retention promote cognitive and observational learning. The high repetition of these gender-based acts makes viewers learn that violence in general and gender-based violence in particular are acceptable, justifiable and even necessary in some situations.

It is important to mention that in many of the episodes, humor was part of many scenes where gender-based violence was used. In what would be considered a comedy series, in *Alzoja Alraba'a/The Fourth Wife*, the main character who is a male was verbally punishing and threatening his wives for not following orders. The facial expression of the wives, the background soundtrack and the overall scene indicate that the scene is comical in nature and not violent. In this case, the use of humor trivializes and defuses gender-based violence and its consequences on consumers who watch these shows. This trivialization normalizes violence as part of everyday life, which according to media dependency and social cognitive theories, can have short and long term effects on audiences who consume media content.

Conclusion

For decades researchers have been documenting the presence of violence in television shows in different countries (Gunter, Harrison & Wykes, 2003). This scholarly attention has been paid because of the importance of the issue of violence on various sectors of society in general. Showing violence in the media has long-term effects on viewers where aggressive behaviors can take place. Signorielli (2005) found that television drama does not discuss the long-term effects of the aggressive behaviors in the series, and rarely do they place the perpetrators' actions in any meaningful context.

As research in the media dependency theory has indicated, media content receivers pay close attention to media messages to satisfy certain needs and goals. It can even have the power to form certain attitudes and behavior beyond the context of media consumption. In this sense, what is acquired from the media content can be transferred to reality and this is where the social cognitive theory helps us understand such a process. Viewers cannot distinguish between what happens on television and what happens in real life in terms of the physical and psychological harm to the

victim. One foundational element of this theory is that the acquisition of knowledge can be directly related to observing others, and media content is immensely integral to the acquisition process. Mass media greatly facilitates observational learning and increases the chances for media consumers to perform the behaviors they acquire (Pajares, Prestin, Chen, & Nabi, 2010). This research study has added knowledge to the literature of media dependency and social cognitive theories. It particularly adds to the current practices of gender-based violence in media content in one of the most populated countries in Africa and the Middle East during the most anticipated time of the year to watch television, Ramadan.

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