Feminist Markers in Contemporary Arabic Songs - Analytical Study of Discourse and Gender

Ahmed Samir Hammad•

Abstract

This study traces feminist markers by analyzing expressions of feminism in popular Arab songs across various media through the feminist and social role theoretical frameworks. The applied portion of the study is limited to YouTube. For the methodological framework, the study adopts a mixed approach. This is established through a congruent triangulation to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data, as well as via critical discourse analysis (CDA) tools across developmental, textual, and contextual aspects. Moreover, the study analyzes frameworks and inferences. Additionally, van Dijk's ideological square of power and hegemony is also utilized. A gender-based social role analysis is also conducted to arrive at the necessary descriptive/quantitative data. The study examines a selected sample of eighty-four Arabic songs that date from 2011 to mid-2023. The selected samples all met the minimum threshold of no less than one million views each. According to the findings, feminist allusions and markers have evolved. More specifically, these markers have developed from merely airing grievances regarding discrimination or violence into more affirmative stances of resistance, right to equality and independence, and even superiority and dominance over males. The psychological implications reveal a similar evolution as they evolved from expressions of surrender into resistance, defiance, pride, and disrespect directed toward males. Those allusions and markers do not maintain a coherent feminist discourse with a clear feminist theory, nor do they define new societal gender-based roles for females or males. Instead, they express various roles within the framework of a male/female relationship that involve fluctuating scales of power.

• Assistant Professor, Radio, and Television Dept, Faculty of Mass Communication, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt/ Associate Professor, Collage of Media and Communication, Imam Mohamed Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, KSA.

Introduction

This study traces feminist markers and allusions by analyzing expressions of feminism in popular songs across various media. The applied portion of the research is limited to YouTube. The study is not based on analyzing self-expressive pro-feminist songs as this genre of music typically assumes aural aesthetics typically associated with alternative music[1], which embody definite characteristics and therefore targets a specific demographic with particular musical tastes. Instead, this research examines more popular mainstream Arabic songs that are addressed to the general public, which are produced by the broader artistic community that is exemplified by its fame, influence, and prevalence. Historically, feminist ideology and advocates of feminism do not account for a significant influence upon the general Arab culture, specifically upon socially acceptable behaviors and emotions. However, songs that carry markers of feminist ideology that are posted to popular social media sites, and even broadcast via traditional media, are gaining influence and significance. The present study does not seek to discuss feminism from a value-based, ethical, moral, social, and/or religious perspective. Rather, the study postulates that Arabic songs that are infused with feminist allusions do exert an influence—in one way or another—upon the audience. More specifically, the musical messaging will impact—directly or indirectly—how the listener perceives and adopts feminist perspectives. This study endeavors to identify and analyze these allusions and markers on several levels of analysis. The multi-level examination attempts to ascertain the societal and personal impact involving the temporal and ideational evolution of the allusions and markers, which also includes gender and social roles.

Music as a method of expression is well suited for the Internet era. More particularly, the digital tools that undergird the proliferation of the Internet have also established the capacity for musicians to circulate their songs freely and easily, which resultingly increases potential availability, promotability, and viewability. These same digital tools concurrently augment the capabilities of all musicians—amateur to professional—throughout the process of creation, production, and circulation of their music. Similarly, feminism utilizes

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[1] Feminist songs by Dina Al-Wadidy, Yousra Al-Hawary, Terriz Suleiman, Azizah Ibrahim, as well as other bands/artists are good examples of this genre of alternative music. More specifically, these artists fail to break the one-million-view threshold and most even fail to elicit 100,000 views, which indicates they did not gain any significant publicity.

comparable digital tools to gain publicity and propagate throughout the Internet. As such, feminist perspectives can be clearly detected via their influence within aspects of society. The intersection of these two issues—feminism and Arab music—has necessitated research into Arabic feminist songs, which this study undertakes. More specifically, this research will examine select songs to identify feminist allusions and markers. As such, the research will attempt to determine whether these songs demarcate an evolution of feminism within Arab music and if this messaging represents a coherent feminist discourse. In so doing, the study highlights whether these songs encode a novel gender-based female identity or simply recycle traditional social roles.

Literature review

The literature review of relevant research is divided into two categories:

1- Studies on the feminist discourse in music and singing

2- Studies on the feminist music and gender issues

Studies on the Feminist Discourse in Music and Singing

Numerous studies have revealed how feminist ideology has become embedded within and influenced music throughout different cultures and nations. Rahayu, Emerson, and Sittiprapaporn (2021) revealed that feminist discourse is ingrained in gamelan music created by women in Java, Indonesia. Kim (2020) examined the popularity of feminism in Korean hip hop music, particularly as the genre established itself in the country, and linked these feminist themes with wider global contexts regarding the roles of women in society. Webster-Kogan (2013) established a connection within the lyrics of popular Ethiopian diaspora songs, written and performed by Ethiopian women, regarding issues involving gender, family, national belonging, and migration. Pillai (2019) identified similar findings as it pertains to the lineal influence of Indian culture upon feminist expression in music among Indo-Caribbean Americans. More specifically, these songs express a unique polycultural voice that attempts to forge a cohesive identity from the cultural binaries of East Indian and West Indian, American and immigrant, secular and religious, contemporary and conventional. Liska (2021) explored feminist themes within the lyrics of Argentinian pop music, as well as the aural and performance structure of select songs. The research highlights a revival involving themes of female well-being, balance of feminine power, and patriarchally silenced female powers. Haynes (2018) analyzed lyrical themes

of feminism evident in 1990s American country music, which includes artists as Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton, and Dixie Chicks. Haynes integrated historical and cultural perspectives to examine these themes and demonstrated that feminist issues of equality and independence were prevalent throughout—what the researcher termed—*hillbilly feminism.*

Studies on Feminist Music and Gender Issues

Feo and Lundstedt (2020) conducted a thematic analysis of chart-topping songs in Sweden and Denmark between 2017 and 2019. The investigation revealed this commercial industry integrates aspects of feminist neoliberalism to capitalize on popular feminism. This process of commercialization strengthens a correlation between commercial feminism and popular feminist issues, which accordingly generating profits predicated upon feminism. In other words, themes of feminism are commodified by the music industry rather than widely integrated into cultural norms. Peruzzo (2019) examined popular Beyoncé songs that integrate feminist ideology into the lyrics, which include issues pertaining to class, profession, race, and sexual orientation, as well as how women are valued for their physical beauty and appearance. The researcher also identified themes that advocate on behalf of female sex workers and transgender issues.

Kim (2019) traced feminist discourse in Korean K-pop music videos and revealed how select exemplars serve to advance themes of resilience combined with neoliberal ideals, which bolstered a prevailing version of feminism and female individuality. However, while the themes seemingly promoted liberation and resistance, they served to reify patriarchal mechanisms. Similarly, Hains (2014) examined commodity feminism by juxtaposing the riot grrrls subculture musical movement with the mainstream Spice Girls female group. Both musical variants, which reached their zenith at similar times, promoted themes of girl power and self-realization. The researcher interviewed young women who occupied the original intended audience of the Spice Girls group but also encountered music produced by acts associated with the riot grrrls movement. The researcher concluded that exposure to the Spice Girls music at a young age, despite this musical act commodifying and capitalizing on a flaccid ideal of girl power, exerted tremendous influence upon listeners as it pertains to feminism and shaped their views regarding culture and society. Reger (2007) addressed leadership dynamics as it relates to culture and feminism. The research queried feminist activists regarding perceived thought leaders that exist outside of their local

community. Respondents often pointed toward well-known musical artists as the paragon of contemporary feminism, which demonstrates the influence of music in shaping and mobilizing feminist ideals and thought leaders, while feminism forges new dynamics that are predicated on former iterations.

Literature Review in Perspective

The examined literature establishes direct connections between music and feminist ideology, as well as gender issues, which influences the ongoing evolution of feminism. Most of the cited studies rely upon limited samples and narrow tools of analysis to examine lyrics and music.

Research Problem

Previous research on Arab feminist discourse is almost exclusively predicated upon textual or dialectical examinations. Those few studies that analyze art and music often stop short of providing an integrated image of feminism within Arabic songs. Among these scant examples, most of this body of work would not be considered academic and instead manifest as journalism or articles of critique. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, themes and markers of feminism in Arabic music have not been investigated from an academic perspective. Therefore, the present study endeavors to fill this gap in the knowledge base by researching feminist markers in contemporary Arabic songs from a mass communication perspective. As such, this research will examine the selected sample through the framework of media, as opposed to relying on art philosophy. As a result, the researcher seeks to address the following: identify feminist markers in contemporary popular Arabic songs; trace their developments over different time periods; examine the underlying ideological positions; how female/male relations are represented; and reveal perceived limits of gender within society juxtaposed to social realities.

