Feminist Narratives and Gender Representation in Media and Popular Culture

A Comparative Study Across Six Countries

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About the report

This comparative study was conducted by Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights and presents a comprehensive analysis of gender representations, feminist issues, and gender-based violence in various popular media forms in six countries: Portugal, Jordan, Tunisia, Romania, Lebanon, and Egypt.

This report is part of the **"FemRise: Changing the Narrative, Shaping the Future"** project, an initiative that focuses on building the capacities of youth workers to integrate Newspaper Theatre and Online Campaigning methodologies in their programs. The project aims to critically assess dominant narratives and discourses surrounding gender issues and feminism in popular media, in order to understand their origins and societal impact in both the short and long term. It also seeks to

empower youth workers to challenge prevailing narratives and promote alternative narratives related to gender issues and feminism in targeted youth communities.

The FemRise project aimed to gather evidence regarding the dominant narratives in media and popular culture across the six participating countries, using this research as a guiding pathway for community-based interventions. It emphasizes primary prevention, specifically through efforts to change social norms and behaviors, aiming to end tolerance for all forms of gender-based violence and promote gender equality in our communities. The project also seeks to build the capacities of youth organizations to effectively confront the public and media narratives surrounding feminism and its issues. Ultimately, it aims to change social norms and behaviors to eliminate tolerance for all forms of gender-based violence.

Partner Organizations in the Project

Organization	Country
A.R.T. Fusion	Romania
Teatro Metaphora	Portugal
MAAT For Peace, Development and Human Rights	Egypt
We Youth Organization	Tunisia
Solidarity Is Global Institute - SIGI -JO	Jordan
OFFBEAT for Youth & Women Empowerment	Lebanon

Glossary

Gender

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and expectations associated with women and men. These roles are acquired through socialisation, vary across cultures and historical periods, and are subject to change. Gender should not be conflated with biological sex, which refers to biological differences between women and men.

Dominant narratives

Dominant narratives are explanations or stories that are produced and circulated in service of the interests and ideologies of dominant social groups. They typically attain their dominance through continuous repetition, the perceived authority of the speaker—an authority often granted to those who represent socially dominant groups—and the systematic silencing or marginalization of alternative accounts

Counter Narratives

Counter-narratives are defined as the stories people tell and live to resist dominant, hegemonic, and mainstream narratives and values (Andrews, 2004). These narratives often emerge from marginalised groups and challenge prevailing meanings by offering alternative interpretations of social reality.

Symbolic Violence

Symbolic violence, a concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu, refers to subtle, everyday discursive practices through which power relations and gender hierarchies are reproduced without overt physical coercion. In media contexts, symbolic violence operates when content explicitly condemns certain actions while implicitly normalizing harmful norms and unequal gender relations.

Coercive Control

Coercive control refers to patterns of domination and regulation within intimate relationships, identified by researchers such as Dobash and Dobash (2004) as a central component of many abusive dynamics. In media narratives, coercive control is often implicitly legitimised through portrayals that normalise surveillance, jealousy, or restriction as expression of care and love. Although not always framed explicitly as gender-based violence (GBV), such representations socialize audiences - particularly youth - to accept control as a normative element in emotional relationships.

Objectification

Objectification is the phenomenon where individuals, especially women, are treated and evaluated based on their physical appearance and sexual attractiveness rather than their full identity characterized by emotions, intellect, independence, and agency. This concept is deeply rooted in social norms, interactions between individuals, and media platforms that prioritize the female body as a site of value, visibility, and control.

● Introduction

The significance of traditional and digital media in reshaping and reproducing feminist narratives that influence women's rights and issues has increased. Just as biased media coverage can undermine women's issues and negatively affect their roles in society, alternative feminist narratives that advocate for women's rights can drive progress toward gender equality, reclaim denied rights, and help reduce gender-based violence.

The increasing reliance on media has also created a vital space in which women can produce content and share their experiences in ways that mainstream media often fails to accommodate. Through these platforms, women challenge dominant narratives and offer alternative perspectives that may be negotiated or rejected. Furthermore, these spaces have the potential to foster a sense of community and solidarity among women from diverse backgrounds as they share their stories and build connections. Through this process, they can challenge societal norms and stereotypes that hinder gender equality or contribute, directly or indirectly, to gender-based violence. At the same time, the media remains a site where dominant negative narratives persist, making it a contested arena for negotiation between traditional power structures and forces pushing for social change.