Theoretical Framework

The Development of Feminism

Feminism initially evolved via movements that advocated for increased freedoms for women, which initially emerged as a demand for women to receive education in the late 1790s. This initial demand evolved over intervening centuries to coalesce into a movement that advocated for equality between men and women and subsequently into feminist theory across cultural and social landscapes. Powell (2013) argues that at its core, feminist theory is both deconstructionism and reconstructionism. In other words, it concurrently deconstructs and reconstructs patriarchal perspectives

throughout society and philosophy. Feminist philosophy that advocates empowering women is inseparable from the prevailing forms of inequality that were embedded within society during the emergence of feminist philosophy (Buist 2015). Such ingrained inequalities precipitate an uneven state of variability within feminist discourse and ideology, which has correspondingly shaped what is known as *waves of feminism* (Zack 2005). Accordingly, there are two primary traditions within feminist theory:

1- Liberal feminism, which is epitomized by classical feminism that is often associated with the initial wave of feminism, which reached its peak throughout the 1950s until the late 1980s and subsequently evolved during the 1990s. Tong (2018) cataloged the stages of development for all three waves of feminism. This included tracing the initial demands for educational equality through advocating for equality and into more modern advents, such as intersectionality, which involves integrating multiples aspects of the female experience—gender, race, social status, etc.—to form a more holistic comprehension of feminism. Meanwhile, liberal feminism can be summarized via four main tenets:

   a- Achieving legal equality between the two genders

   b- Advocating equal opportunity for women

   c- Empowering personal freedom for women

   d- Empowering women across sectors of society, which includes employment, political, and educational opportunities

   This comprehension of liberal feminism has been broadly adopted and integrated within sociocultural norms of many societies. As such, this philosophy positions women as social beings that are entitled to rights equal, despite the pre-established social contexts involving social power and roles.

2- Radical feminism was heavily influenced by novel philosophies that were established throughout the 1960s. The origins of this line of feminism traces its roots to Structural Marxist philosophy, which focused upon the impact of economic, social, labor, and production structures imposed on women. Thus, this branch of feminism argues that women will remain incapable of realizing their potential as the prevailing social and economic structures remain unchanged. Saulnier (2014) defined radical feminism through the following six principles:

a. The personal is as equally important as the political. As such, personal experiences of women are strongly associated with shaping the political reality that imposes such experiences.

b. Oppression is the natural outcome of patriarchal power because the existing patriarchal authority normalizes the oppression of women.

c. Patriarchal authority is predicated upon violence-based biological, psychological, and social norms.

d. Men and women are fundamentally different. More specifically, the relationship between men and women does not invoke reciprocal benefits, as men often receive inordinate benefits vis-à-vis women.

e. The entirety of society must undergo drastic change to address these systemic issues.

f. All social hierarchies within society and culture must be eliminated.

Fundamentally, radical feminism argues for society-wide change to liberate women from hegemonic and oppressive social systems, which would cultivate new roles for men and women. Essentially, there are two primary differences between liberal and radical feminism:

First, radical feminism argues that men are different from women, which fundamentally renders equality impossible. Consequently, radical feminism advocates the establishment of an entirely new social environment that eliminates all existing forms of patriarchy. This contention has influenced the emergence of cultural feminism, which believes that male and female experience is fundamentally different and seeks to empower female experience within culture and society. Second, unlike liberal feminism, radical feminism openly advocates for shaping unique female identities outside and away from the bounds of male reality, which includes gender and social norms. Some radical feminist theorists even advocate for the imposition of female hegemony.

Feminism in Mass Media

In general, feminist theory has its own manifestations that reside outside of mass media scholarship. Yet, there are numerous studies that examine male/female inequality, as well as the manifestations and repercussions of inequal representation in mass media. Moreover, gender-based differences have been examined as it pertains to the production and reception of media messaging. Rakow and Wackwitz (2004) identified the application of feminist

theory within media scholarship as existing on three fronts: difference, voice, and representation. Cuklanz (2016) argued that studies tend to focus on gender and gendered power when analyzing communication texts, while advocating for an integration of other considerations, including race, sexuality and socio-economic class considerations.

The Social Role Theory

The social role theory acknowledges the differences and dimensions within a spectrum of female/male genders. Moreover, discrimination is based on individual gender, while gender roles are imposed through heteronormative sociocultural models. This theory seeks to counterbalance biological factors involving gender and instead emphasize the role of social construction of gender, which eliminates distinctive features involving gendered roles for men and women (Kimmel 2000). However, the social role theory is based on taking sex-related social roles for foundations of the gender-based roles of men and women, with those roles are tied to race, age, social class, family professions, and preconceptions of relations (Eagly 2009). Accordingly, social roles of men and women are shaped via preconceived social constructions. In this paradigm, social roles are immutable and unchangeable. As a result, both feminist traditions advocate for change by means of altering social reality, which includes gender-based social roles. As such, mass media tremendously influences and shapes conceptions and attitudes regarding gender-based social roles, which could provide the potential to instigate social change, though gradually.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to attain the following:

1- Identify and examine feminist discourse within select contemporary Arabic songs.

2- Determine the mechanisms of feminist expression in the sample

3- Clarify the manner that feminist issues presented in the context of lyrics/singing.

4- Establish cultural and social links to the feminist expressions within the sample.

5- Draw a concept map of feminism, social roles, artistic feminist discourse, and music.

Questions and Hypotheses

Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1- What are general characteristics of contemporary feminism in the sample of Arab songs?

2- What are the elements of feminist discourse in the sample of Arab songs?

3- What is the nature of expressed relations in the sample of Arab feminist songs?

4- How have the frameworks of relations with the other and key song perspectives developed as manifested by feminist songs?

5- How are meanings constructed in the sample of Arab feminist songs?

6- What is the gender role typically ascribed to men and women in the sample of Arab feminist songs?

7- If themes of social reality are evident, then how is it represented in the sample of Arab feminist songs?

Hypotheses

This study seeks to test the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis I: There are statistically significant differences between the measures used for the study (namely, the nature of the relation with the other, meaning, performance) and relationship frameworks with the other.

- Hypothesis II: There are statistically significant differences between the measures used for the study (namely, the nature of the relation with the other, meaning, performance) and the ideological stance expressed.

- Hypothesis III: There are statistically significant differences between the measures used for the study (namely, the nature of the relation with the other, meaning, performance) and the main focus of songs.

- Hypothesis IV: There are statistically significant differences between the measures used for the study (namely, the nature of the relation with the other, meaning, performance) and inferential dimensions.

- <u>Hypothesis V</u>: There are statistically significant differences between the depicted relationship with the other and meaning/performance.

- <u>Hypothesis VI</u>: There are statistically significant differences between meaning and performance.

Methodology

This study applies mixed methods to conduct the inquiry, which integrates multiple methods in the research design as it pertains to collecting, analyzing, and mixing quantitative and qualitative methods to effectively examine the research problem (Creswell and Clark 2011). Mixed methods research is not limited to simply blending tools or data collection techniques, as it also merges and integrates different analytic approaches. The research adopts concurrent triangulation, which utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data collection. According to Tashakkaori and Teddlie (2002), a mixed methods approach aims to ensure an integrated analysis and valid findings, particularly if the phenomenon under study expresses interwoven perspectives. Hesse-Biber (2012) upheld the validity of triangulation methods in feminist research. Moreover, several studies have considered the application of mixed methods in feminist studies, which include Jackson (2011) and Fitzpatrick (2023). The latter argued that feminist discourse intrinsically assumes essentially biased meanings. Moreover, the subjective bias of the researchers must be considered. These facts require the adoption of mixed research methods as the optimum means of analysis to achieve objective findings.

Research Tools

The research adopts three tools:

1- Content analysis, which is employed to determine the general characteristics of the phenomenon under study.

2- Critical discourse analysis (CDA):

a- Evolution analysis, which identifies song developments within their respective historical and cultural contexts over the period of the study.

b- Analyzing the lyrics and distinct concepts that depict the image of women.

c- Analyzing the contexts of the sample of Arab feminist songs.

d- Analyzing the lyrical framing and representation of issues and relationships.

e- Analyzing the inferences used in the sample of songs to establish the meanings and persuasive dimensions.

f- Applying van Dijk's ideological square of power and hegemony-based analysis.

g- Analyzing the directions of performance and meanings.

3- Gender-based role analysis, which focuses on representations of gender dimensions and interpersonal relations:

a- Analyzing how relations are contextually represented.

b- Analyzing the represented gender roles of men and women.

c- Applying gender-based analysis to examine social realities expressed in the sample of songs.

Validity and Reliability Measures

The research tools have been reviewed by three experienced researchers. Reliability retesting has been used to investigate the reliability of data. The reliability factor is 0.896, which is indicative of a very good reliability rate.

Delimitations, Population, and Sample

Delimitations and Sampling

Regarding the data, this study examines songs performed by Arab women that integrate women's issues into the theme. Moreover, the study sample includes data from 2011 to mid-2023, which originate from the Arab World and are extracted from YouTube. Accordingly, the study population is the audience of the sample songs over the said period. To be included in the sample, a threshold of at least one million views on YouTube has been applied, which indicates the song is popular. While surveying YouTube, the researcher adopted two methods to identify potential sample songs:

1- A key-word search that integrated women and feminism.

2- To select songs for the sample, the researcher identified and reviewed audio-visual production YouTube channels and YouTube channels dedicated to Arab female singers. In total, eighty-four songs met the criterion and were included in the sample.

Delimitations and Findings

Considering the delimitations of this study, it may not be argued that this study can assess feminist ideology over various means of expression. Two major considerations account for this:

1- Feminist messaging and advocacy in the public sphere typically does not exhibit a coherent artistic expression, which may be necessary to achieve direct messages. This is because the effect of music is intrinsically indirect. Instead, music aims to instigate an emotional state and embed messaging into this unquantifiable state. Despite the aforementioned, it cannot be assumed that feminist meanings, themes, and indications within the sample are indicative of clearly delineated ideologies that exist within the established feminist theoretical corpus, particularly as it relates to Western contexts.

2- While this study seeks to trace feminist themes and makers, it focuses on describing and analyzing their interrelations. It is necessary to provide context for such explorative and explanatory dimensions of this research, as opposed to judgments involving religious, moral, ideological, or social means, which are beyond the scope of the present study.

Relevant Future Research

This study provides a foundation for future studies to potentially build upon it in several directions, which include:

1- The relation between feminist discourse and feminist behaviors in social relationships.

2- Assessing the impact of mass media broadcasted messages on the audience's perceptions of social relations.

3- Comparing the relationship between feminist-centric media juxtaposed to the actuality of feminist discourse in Arab societies.

4- Examining feminist discourse and its capacity for adoption while considering social, religious, and moral contexts.

Data Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed in parallel. Descriptive methods have been used to present quantitative data, which includes repetitions, percentages, and arithmetic means. Analysis of variation (ANOVA) has been

used to test the hypotheses. The researcher has adopted an analysis-based breakdown of the findings as follows:

1- Content analysis. Variables are applied to quantitative data. Hypotheses involving three variables are tested compared to other variables, which include relationship with men, general meaning, and expressionist performance.

2- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Sample songs are explored, and feminist markers and themes are traced over the sample period to determine the meaning, context, power, hegemony, ideology, and the developments within the relationships between both males and broader society, as well as corresponding notable and unique perspective developments. Considering both the radical and classical tradition of feminist theory, key authoritative and semantic inferential dimension developments are also explored.

3- Gender analysis. This level of analysis links the song within the sample to the social roles expressed. More specifically, representing interrelations as situated within gender roles of man and woman and the gender-based view of social reality.

Quantitative Data Findings

A sample of eighty-four songs by twenty-two Arab female singers has been selected for analysis. Within this sample, twenty songs were performed by Elissa, nine songs performed by Asalah and seven by Amal Maher. Six songs were performed by Angham and Lamis respectively. Jannat, Samira Said, and Nawal Zoghbi, each performed four songs within the sample. Nansy Ajram, Sherin A. Wahab, and Nawal A. Shafi performed three songs respectively. Maha Ftouni, Donia Samir Ghanem, and Haifa Wehbe each performed two songs within the sample. The remaining female singers each performed one song.

The sample songs have been written by forty-seven songwriters, which included Nader Abdulla who wrote ten songs in the sample, followed by Amir Teima with five, Ayman Bahghat Qamar with four, Bahaaddin Mohamed with four, Ahmed Marzouq with three, Amr Al-Masri with three, Mostafa Hadouta with three, Ahmed Al-Gendi with two, Ahmed Madhi with two, Tamer Hussein with two, Turki and Jamal Al-Khouli with two, Salam Ali with two, Shadi Nour with two, Mazen Dhaher with two, and Nuruddin Mohamed with two. The remaining songwriters each wrote one song.

Table (1): General Characteristics of Sample Songs

Songwriter's sex	K	%
Male	83	98.8
Female	1	1.2
Total	84	100.0
Composer's sex	K	%
Male	84	100
Female	0	0.0
Total	84	100.0
Year	K	%
2011	4	4.8
2012	11	13.1
2013	5	6.0
2014	2	2.4
2015	8	9.5
2016	5	6.0
2017	2	2.4
2018	7	8.3
2019	6	7.1
2020	11	13.1
2021	4	4.8
2022	14	16.7
2023	5	6.0
Total	84	100.0
Total views		
Minimum	1,025,582	
Maximum	272,694,479	
Mean	28,666,282	

Table 1 data interpretation

- Despite feminist themes within the music, male songwriters comprise 98.8 percent of total sample. The fact that men are the primary songwriters of popular songs that incorporate feminist themes is quite noteworthy. Only one song from the sample has been written by a female, which is titled *The Ghalban* (*helpless*) and written by Menna Al-Qiei. As a result of the predominance of male composers within the sample of the songs this variable is neutralized in the research. Oddly enough, popular Arab songs the integrate feminist issues are almost entirely written and composed by men, but entirely performed by women. Therefore, the research within the sample is limited to the performance and themes presented.

- In 2022 there were fourteen songs identified for the sample, which was followed by 2020 and 2012 with eleven respectively. Both 2014 and 2017 only had two songs respectively, which represents the lowest output years among the sample. Although intriguing, such findings cannot be presumed as substantiating proof of increasing popularity of

feminism and songs integrating feminist themes. Rather, these findings may simply correlate to the schedules of those female singers within the sample and their respective album release dates. However, the date does clearly indicate that 2022 had the highest output of songs within the sample, which was nine total.

- Within the sample, the average views were 28,666,000, which indicates the songs within the sample were quite popular. The popularity of these songs is likely even more pervasive as the data within the sample was only taken from official channels on YouTube and does not consider ancillary audio platforms, nonofficial versions, and broadcast channels, etc. As a result, it can be argued that most of the sample would be considered viral and thus very popular. The song within the sample with most views was 272,000,000, which is an incredibly large amount.

Table (2): Feminist Discourse of Sample Songs

Woman-other relationship	K	%
Relationship with man	68	81.0
Women-only themes	11	13.1
Women-society relationship	5	6.0
Total	84	100.0
Ideological stance	**K**	**%**
Emphasizing positives of women	30	35.7
Emphasizing negatives of other	40	47.6
De-emphasizing negatives of women	6	7.1
De-emphasizing positives of other	6	9.5
Total	84	100.0
Relationship frameworks with others	**K**	**%**
Struggle	31	36.9
Resistance	19	22.6
Trauma and shock	20	23.8
Giving up	3	3.6
Self-pride	11	13.1
Total	84	100.0
Main focus	**K**	**%**
Indifference	13	15.5
Blaming	4	4.8
Injustice	12	14.3
Defiance	13	15.5
Self-pity	6	7.1
Expressing personality	15	17.9
Rejection	10	11.9
Female supremacy	11	13.1
Total	84	100.0

Denotations	K	%
Getting used to pain	16	19.0
Irreligiousness	3	3.6
Inevitable divine punishment	3	3.6
Male has violent personality	4	4.8
Human nature	2.	2.4
Showing contempt to men	28	33.3
Holding on to self-respect	18	21.4
Corrupt/unfair society	10	11.9
Total	84	100.0

Table 2 data interpretation

- Within the sample, eighty-one percent of the songs incorporated lyrics pertaining to female/male relationships. As this is by far the most popular theme within the sample, it indicates that Arab feminist songs primarily focus on men and situates these songs within the traditional male/female paradigm while integrating multiple social roles. Songs with themes focusing on women only consisted of 13.1 percent of the sample, which is not surprising when considering the novelty of this type of relationship within Arab culture, which also instantiates considerations regarding commercial viability. After all, potential audiences may not be receptive to such songs given the potentially controversial non-traditional nature of this subject. For similar reasons, songs focusing on female/society relations only account for six percent of the sample.

- Potentially affirming how male-centric the feminist discourse is within the sample, the ideological stance of *emphasizing negatives of other* is at the top of the list with 47.6 percent, which was followed by *emphasizing positives of women* at 35.7 percent. Meanwhile, *de-emphasizing positives of other* accounted for 9.5 percent and *de-emphasizing negatives of women* accounted for 7.1 percent of the sample respectively. These findings indicate that negative themes are much more prevalent than positive ones.

- The relational frames with others revealed additional negative themes as *struggle* was the primary framework at 36.9 percent, followed by *trauma and shock* at 23.8 percent and *resistance* at 22.6 percent. The latter two themes likely indicate a disparity between the parties involved, which may deepen inequality. The theme of giving up was at the bottom of the list at only 3.6 percent. The theme of *self-pride*, which

> often expressed the inevitably women becoming victorious, represented 13.1 percent of the sample.

- Except for *self-pity* and *blaming*, which were clearly exhibited lower percentages, the main focus of lyrics was largely balanced.

The denotation of *showing contempt to men* represents 33.3 percent of the sample, which occupies the top of semantic detonations list and may indicate just how negative relations with men has become. *Holding on to self-respect* came in second with 21.4 percent of the sample. These top two spots may point to just how widespread feminism has become within music, and potentially society. *Getting used to pain* and *corrupt/unfair society* each had 19 percent and 11.9 percent, respectively. Other semantic detonations received minimal and similar percentages.