Misleading narratives about feminism deny recognition of the rights of women and girls and often lead to the repression or regression of these rights. Such trends significantly weaken progress toward achieving the fifth Sustainable Development Goal. More broadly, they make the prospect of creating just, peaceful, and sustainable societies that do not exclude anyone seem out of reach. Ending gender-based violence is central to alternative feminist narratives due to its direct link to gender inequality. Traditional gender roles continue to confine women to caregiving and homemaking positions, while the lack of representation of women in media, particularly in television programming, perpetuates stereotypical perceptions of women.

It can be argued that the wider dissemination of feminist narratives has been facilitated by the rapid adoption of technology and the growing use of social media, which surpassed five billion accounts in 2023, with an additional 200 million accounts added in 2024[1]. The increased use of social media, alongside the continued influence of traditional media, has had a profound impact on shaping feminist narratives while simultaneously generating resistance to them. Despite progress and

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[1] *"Digital 2024: 5 billion social media users"*, **We Are Social** (blog post), We Are Social UK, January 31, 2024, available at
https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2024/01/digital-2024-5-billion-social-media-users/

broader recognition of women's rights, a UN Women report has raised concerns, warning that the world is entering "an era of anti-women discourse."

In this context, analyzing the prevailing narratives around gender and feminism, as well as understanding the extent of resistance from alternative narratives, is essential. This report examines these narratives across media in six countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Portugal, Romania and Tunisia. Media in these six contexts plays a significant role in shaping societal understanding of gender and the roles associated with it. Although women frequently appear in media content, they are often portrayed in stereotypical ways that marginalise their voices and limit their roles. This underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to develop and promote counter-narratives capable of confronting harmful discourses that undermine women's rights.

This comparative study aims to map representations of gender and feminist narratives in selected media content across the six countries, focusing on how traditional and digital media platforms shape public discourse on women's issues and gender more broadly.

This work is part of a broader effort to understand dominant cultural discourses, explore positive intervention opportunities to enhance gender equality, and challenge narratives that reproduce stereotypes or justify violence and discrimination against women, thereby reinforcing misleading narratives. Often, confusion persists between the concept of sex, which is biological and innate, and the concept of gender roles, which are socially constructed and shaped over time rather than determined at birth.

● Methodology

This study is part of **FemRise: Changing the Narrative, Shaping the Future**, a project coordinated by A.R.T. Fusion Association in Romania in partnership with Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights in Egypt, Teatro Metaphora in Portugal, the Jordanian Women's Solidarity Association - SIGI, We Youth Organization in Tunisia, and OFFBEAT for Youth & Women Empowerment in Lebanon, with funding from the European Commission. The project focuses on addressing prevailing feminist narratives in both traditional and digital media platforms. Consequently, this study is based on a methodology that incorporates quantitative data collected from country reports by the participating organizations, alongside qualitative data extracted from the same reports, which were developed using a regional monitoring framework prior to their preparation. Additionally, it draws upon relevant literature and other open data that align with the study's purpose.

The research aims to prepare a regional comparative study that identifies dominant narratives around feminism, gender and stereotypes, as well as alternative narratives revealed by qualitative data from the six countries included in the report. It seeks to highlight representation gaps in various media outlets and examine how youth interact with these narratives. The study also aims to uncover whether feminist and gender-related narratives contribute to the stereotyping of women or the neglect of their issues, how these issues are portrayed and covered in the media, and the extent to which these negative narratives are resisted through alternative narratives. This involves analyzing media content, including traditional and digital platforms, from a gender perspective and relies on both quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted over a specific period, focusing solely on the quantitative and qualitative data from the aforementioned countries.

The study adopted a logical process to determine the research sample for related materials by first selecting six media platforms in each of the six countries and secondly selecting samples produced by those media platforms for analysis and examination. Each report relied on a survey of the selected media platforms according to their spread, influence, frequency of gender-related content, and youth interaction with them, which made them essential for any analysis focusing on feminism and gender. The media materials survey resulted in the selection of 518 media samples distributed across the six countries included in this study.

Data analysis process

The data analysis process was conducted in three main phases to examine the presence and representation of feminist and gender-related narratives in mainstream popular culture across the six countries.

- ### Phase One: Identification of Media Platforms

In the first phase, a set of key media platforms was identified in each country for systematic monitoring. The country reports focused on six main media platforms, which were selected based on their reach, visibility and influence within each national context. They include television (series, films, talk shows), print media (newspapers and news reports), commercials, songs, podcasts and trends on social media platforms (TikTok, Instagram, X, Facebook).