Table (3): Relationships, Meanings, and Performances in Sample Songs

Relationship with the 'other'	K	%	Arithmetic mean
Women as victims	26	31.0	
Women as independent from and equal to men	29	34.5	
Women as beings with dominance and supremacy	29	34.5	0.0357
Total	84	100.0	
Meanings (detonations)	K	%	Arithmetic mean
Negative	39	46.4	
Neutral	14	16.7	
Positive	31	36.9	-0.0952
Total	84	100.00	
Performance	K	%	Arithmetic mean
Tragic	34	40.5	
Impassioned	18	21.4	
Cheerful	32	38.1	-0.0238
Total	84	100.00	

Table 3 data interpretation

- With the arithmetic mean of 0.0357, a positive perspective has been revealed within the category of relationship with others. More specifically, this indicates the nature of the relationship between women and the 'other' exemplifies self-respect as there is a focus on female independence and supremacy.

- With the arithmetic mean of -0.0952, the meanings conveyed through the lyrics were predominantly negative as they raised issues involving struggles, inequality, trauma and shock, as well as disappointment, which were more prevalent than neutral and/or positive themes.

- Performances that were exemplified by tragic were slightly ahead of cheerful, which reflect fluctuating expressions pertaining to women's issues. Expressing passion for oneself and the future, impassioned

performance was less than mean of -0.0238, which made the measure negative.

- Generally, differences between positive and negative dimensions on the three measures were a miniscule -0.1, which indicates an overall sense of relative balance between negative and positive themes, as well as a negligible deviation to negativity and positivity.

Table (4): Women-Other Relationship Frameworks (W-ORFs)

and Measures of the Study

Measures	W-ORFs	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Relationship with the 'other'	Struggle	31	0.5806	0.62044	4-79	32.355	0.000
	Resistance	19	-0.1579	0.50146			
	Trauma and shock	20	-0.08500	0.36635			
	Giving up	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Self-pride	11	0.7273	0.46710			
	Total	84	0.0357	0.81324			
Meanings	Struggle	31	0.1290	0.88476	4-79	12.110	0.000
	Resistance	19	0.0000	0.94281			
	Trauma and shock	20	-0.9000	0.30779			
	Giving up	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Self-pride	11	0.8182	0.40452			
	Total	84	-0.0952	0.91334			
Performance	Struggle	31	0.4516	0.80989	4-79	20.207	0.000
	Resistance	19	-0.1053	0.73747			
	Trauma and shock	20	-0.9500	0.22361			
	Giving up	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Self-pride	11	0.7273	0.4671			
	Total	84	-0.0238	0.8914			

Table 4 data interpretation

- The framework of *giving-up* was limited to representations of victimized women, which was followed by *trauma and shock*, as well as *resistance*. Thus, the three frameworks are indicative of a negative attitude toward unhealthy relationships with others. Although it may initially be perceived as negative, the framework of *struggle* was positive as it was exemplified by women's independence and supremacy. Meanwhile *self-pride* was the top positive expression as it was exemplified by women's hegemony and supremacy. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. The Least Significant Difference Test

(LSD) has revealed group differences between all categories of comparison, except for *self-pride* as opposed to *struggle*, and *shock* as opposed to *giving up*.

- While the meanings conveyed under *giving-up*, *trauma and shock*, and *resistance* were distinctly negative, their positive counterparts were *struggle* and *self-pride*, which were expected. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed that the group differences were between all categories of comparison, except for *struggle* as opposed to *resistance*, and *shock* as opposed to *giving up*.

- While tragic performance was detected in the themes of *giving-up*, *trauma and shock*, and *resistance*. Meanwhile, the themes of *self-pride* and *struggle* was depicted through a cheerful performance, which were expected findings. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed the group differences were between all categories of comparison, except for *struggle* as opposed to *self-pride* and *shock* as opposed to *giving up*.

- The first hypothesis is validated as a result of the above findings.

Table (5): Relationship between Ideological Stance (IS) and Measures of the Study

Measures	IS	No.	Arithmetic means	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Relationship with the 'other'	Emphasizing positives of women	30	0.4333	0.62606	3-80	4.281	0.007
	Emphasizing negatives of other	40	-0.1500	0.83359			
	De-emphasizing negatives of women	6	-0.3333	0.81650			
	De-emphasizing positives of other	8	-0.2500	0.88641			
	Total	84	0.0357	0.81324			
Meanings	Emphasizing positives of women	30	0.4333	0.81720	3-80	6.323	0.001
	Emphasizing negatives of other	40	-0.4000	0.87119			
	De-emphasizing negatives of women	6	-0.5000	0.54772			
	De-emphasizing positives of other	8	-0.2500	0.88641			
	Total	84	-0.0952	0.91334			

Measures	IS	No.	Arithmetic means	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Performance	Emphasizing positives of women	30	0.4000	0.72397	3-80	5.132	0.003
	Emphasizing negatives of other	40	-0.2000	0.91147			
	De-emphasizing negatives of women	6	-0.8333	0.40825			
	De-emphasizing positives of other	8	-0.1250	0.99103			
	Total	84	-0.0238	0.89141			

Table 5 data interpretation

- Except for *emphasizing positives of women*, which received a positive mean, all other measures involving relationships were marked by negative stances. The differences have been found statistically significant at 0.007. LSD revealed the group differences were between *emphasizing the positives of women* and all other ideological stances involving relationships.

- Except for *emphasizing the positives of women*, which received a positive mean, all other measures involving meanings were marked by negative stances. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.001. LSD revealed the group differences were between *emphasizing the positives of women* and all other ideological stances involving meanings.

- Except for *emphasizing the positives of women*, which received a positive mean, tragic performance was identified in all other categories. The differences have been found statistically significant at 0.003. LSD revealed the group differences were between *emphasizing the positives of women* and all other ideological stances involving performance.

- Clearly, there is a level of consistency as it pertains to the three measures examining the ideological stances. It can be argued that *emphasizing the positives of women* is closely related to female supremacy, positive meanings, and cheerful performance. Meanwhile, negativity ideological stances attach elsewhere.

- The second hypothesis is validated as a result of the above findings.

Table (6): Relationship between the Main Focus (MF) and Measures of the Study

Measures	MF	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Relationship with the 'other'	Indifference	13	-0.2308	0.43853	7-76	21.209	0.000
	Blaming	4	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Injustice	12	-0.8333	0.38925			
	Defiance	13	0.3077	0.63043			
	Self-pity	6	1.0000-	0.00000			
	Expressing personality	15	0.6667	0.48795			
	Rejection	10	0.2000	0.78881			
	Female supremacy	11	0.9091	0.30151			
	Total	84	0.0357	0.81324			
Meanings	Indifference	13	-0.1538	0.98710	7-76	8.189	0.000
	Blaming	4	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Injustice	12	-0.8333	0.57735			
	Defiance	13	0.0000	0.91287			
	Self-pity	6	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Expressing personality	15	0.4000	0.73679			
	Rejection	10	-0.2000	0.78881			
	Female supremacy	11	0.9091	0.30151			
	Total	84	-0.0952	0.91334			
Performance	Indifference	13	-0.0769	1.03775	7-76	9.980	٠,٠٠٠
	Blaming	4	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Injustice	12	-0.8333	0.38925			
	Defiance	13	0.4615	0.66023			
	Self-pity	6	-0.8333	0.40825			
	Expressing personality	15	0.2667	0.79881			
	Rejection	10	-0.2000	0.78881			
	Female supremacy	11	0.9091	0.30151			
	Total	84	-0.0238	0.89141			

Table 6 data interpretation

- Regarding the relationships between the main focus and the measures of the study, *blaming* and *self-pity* were the most negative depictions, which situated women as victims. Meanwhile, a less negative mode was utilized while depicting *injustice* and *indifference*. The *relationship with 'the other'* positioned women as controlling both their own and the lives of others. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between *indifference* and all categories of comparison, *blaming* and all categories of comparison (excluding *injustice* and *self-pity)*, *injustice* and all categories of comparison, *defiance* and all categories of comparison (excluding *expressing personality*, *rejection* and *women supremacy)*, and between *rejection*, *expressing personality*, and *women supremacy*.

- Regarding the measure of meanings, *blaming* and *self-pity* were presented as the most negative depictions, followed by *injustice*, *rejection*, and *indifference*. Positive meanings were limited to *expressing personality* and *women supremacy*, with the latter achieving the highest position. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between *women supremacy* and all categories of comparison (excluding *expressing personality*), between *expressing personality* and all categories of comparison (excluding *defiance* and *women supremacy*), between *self-pity* and all categories of comparison (excluding *blaming* and *injustice*), and between *indifference* and all categories of comparison (excluding *defiance* and *rejection*).

- Regarding the measure of performance, the entire category was distinctly tragic via *blaming*, *injustice*, and *self-pity* occupying the top positions respectively. Only slightly less tragic were *rejection* and *indifference*. There were only three cheerful performance indicators with *female supremacy* occupying the top spot by a large margin. The indicators of *expressing personality* and *defiance* did not occur nearly as often. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed that group differences were between *indifference* and all categories of comparison (excluding *rejection* and *expressing personality*), between *women supremacy* and all categories of comparison (excluding *defiance*), and between *defiance* and all categories of comparison (excluding *expressing personality*, *blaming*, *injustice*, and *self-pity*).

- The third hypothesis is validated as a result of the above findings.

Table (7): Relationship between Inferential Dimensions (ID) and Measures of the Study

Measures	ID	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Relationship with the 'other'	Getting used to pain	16	-0.5625	0.51235	7-76	43.139	000.0
	Irreligiousness	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Inevitable divine punishment	3	-0.6667	0.57735			
	Male has violent personality	4	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Human nature	2	-0.5000	0.70711			
	Showing contempt to men	28	0.7143	0.53452			
	Holding on to self-respect	18	0.2778	0.75190			
	Corrupt/unfair society	10	-0.3000	0.48305			
	Total	84	0.0357	0.81324			

Measures	ID	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Meanings	Getting used to pain	16	-0.5000	0.81650	7-76	784.2	012.0
	Irreligiousness	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Inevitable divine punishment	3	-0.6667	0.57735			
	Male has violent personality	4	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Human nature	2	-0.5000	0.70711			
	Showing contempt to men	28	0.1429	0.89087			
	Holding on to self-respect	18	0.2778	0.89479			
	Corrupt/unfair society	10	0.1000	0.99443			
	Total	84	-0.0952	0.91334			
Performance	Getting used to pain	16	-0.6875	0.70415	7-76	818.8	0.000
	Irreligiousness	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Inevitable divine punishment	3	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Male has violent personality	4	-1.0000	0.00000			
	Human nature	2	-0.5000	0.70711			
	Showing contempt to men	28	0.5714	0.74180			
	Holding on to self-respect	18	0.3333	0.84017			
	Corrupt/unfair society	10	-0.2000	0.42164			
	Total	84	-0.0238	0.89141			

Table 7 data interpretation

- While the inferential dimensions of *irreligiousness* and *male has violent personality* were distinctly negative, the dimensions of *inevitable divine punishment*, *getting used to pain*, *human nature*, and *corrupt/unfair society* were presented as less negative. Meanwhile, positive presentations were identified through the themes of *self-respect* and *showing contempt to man*, which occupied the top spot. Thus, an inference can be made involving predominantly negative depictions of *the relationship with the 'other.'* The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between *showing contempt to man* and all categories of comparison and between *holding on to self-respect* and all categories of comparison (excluding *human personality*).

- While meanings and detonations of inferential dimensions pertaining to *irreligiousness* and *reproving male personality* were distinctly negative,

inevitable divine punishment, *getting used to pain*, and *human nature* were less negative. Meanwhile, *holding on to self-respect*, *showing contempt to man,* and *corrupt/unfair society* topped the positive dimensions. The meanings of the positive dimensions related to standing up to the corruption in a unethical society. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.012. LSD revealed group differences were between *showing contempt to man*, *getting used to pain*, *irreligiousness*, and *reproving male personality*. The LSD further disclosed that group differences were evident between *holding on to self-respect*, *irreligiousness*, *getting used to pain*, and *reproving male personality*, as well as between *corrupt, unfair society*, and *reproving male personality*.

- Regarding the measure of performance, the entire category was distinctly tragic across the categories of *irreligiousness*, *inevitable divine punishment*, and *male has violent personality*. Although typified by Tragic, the following categories were less so than the aforementioned, which included *getting used to pain*, *human nature*, and *corrupt/unfair society*. Both measures of cheerful and impassioned performance were found in the categories *holding on to self-respect* and *showing contempt to man*, with the latter category ranking the highest. These findings uphold the consistency of performance with the inferential dimensions used. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between *showing contempt to man* and all categories of comparison (excluding *holding on to self-respect*) and between *holding on to self-respect* and all categories of comparison (excluding *human personality* and *corrupt/unfair society)*.

- The fourth hypothesis is validated as a result of the above findings.

Table (8): The Relationship between Meanings and Performance

	Relationship with the other	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Meanings	Women as victims	26	-1.0000	0.00000	2-81	34.657	0.000
	Women as independent from and equal to men	29	0.1724	0.84806			
	Women as beings with dominance and supremacy	29	0.4483	0.78314			
	Total	84	-0.0952	0.91334			

	Relationship with the other	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
Performance	Women as victims	26	-0.9231	0.27175	2-81	45.421	0.012
	Women as independent from and equal to men	29	0.1034	0.77205			
	Women as beings with dominance and supremacy	29	0.6552	0.66953			
	Total	84	-0.0238	0.89141			

Table 8 data interpretation

- The category of *women as victims* was a distinctly negative depiction of the relationship with the 'other'. Meanwhile, positive depictions were detected in the categories of *women as independent from and equal to men* and *women as beings with dominance and supremacy*, with the latter category reaching the peak of significance. These findings uphold the consistency of meanings and the relationship they intend to express. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between all categories of comparison except for *women as independent from and equal to men* and *women as beings with dominance and supremacy*.

- Tragic performance has been restricted to depicting *women as victims*, but cheerful and impassioned with *women as independent from and equal to men*, and entirely cheerful with *women as beings with dominance and supremacy* (to men). The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between all categories of comparison.

- The fifth hypothesis is validated as a result of the above findings.

Table (9): Relationship Between Meanings and Performance

Performance	Meaning	No.	Arithmetic mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	F value	Significance
	Negative	39	-0.6410	0.66835	2-81	34.820	0.000
	Neutral	14	0.1429	0.86444			
	Positive	31	0.6774	0.54081			
	Total	84	-0.0238	0.89141			

Table 9 data interpretation

- The category of tragic performance was typified by negative meanings and detonations. Meanwhile, the impassioned performance category was exemplified by neutral meanings and detonations, which is upheld by the relative significance. Lastly, the cheerful performance category was distinctly positive. These findings are consistent with expectations. The differences were found to be statistically significant at 0.000. LSD revealed group differences were between all categories of comparison.

- The sixth hypothesis is validated as a result of the above findings.

Discussion

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The findings within contemporary Arab feminist song do not exhibit a coherent and unified philosophy. Nonetheless, CDA tools may be applied to the findings via techniques that measure the underlying key discourse markers as a means to better understand how meanings, contexts, trends, and power have been influenced and changed over the period of study. This technique involved six factors. As CDA techniques are applicable to both qualitative and quantitative analysis, quantitative data was relied on for some phenomena. CDA has been applied for purposes of interpretation and to elucidate deeper knowledge from the date.

Time-Based Developments of Arab Feminist Songs and Defining Dimensions of Focus

With 2011 as the initial year for collecting data, the sample period can be sub-divided into three periods, which are pre-2016, 2016-2019, and post-2019. The sub-dividing of periods of data collection, as it pertains to media messaging and content, is done in relation to relevant public-opinion phenomena. More specifically, the subject of single motherhood was evident within society by late 2016. The story of Hadir Makaqi, a single mother in Egypt, precipitated a social media campaign domestically known as *I Support Hadir Makawi* (Al Arabiya English 2017). The campaign instigated tremendous debate throughout social media, which was later followed by a domestically broadcasted drama series titled *Sabe'a Gar* (*Seventh Neighbor*[1]). The social media campaign and drama series provoked societal debate regarding the role of women and more specific issues related to feminism, such as independence, intimate relationship, extramarital affairs, single mother, etc.

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[1] It is a socioreligious edict among Muslims to extend help and care to their neighbors, which includes up to the seventh neighbor, if possible.

The topic of feminism received unprecedented interest because of these controversies. By 2020, season one of the *Leeh La'a* (*Why not*) drama series, which aired for three seasons, made it broadcast debut and focused primarily on feminist issues. While season one of *Leeh La'a* focused on the main female character's attempt to become independent from her family and her freedom of choice, season two tackled single motherhood and adoption issues, as well as the resulting social consequences. Season three addressed issues of moving on after the failure of relationships and the rights of female divorcees. Considering the above exemplars, the sub-divided time categories coincide with pertinent issues broadcast by the media that involve feminist issues, which coincide with identified themes in some of the Arab feminist song in the sample. For the initial two sub-divided periods, they reveal an almost equal focus pertaining to relationships with men. The third and final sub-divided period revealed an increased focus upon women and their relationship to society.

Analyzing the theme of male/female relationships, the initial sub-divided period of the sample includes songs the focus on women and their emotions, feelings, and passions. The female singers Amal Maher, Samira Said, and Asalah, as well as the songwriter Nader Abdulla (male), were the artists that appeared the most during this sub-divided period of the sample date collection. As it relates to the themes, songs during this sub-divided period of the sample depicted male immoralities, affirmed women's patience and self-control, and the inequitable relationship between males and females. The second sub-divided period of the sample exemplified by songs performed by the female singers Amgham and Elissa, as well as songs written by Amir Teima (male). This portion of songs typically depict women, despite suffering psychological and emotional crises, able to pull themselves away from toxic relationships, move on, self-manage, and leave behind the abusee. The third sub-divided period of the sample involved most of the singers and songwriters, although none had a higher rate of occurrence than the others. This period of the sample exhibits more coherent and unified feminist themes, which possibly indicate the commodification of these themes by various female singers and male songwriters. Additionally, songs clearly become quicker-paced and sometimes cheerful. The evidence of enthusiastic performances is unmistakable. This sub-divided period of the sample focused on addressing broad societal issues. More specifically, the songs indicate that women are unable to relieve their pain, but nonetheless are inspired to claim their rights within society.