The selection was guided by the widespread use of these platforms, their level of influence, as reflected in viewership and followership rates. Youth engagement with these platforms was also a key consideration in the analysis.

- ### Phase Two: Sample Selection

The second phase involved monitoring the identified platforms over a defined period of time and selecting media samples to be analysed. Media platforms were monitored between March and September 2025 and a minimum number of samples was established for each platform in each country.

In total, 518 media samples were collected and analysed across the six participating countries, ranging from 60 samples in Jordan to 130 in Romania. The samples included television episodes, articles, advertisements, trending digital posts, and songs and the collected material formed the basis for the preparation of individual country reports.

- ● **Phase Three: Comparative Data Analysis**

The final phase involved the comparative analysis of the country reports. This phase focused on identifying recurring feminist and gender-related narratives, assessing their prevalence as dominant or alternative narratives, and examining their impact. Particular attention was given to points of convergence and divergence between countries, as well as to the extent of engagement by specific groups, especially youth, with these narratives.

Methodological Disclaimers

1. The analysis revealed variation in the number of media samples across the six country reports. In some instances, insufficient quantitative categorization within the country reports made it more difficult to conduct fully comparable qualitative analyses across countries.

2. The Portuguese and Jordanian datasets diverge slightly from the common comparative framework. While the study aimed to analyse *media content that was most popular during the monitoring period*, both country teams prioritised **media samples explicitly engaging with feminist, gender-equality, and gender-based violence themes**.

   As a result, some media items were selected for **thematic relevance rather than contemporaneity or popularity**. This focus may contribute to the **higher visibility of supportive feminist narratives** observed in Portugal and Jordan compared to other countries.

   These methodological differences should be considered when interpreting cross-country comparisons, particularly regarding the relative balance between dominant and counter-gender narratives.

Main Findings

The main findings of this study are based on common patterns among the six countries, highlighting similarities in feminist narratives and gender representation in both traditional and digital media.

- **Resistance to positive feminist narratives**

The analysis of media content across the six country reports indicates that resistance to positive feminist narratives remains a recurring pattern, although its forms and intensity vary across contexts. Media—particularly television drama and digital platforms—often function as sites where feminist narratives are negotiated, contested, or resisted.

In Jordan, television series like "AlRawabi School for Girls," "Nof," "Sabr Al-Adhub," "Al-Hara," and "Nimer Ibn Adwan" present a mix of progressive and conservative portrayals of women, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between tradition and social change. In Portugal, the analyzed data suggest the presence of counter-reactions to feminist narratives, particularly among youth, often expressed through skepticism and online cultural practices that reflect broader debates around masculinity and gender roles.

In Tunisia, resistance to feminist discourse appears less structured but intermittently visible within the analyzed media, including social pressure on women who choose non-traditional life paths, negative reactions to artists or thinkers producing controversial work, and critical commentary on social media that reinforces dominant narratives about feminism. In Romania, the analysis points to forms of cultural resistance and political polarization surrounding feminist issues. In Lebanon, the data reveal instances of gender-based targeting of women in public and political life, reflecting broader patterns of political and media pressure on women's participation.

Similarly, in Egypt, the analyzed media content highlights the persistence of anti-feminist narratives, particularly those circulated by religious or public figures with a significant digital reach. These narratives often seek to delegitimize feminist narratives through ridicule or by framing them as threats to religious or national identity. In some cases, responsibility for violence against women is shifted onto women themselves, including by linking women's clothing to harassment. Such framing diverts attention away from the structural causes of gender-based violence.

- **Violence as an atypical practice and isolated incidents**

Across the six country reports, the analysis indicates that media representations frequently frame violence against women as isolated and exceptional incidents rather than as a systemic social problem rooted in structural inequalities. Coverage often focuses on individual cases without addressing the broader social, cultural, and institutional factors that enable such violence.

Jordan represents a partial exception, as repeated cases of femicide have elevated violence against women to a public issue, triggering waves of popular and feminist outrage and forcing sustained media attention, even if structural causes are not always fully addressed. In the other countries, however, available data suggest that violence is more commonly portrayed as an incidental practice or a series of unrelated individual occurrences.

In Romania, media coverage within the sample frequently emphasizes individual incidents, arrests, and legal proceedings rather than situating violence within a broader societal context. Romania shows partial similarities to the Jordanian context, particularly in moments when repeated or severe cases of violence against women generate public and feminist outrage and elevate the issue temporarily within media discourse. However, unlike Jordan, Romanian media attention tends to remain episodic, often returning to individualised and procedural framing rather than sustained structural analysis.