Accordingly, quantitatively speaking the feminist denotations grew stronger over time. From a qualitative perspective, the songs moved away from establishing differences between women and men, advocating for equality to men, ignoring men, through to talking about the self and addressing society from a feminist perspective. These findings potentially indicate a progressive and systemic move toward to the integration of qualitative and quantitative feminism in Arab songs that are sung by women.

Meaning and Context Developments

For a temporal perspective, as it relates to meanings and contexts, the songs in the sample have demonstrated an unmistakable evolution from presenting women as victims to becoming independent beings and ultimately superior to men. The presentation of women as victims of the other (e.g., men and society) was a hallmark of the second sub-divided period of the sample. Women as independent beings, more specifically represented as equal to or superior to men, were the primary characteristics identified in the third sub-divided period of the sample, which upholds the validity of the previous finding. Meanwhile, the meanings expressed in the songs also indicate an evolution. During the first sub-divided period of the sample, certain concepts were worded in a manner that exemplified semantic values of self-pity, proving how oppressive men are toward women, and the pain women suffer as a result. These concepts are illuminated by the lyrics: "be pious to God when dealing with me, desperate love, wait for God's punishment, I'm all done with you, you hit first, and innocent woman." The evolution during this sub-divided period of the sample is also evident in the song titles. More specifically, songs focused on self-pity or proving the male's mistake and the consequences of this mistake on the women, while the meanings develop to become song titles, such as: "Rebellious", "my own way", "what on earth might scare me", "not a big deal!", "that stupid [guy]", "I'm too much for him", "rest and live", and "I'll move on". Broadly speaking, these titles signify female indifference toward the continuity of male relationships, which indicate a higher level of self-esteem. Further, the titles and meanings identified in the third sub-divided period of the sample also point toward an evolution. More specifically, this period is demarcated by a sense of supremacy, hegemony, and control, which included such titles as: "I'm in full control", "poor him!", "I know who I am", "flying high and singing", "I need no one", "never feeling weak", "only the way I like it", and "I'm really high". The meanings and contexts of these songs illustrate clear feminist inclinations,

which possibly transcend traditional feminism into the realm of radical feminism.

Ideological Analysis: van Dijk's Ideological Square

The ideology behind the depictions of relationships manifests in the discourse, which provides a clear indication pertaining to the ideology, concepts, self-image of women, and image of others as expressed by women singers. The first sub-divided period of the sample is marked with depriving the other—mostly men and sometimes society—of unfairly acquired advantages. Often, men are depicted as indifferent, transgressors, and violators of sociocultural norms. Meanwhile, society is depicted as a bastion of injustice. This discourse often presents an ideal of how men and society should be to uphold sociocultural norms and traditions. In other words, men do not observe Islamic rules or justice, nor are they pious toward God. Accordingly, the main line of discourse in the lyrics emphasize observable norms, traditions, and positive traits (of both men and society), only to express sadness at the fact they no longer exist.

In the second sub-divided period of the sample, disadvantages involving the 'other'—men and society—are additionally highlighted, along with emphasizing how infallible women are. These lines of discourse are exemplified by cruelty, transgression, and admonishing men, as well as cultural injustice and anger directed toward society. In turn, women—under prevailing social roles—do not reciprocate such injustice, nor do they adopt an equally transgressive attitude. Rather, these focus on contradictions between women and others' attitudes and behavior, which references the semantic dominance of negativity in songs, which even blame men and society for the psychological and emotional damage felt by women. In other words, women respect sociocultural norms and traditions, as well as the generally applicable rules of engagement with the 'other', only to suffer unfair and unsafe treatment. This includes the potential of being denied any financial support or fair and equal treatment. Notably, this line of discourse highlights equality to—rather than independence from—the 'other'. It also focuses on the differences between men and women.

For the third sub-divided period of the sample, the good qualities of women are emphasized. Generally, female singers no longer air their grievances or sought a fair system to ensure justice and equality. Instead, usually they expressed a state of independence, freedom, indifference to the other, and a sense of supremacy. Analytically, the line of ideological discourse upholds the theory of evolving feminist discourse. Essentially, this can be viewed as

establishing the conditions of discrimination and inequality during the initial sub-divided period, then in the second sub-divided period the depiction of the other as not being what they appear to be, severely negative depictions regarding the other, and a positive portrayal of women. During the third sub-divided period, this evolves into establishing differentiation, advocating equality throughout society and culture, encouraging complete independence from the other, and imposing female conditions on any relationship to ensure complete autonomy and freedom. This period illustrates a desire to create new social roles through the framework of feminism.

Applying van Dijk's model, the ideology expressed has mapped out power and hegemonic relations. According to the analysis above, the initial sub-divided period of the sample depicts traditional hegemony and power as a historical and continual status quo. More specifically, this pertains to all prevailing religious rules, norms, traditions, and female/male relationships. Thus, the illustrated themes serve to uphold and bolster ongoing authority when determining the limits of social power, a domain the males traditionally dominate. However, during the second sub-divided period of the sample, social norms and traditions have been presented as a means of power to those who are arbiters of these issues. Although the roles of men and women should be equal, the opposite is depicted by this sample of the songs. Both males and females are not meant to dominate power, nor should either party dominate the other, which highlights the inevitability of moving from away from opaque social power toward a definite and equally distributed version. For the third sub-divided period of the sample, the themes have changed tremendously as they depict women has possessing power, openly displaying supremacy, and practicing dominance over themselves and their lives. During this period, an extreme discourse is observable, which sometimes upholds women as deserving the right to control and dominate men, as well as society, and to create a hegemonic environment where women dominate.

Evolving Relationships with the 'Other'

Relationship frameworks with the 'other'—men or society—vary and evolve over the three sub-divided periods of the sample. The first subperiod is illustrative of conflict and struggle, which is not as evident in the two ensuing subperiods. In this case, the idea of conflict itself confirms the existence of a state of relative balance between the woman and the 'other' and it appears there are basic difference between men and women, with uncertain ambition to redress the imbalance into an area that might resolve this conflict in a relative manner. However, in the second sub-divided period of the sample it

becomes clear there are completely negative frameworks in which there is trauma and shock. Resulting from disappointment and surprise from suffering injustice, which assumes the existences of a more powerful and controlling entity, and surrender. This references the psychological and physical exhaustion inflicted upon women, which prompts their surrender to an unfair reality. In all three cases, the 'other' appears to be the weaker party. In the relationship with the 'other,' her negatives feelings are used, as well as lyrical and musical performance, to emphasize the injustice inflicted upon her by the 'other.' As such, this exhausts her ability to confront this reality, as she is afflicted with anguish and shock as a result of betrayal, or she tries to resist this reality with great difficulty, or she surrenders to this reality because her tools of managing conflict with the 'other' is limited.

Compared to subperiod one and two, the third subperiod is demarcated by a vociferous and unprecedented sense of pride, which sets women free from social constraints, demonstrates indifference to others, and depicts women taking pride in themselves and their capabilities. This subperiod reveals an inclination to celebrate women's capabilities, good qualities, and capacity to deal with the others from a position of supremacy. Consequently, feminist detonations have evolved from establishing a state of disagreement and conflict; to affirming a state of injustice, disparity, and inequality; to transcending conflict and disposing of the 'other.' These conform to earlier findings and uphold the thesis involving the evolution of feminist themes over the three subperiods.

Evolving Main Focus of Sample Songs

Music in culture acts as a foundational launchpad for novel influences within society, which songs seek to extol. Although many studies have conducted song analyses according to the main focus model, the terminological definitions remain limited when analyzing songs as it is an intuitive term for analyzing songs in a musical context. Kuhn (2010, 1618) argues that "the main focus must therefore be strictly on what these texts intended to do and by what means". From a procedural perspective, the main focus are the concepts that artists seek to project into the minds of their audience via words, compositions, and performance. According to this definition, the main focus of Arab songs reveals tremendous change over the three subperiods. The first subperiod is typified by a main focus of blame or airing grievances. Therefore, this is consistent with establishing differences between males and females, inequality, and the resultant unequal relationship. For the second subperiod, various perspectives were identified, including self-pity and demonstrating

increased oppression of women, which precipitates the expression of differences and inequality. Nonetheless, this subperiod revealed strong rejection as a main focus, which is exemplified by women rejecting inequality or poisonous relationships and culminates with advocating defiance of the other (e.g., men and society). These are the methods that women advocate using to manage conflict and establish equal footing with men.

During the third subperiod, personality markers have become powerful, which is founded upon feminism. Conflict with men is no longer a primary concern. Instead, a higher sense of self-worth is evident through directly advocating, rather than begging, for independence. Indifference is also evident as women remove themselves from harm, do not accept abuse, and disregard sociocultural stereotypes. This is how women have come to prioritize self-placation and their inner peace to any social and/or relational systems, regardless of the resulting pain. Women take control as they no longer seek to prove their independence, but instead openly proclaim their independence. Moreover, they express disregard for sociocultural norms and traditions, as well as potential social and psychological consequences, and exhibit supremacy and hegemony over the other. Throughout subperiod three, women are always winners. These conform to the earlier findings regarding the evolution of feminism.

Key Inferential Dimensions: Meanings Across Subperiods

Several inferential dimensions are evident in the main focuses of the sample. Semantic inferences have differed during each respective subperiods. In the first subperiod, inferences of *irreligiousness* of the masculine attitudes towards women are ample. This contention is upheld by notable lyrics, such as: "be pious to God when dealing with me" and "no faith or law would accept this state." In these lyrics, women invoke the social system of religiosity to highlight injustices they suffer and their right to redress. *Human nature* is also evident in the main focus during the same subperiod, which is demonstrated via the lyrics: "there are things only felt, never said." This may reflect a desire on behalf of women to share feelings and emotions they may feel too shy to express. Consequently, the third subperiod displayed lyrics and descriptions that are indicative of independence and no longer need to express their feelings and emotions: "I have my own opinion, living my life the way I see it."

Holding on to self-respect is a key manifestation of this subperiod, which is exemplified by women abandoning *desperate love* and rejecting mistreatment.

This is evident in the lyric "this is not the treatment I deserve." Concurrently, the lyrics are demonstrating their pride and examples of abiding by sociocultural norms, which is evident in the lyrics: "how blessed he is that I met and bore up with him." Further, some lyrics demonstrate no regret regarding a dissolution of a relationship: "never turn back… good speed! Just close the door!" Another lyrical exemplar is: "I want myself back, even if my voice is all that is left… I'll stay alone for what is left of my life, with the only condition of respect!" As such, the demonstrations of self-respect and lack of concern regarding sociocultural judgement propel women to end the abusive relationship.

The second subperiod is indicative of affirming the admonishment of men due to their victimizing women through violence and hardships. This is epitomized in lyrics: "I had bad days with you" and "every time pain sees me, it laughs and says, 'I've seen you before! How many times do you have to pass by?! How many times do I have to afflict you?!'". Women sought to eliminate their hardships but indicate the seemingly insurmountable difficulty in doing so: "no one with an eraser can erase may pain… nor can anyone forget when everyone stood against me." This subperiod was preceded and followed similar lyrics as exemplified by the song *oh! My mirror!*, which alludes to a myriad of inferences regarding man's cruelty and violence. The video of the aforementioned song clearly demonstrates these themes through the main character's reflection in the mirror. The song provides a message that is addressed to victimized women, particularly how they should deal with masculine violence. Similarly, the video for the song titled "would you ever apologize?!" features scenes of violence committed by a husband against his wife in front of their son. Both songs depict feelings of fear, anticipation of violent acts, and humiliation. The lyrics emphasize the despair regarding how corrupt and unjust society is toward women who suffer violence, which is clearly delineated in the lyrics: "has anyone of them felt my humiliation, when he totally brought me down and smashed my tender heart?! No one of them has ever cared for me when he used to make my blood boil with absurd abusive words!" Another example is found in the song titled "liars", which accuses society of lying and hypocrisy through the lyrics: "it is a time of too many empowered liars." Another example is depicted in the song titled "the opposite of whom you see," which focuses on how society is deceived by appearances through the lyrics: "judging me by my appearance and livelihood... had they experienced what I went through, they would have wished for a different life!"

During the third subperiod, the prime focus involves the theme of getting used to pain. This theme is exemplified by the lyrics: "that if it [my heart] were a stone, it would have melted down, I swear!" Another theme that is prevalent is a feeling of incessant defeat, which is illustrated by the lyrics: "with you, I've always had the feeling of defeat!"

An equally widespread theme is inevitable divine punishment, which is epitomized by the lyrics: "to God is my resort, and yours is to this world." The underlying meaning of these lyrics is a reference to a woman desiring to abandon this man's world while she is certain of his gruesome fate, which is evident in her supplication: "I pray to God to see you with the same sufferings I have!" The song continues with the lyrics that allude to her certainty in divine retribution and reward: "you get what you seed and may God recompense me for the time vainly spent with you!." Those meanings reflect strong belief in divine punishment, yet with stronger inclination toward punishing the abusive man than to divine recompensating and placation for her woes and grief. The theme of contempt toward men was also evident during this subperiod, which is epitomized by the female singer expressing astonishment at the man's boldness in the lyrics: "allowing yourself to annoy me and cross the limits." Later in the song she is expresses newfound strength in herself as well as repulsion at her former significant other, whom she "deemed dead," after the dissolution of their relationship through the lyrics: "with you leaving me, I've grown stronger… many strengthening wounds to me! Many painful returns to you!" The renewed internal confidence is coupled with a defiant attitude in the lyrics: "empowerment unimagined!" and "I'm calling the shots, my dominance over you shall be everlasting." The song later portrays her former lover as weak and at her disposal via the lyrics: "Get lost! I can't stand looking at your face. Leave me, I don't want to be with you! Never turn up your face here again!" These exemplar lyrics are indicative of women able to control men, which does at times even depict women as completely superior to men.

In general, the inferences and semantic values throughout all the songs in the sample illustrate the evolution of interwoven themes. These move from initially depicting injustice as well as resistance and transforms into embodying self-respect and proving the actions of men as counter to their religious values. This later evolves into emphasizing depictions of violence enacted by men toward women and establishing a connection between these violent acts and sociocultural values. Embedded in these portrayals of violence are themes of women dealing with and getting used to pain while espousing their belief

in divine retribution and reward. This transformation of themes culminates in displaying outward contempt toward men. The evolution of feminism is clear as the themes migrate from expressing injustice to resistance, then from being inflicted by violence to proving victoriousness, superior, and firmly in control. Broadly, the CDA six-factor analysis argues that an escalating curve has marked feminist markers within the songs in the sample and upholds the theory regarding an evolution of feminism. This indicates a trend in the discourse identified in popular Arab songs, which invoke more radical dimensions of feminism. As highlighted earlier, this evolution within the sample of songs coincides with sociocultural evolution as indicated by social debates, drama series, and productions featuring similar feminist themes. Music wields tremendous influence throughout Arab culture, which is particularly true regarding broadly popular mainstream music. Pertaining to the songs in the sample, these clearly are within this category of popularity as evidenced by the voluminous number of views. Accordingly, there is a state of consistency and agreement evident between sociocultural proceedings and artistic output, which in reference to this research is popular music. Thus, an argument outlining the expansion and proliferation of feminism throughout art and culture, which (re)produces itself concurrently, on a qualitative level has served to augment radical feminism at the expense of more traditional feminism.

Gender-Based Analysis

The songs within the sample feature gender roles of men and women in a myriad of aspect, which are explored below.

Level I: Contextualization of relationships

The majority of the songs in the sample express relationships involving either female/male or female/society. At the quantitative level, there was a relative balance regarding the nature of relationships in the songs. However, as it pertains to the feminist discourse, when women are highlighted as victims within the lyrics it correspondingly establishes men failing to uphold their traditionally prevailing social role. More specifically, males fail to meet the requirements involving their roles, responsibilities, and/or duties as it relates to their relationship with women. As a result, men are perceived and portrayed as unjust, cheater, or indifferent to her feelings and emotions. On the one hand, her vision of the relationship is dominated by feelings of disappointment, pain, or feelings of betrayal or humiliation. Mostly, the songs do not present a new picture for overcoming the reality of the

relationship with the man except separation, refusal to abuse, get over the pain, or continue waiting. Overall, the theme of women as victims conforms to feminist discourse in relation to the following:

1- Emphasizing that males are the abusers to the socially acceptable limits

2- Emphasizing that while women giving up, exhibiting patience, or being emotion-driven will encourages man to grow even more abusive

3- Discussing the existing physical and emotional abuses by men

4- Emphasizing victimization of women

5- Highlighting the capacity to overcome pain and move on as an independent woman, which pertains to both narratives involving female/male and female/society relations.

Such discourse is founded upon feminist discourse, which upholds the understanding that female/male and female/society relationships are inequitable, and women are victims of abuse from both males and society. Meanwhile, this level of discourse has not transcended the boundaries of social norms and traditions. Instead, it seems to remain within the framework of sociocultural norms. More specifically, the lyrics expressed within the songs in the sample emphasize a form of salvation as achievable without offering a factual approach regarding how this may be accomplished.