In Portugal, the analyzed news content tends to frame violence primarily as an individual criminal act,[2] while cultural materials such as songs and podcasts sometimes connect gender-based violence to inequality.

In Tunisia, despite the presence of online platforms that document daily cases of violence against women, making it difficult to dismiss the phenomenon as exceptional, public and media discussions of the root causes of such violence remain limited or nearly absent within the analyzed sample.

In Egypt, the analysis reveals discursive patterns that sometimes justify violence by placing responsibility on women, even if such narratives are not always explicit or dominant.

- **Symbolic violence related to gender**

The results indicate that even in countries where gender-based violence was not prominently represented in the analyzed media materials, forms of symbolic violence were nonetheless prevalent. With the exception of Portugal and Lebanon, where symbolic violence appeared less frequently in the analyzed sample, the data suggest

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[2] Monitoring Gender Representation in Media, Page 11, https://shorturl.at/cMOIA

a recurring presence of symbolic violence across media and popular culture in the remaining countries.

In Jordan, symbolic violence accounted for approximately 60% of the total cases identified in dramatic works, including practices such as coercive control and social stigmatization. Similarly, symbolic violence was observed in Tunisia, particularly in dramatic productions such as the series "El Nuba."[3] In Romania, although only a small percentage of texts explicitly referenced gender-based violence (approximately 2%), symbolic forms of gender-based harm were more widespread.

These patterns reflect what Bourdieu (2001) termed "symbolic violence," which refers to subtle everyday discursive practices that reproduce gender hierarchies without explicitly indicating physical coercion. Media representations across news, entertainment, and social platforms may openly condemn certain actions while simultaneously normalizing harmful gender norms through implicit messaging.

An illustrative example of symbolic violence in Romania emerged in political discourse following the elections, when a public statement by George Simion, leader of far-right party Alliance for the Union of Romanians, "I am a fighter, not a woman or a traitor," circulated widely in the media. The reproduction of this statement by major outlets as part of the broader "electoral drama," without critical interrogation of its gendered implications, contributed to the normalization of gendered insult within political debate.

In Tunisia, symbolic violence was also embedded in social norms and popular culture, as illustrated in the series "El Nuba." In the series, the character Wasila is repeatedly referred to using the phrase "Wasila Al-Awra," an Arabic expression that labels her as a "source of shame" to her family and community. This form of labeling strips the character of her individuality and humanity, reducing her identity to moral dishonor. By framing the character in this way, the narrative normalizes social exclusion and facilitates the justification of potential future violence against her, presenting such violence as socially or morally acceptable rather than as abuse.

In Egypt, symbolic violence appeared in cultural products such as song lyrics, which often carry layered messages about love and power. While some songs present romantic narratives, others reinforce patterns of masculine dominance and control, contributing to symbolic forms of gender-based harm. This type of symbolic violence is particularly concerning, as it may serve as a precursor to the normalization and escalation of physical violence against women.

- **Structural barriers to feminist media production**

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[3] Regional report to monitor gender representation in Tunisian media, p. 3, at the following link:

Across the six country reports, insufficient and inconsistent funding emerged as a key structural barrier limiting the sustainability and impact of feminist media initiatives. While alternative and counter-narratives are present, they are often confined to short-term projects, digital campaigns, or individual efforts rather than sustained media production.

In **Jordan**, limited funding for investigative journalism and feminist media restricts the capacity for long-term, in-depth reporting on gender inequality and gender-based violence. In **Portugal**, the analysis highlights the fragility of initiatives amplifying feminist voices due to the absence of stable financial support. In Romania, restrictions on funding for feminist initiatives intersect with a broader weakening of civil society capacity, limiting the ability of such actors to shape alternative narratives or advocate for systematic media coverage of issues such as online gender-based violence. In Egypt, the analysis points to a notable absence of sustained investment in independent feminist media content, resulting in insufficient spaces or unstable funding for the production of feminist or progressive media, particularly within mainstream channels. Consequently, many feminist initiatives remain confined to short-term digital campaigns or individual projects, restricting the development of cumulative alternative narratives capable of challenging entrenched stereotypes.

This funding gap contributes to a media environment in which dominant narratives remain largely unchallenged and young audiences receive limited guidance for interpreting or resisting digital forms of gender-based violence.