Regarding the songs that embody the themes of women being independent from men, the majority of the lyrics and contexts reveal a sense of defiance. More specifically, the protagonist in the song typically reciprocates the different forms of insults and humiliation while boldly and outrightly resisting assaults against her. Some songs portray women as capable of not only living independently—without men—but also eclipsing men. As such, these songs depict men as adopting socially sanctioned roles and actions, while women are positioned outside of the sociocultural norms through their capacity of independence and even taking on roles in society that were traditionally reserved for men. After all, the protagonist is capable of being independent and defiant, as well as confronting and engaging in conflict. From a sociocultural perspective, the lyrics depict a protagonist who is uninterested in her traditional roles within daily life as they are insignificant when compared to her psychological well-being and self-respect. This instigates the necessity to be ready to provide for herself and achieve psychological independence, which entails not revealing her emotions to anyone, and always trying to manage a balanced relationship with man under the master condition of "A

balanced and role-based relationship is positive when it is conducted through mutual respect. Conversely, any relationship involving a cruel or violent man is objectionable. As such, remaining unattached, independent, and single is far better than engaging in toxic relationships. Accordingly, the depictions of women as independent also conforms to feminist discourse in relation to the following:

1- Establishing the protagonist's (female) defiance of men

2- Establishing the protagonist's (female) capacity of independence as it relates to social constraints, particularly when it involves abusive relationships

3- Establishing the ability to independently move on without any social assistance

4- Establishing that mechanisms of resistance and independence are possible, available, and operational by moving on from the toxic relationships. In other words, dispensing men entirely is an option as any relationship with men must be on equal footing or there will be no relationship at all.

The highlighted themes may be one of the most consistent within traditional feminist discourse, which emphasizes the capacity of women as capable and effective without men. More specifically, women derive real value and self-worth from themselves. As such, they only accept an equal and impartial relationship. In so doing, women's tools are their respective abilities to express themselves, their stances, and self-respect continuously. Despite advocating for these issues and overcoming them through their previously mentioned skills and strengths, the lyrics neglect to address changing social realities across the Arab world. Women have not resisted men in non-emotional realms. Instead, the lyrics portray women refuting their supposed weakness without demanding clear changes within the social reality, either through new gender-based roles or different rights for women.

Despite these seeming incongruities, some songs depict women as superior to men. The protagonist in such songs portray themselves as empowered and in control, which established their ability to entirely dispose of men in their lives or subjugate them to her desires and needs. As such, the argument could be made that these type of lyrics present men as needing women, but not vice versa. Therefore, men have a duty to assume the task of meeting the needs of women, fulfilling their sense of sublimity, supremacy, and womanhood, as

well as observing their inimitable ability to manage anything. From this perspective, men are always inferior to women. Correspondingly, men are either followers or subjects who are endlessly attempting to catch up to women. Moreover, the supreme ambition of men is to be beside women. Conversely, women engaging in relationships with men is depicted as less important to women and often disparaged by women, which often takes the form of women rejecting men. Forms of rejection can be intended to humiliate, subjugate, and show contempt toward men.

Subsequently, the social role for women within this context also manifests differently. For the first time in Arabic songs, the male/female relationship is depicted as explicitly pro-woman and residing outside of the previously existing social contexts. Further, these songs encourage—albeit delicately— novel gender dimensions for the first time, which is evident in the conclusion that some of sample songs foster female-led relationship (FLR). Basically, FLR is a gender term used in certain literature to refer to relationships where women take the lead, as is the case in some American films (Rojc 2014). In some literature, FLR marks a crucial step prior to the inversion of patriarchy and the establishment of a matriarchy, which is a sociopolitical system controlled by women. This uncompromising female supremacy is indicative of radical feminism, which is highly critical of patriarchy. More specifically, this theoretical approach contends that history has been manipulated to favor men, while a proper reading would affirm matriarchies (Rowland 2013, Robinson 2003). Some studies (Patel 2014, Thomas 2009) have addressed manifestations of similar ideas in works of arts, which include songs, and conclude these works are based upon historical or religious practices from previous eras. However, similar highlighting of previous eras, particularly focusing on matriarchy, has yet to manifest in Arabic songs. Therefore, what is being addressed here in simply to highlight FLR. In general, depictions of women as superior to men has manifested itself through:

1- Depicting women as fully independent from men, nor care about men or society

2- Portraying female self-pride and self-admiration, which includes listing their physical and psychological qualities and advantages

3- Emphasizing female leadership and their ability to easily subjugate the other (men or society)

4- Subjugating men is a certainty as men always seek relations with women, but women display contempt toward such endeavors.

Level II: Gender-Based Roles of Women and Men

In the sample songs, the presented gender-based role of women depicts their independence and ability to confront any situation and move on. Thus, these portrayals conform to traditional feminist discourse, which seeks gender equality. In this context, a difference gender nature was not determined outside the norm in nature of the distribution of gender roles in society. Gender her is equal to the social gender with its recognized physical, psychological, and social roles. Even the role expressed by women as a victim of man did not distinguish between the traditional perception of the social gender and the perception associated with gender dimensions—except rarely when it dealt with social reality only—while the gender role was also limited to being equal to the conventional social gender, even it emphasized the existence of differences between men and women both socially and psychologically. However, these differences were not addressed, and in fact, they moved away from the gender perception based on neutralizing the biological factor and natural differences. Further, they emphasized the continuity of looking at the socially accepted gender roles, where the man is responsible for the women and his masculinity is the foundation for the differences in equality and rights. Thus, it requires men to assume his traditional role in providing psychological, social, and economic protection and security to woman. Despite a trend in music that attempts to displace stereotypes regarding women, particularly as it relates to dependence on men, that trend has mostly failed to depart from the socially established roles women traditionally occupy. The difference lies only in women's ability to practice what society, the law, and the labor system have permitted. She was portrayed as working, loving, seeking divorce, breaking free from man, and does what she wants, but without having space for a new social role, such as leading or controlling anything else outside the relationship with the man. This type of song also relied on enhancing the image of women as a female with physical characteristics that are characterized by beauty, sex attraction, and someone that everyone desires. This contradicts the gender vision that attempts to neutralize biological factors to give women a feminine personality according to the factors that govern society and that are subject to adjustment.

Accordingly, gender-based roles have been almost equal to traditional roles as dictated by biology and the general social context that imposes two distinct spaces and roles for females:

1- Women are the responsibility of men and men must fulfill that responsibility

2- Women can achieve and live independently

Both spaces and roles have their respective socially established practices. The sample songs do not conceive of any new role for women, except as it pertains to their relationship with men. More specifically, the only change is seemingly that women emerge in control of the relationship. However, such a control owes its existence and understanding to female biological, rather than social, context.

Level III: Social Reality

Society has been lightly addressed within the sample songs. More specifically, there are three types of songs within the sample that seemingly adopt aspects of social reality as pertains to three matters:

1- <u>Society is designed to oppress women</u>. This is depicted through abuse, social pressure, negligence of women, acceptance of abuse, and being in favor of men as it pertains to relationship crises. Throughout the lyrics women are victimized and oppressed as society denies their rights, even pressurizing them into accepting toxic relationships with men at the expense of their freedom, independence, and psychological well-being.

2- <u>Society can settle female/male relationship disputes</u>. This is when women seek assistance from individuals, religion institutions, legal systems, and society for assistance with redress during a relationship crisis. In so doing, women are confident that men who transgress social norms will be dealt retribution when society recognizes such trespasses or men realize their respective duties towards society or God.

3- <u>Society as a neutral entity</u>. This takes shape, though implicitly, when a woman sees that social restrictions are perceived rather than preordained. Women have rights and must exercise these rights. She can also be economically, socially, and psychologically independent. The crisis is not enacted by society, but rather in the woman who must take the initiative to obtain her rights. Society guaranteed it to her. The social reality from the gender-based perspective here does not entail presenting a new social reality, as it only proves in one area the concept of gender differences between men and women as social beings, while it refers to the ability of women to take their rights and independence

within the limits of the existing natural social reality, without introducing a new reality or different social order.

Key Findings

Songs that feature feminist detonations and markers are quite popular and mainstream, which is indicated by the number of YouTube views. However, a closer examination of these songs illustrates the detonations and markers do not provide a cohesive and unified feminist discourse. Explicit feminist markers have been identified, which reveal their interrelationships in a way that was confirmed by the acceptance of the study's hypotheses, and no clear feminist intellectual orientation was express in these songs. Feminist songs are still issued by massive existence of male writers and composers. This fact affirms that men are the primary voices for feminism within popular Arab music. Moreover, the research reveals an evolution of feminist discourse within popular Arab music, which initially advocated for equality, then proclaimed their independence and equal rights, more recently defending female superiority and hegemony. This evolution is reflected in a myriad of social, cultural, and communication contexts, which provide a more effective comprehension of said discourse. Which may lead in the future to the existence of a clear and coherent independent feminist discourse. However, this discourse did not turn into an application or intellectual call for radical feminism or new gender roles for both men and women in society. Rather, it stopped at recycling the relationship between men and women into new contexts where the centers of power within the relationship change between them. The results also revealed the relationship between men and women is largely independent of the expressive presentation of the relationship with society, as if social reality comes late or responds to developments in the relationship between men and women, and it is not without the presence of many manifestations of unfairness in dealing with women's issues.

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