I. Country Trends and Quantitative Analysis of Feminist Narratives

This section of the study presents the main trends and quantitative analysis of the media samples surveyed across the six countries included in the report. A total of 518 media samples were analyzed, distributed across Portugal, Jordan, Tunisia, Romania, Lebanon, and Egypt. The table below illustrates the distribution of media samples representing gender in these countries.

Table 1: Distribution of Samples by Country

Distribution of Samples by Country
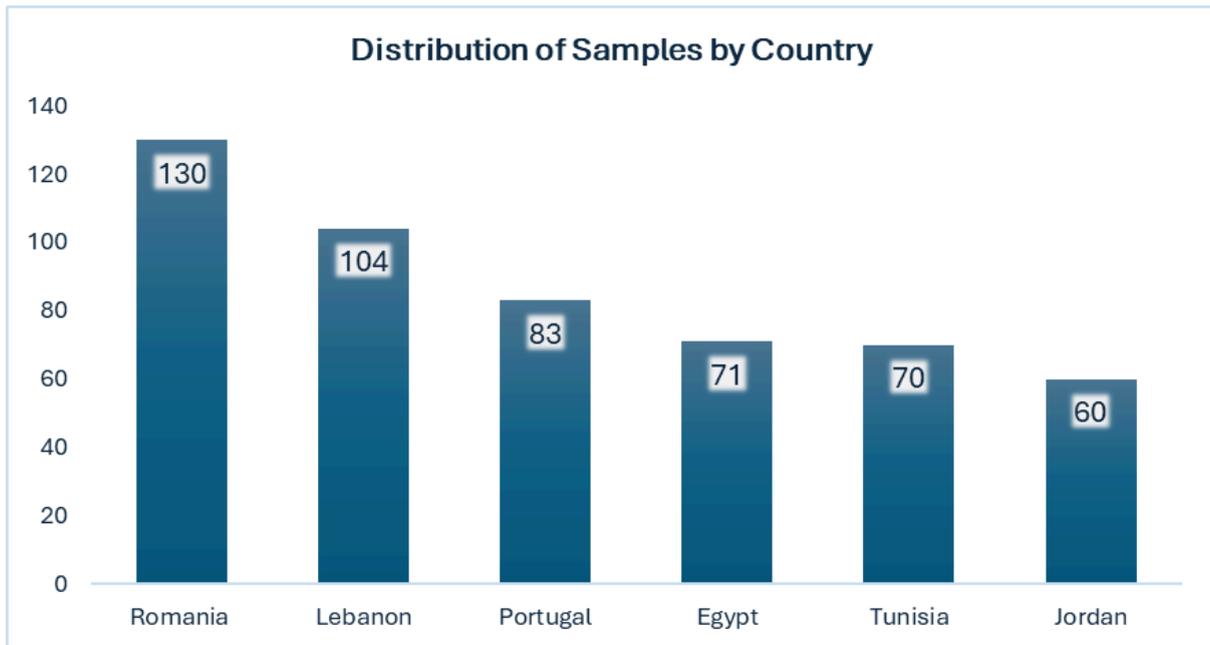
In **Egypt**, content analysis of 71 media samples distributed across six media platforms identified a total of 141 gender-related messages, reflecting a clear diversity in the discourses surrounding women and gender in the Egyptian media landscape. Because individual media items often contained more than one gender-related message, the Egyptian analysis distinguishes between media samples (n = 71) and coded messages (n = 141). Percentages in this section refer to coded messages unless otherwise specified.

Messages reinforcing traditional gender roles were the most prevalent, with 31 instances, accounting for 44% of the coded messages in the analyzed media content. This finding indicates the continued portrayal of women and men within inherited stereotypical roles, reinforcing gender segregation and limiting representations of diversity and empowerment.

Supportive messages promoting feminist ideas and gender equality ranked second, with 28 instances (39%), suggesting the presence of visible voices advocating equality, despite remaining less prominent than traditional messages. References to gender-based violence followed, appearing in 21 messages (30%). These messages largely aimed to raise awareness and caution against the consequences of gender-based violence - particularly its impact on children and families - without evidence of normalization or justification of violence.

Themes related to toxic masculinity and patriarchal authority were identified in 19 instances (27%), reflecting the ongoing normalization of masculine dominance within certain discourses. Gender stereotypes appeared in 16 messages (23%), confirming

the media's continuous reproduction of simplified and often inaccurate portrayals of women and men. Messages explicitly addressing women's empowerment and independence were less frequent, occurring in only 11 cases (15%), indicating limited media attention to women as autonomous actors capable of leadership and decision-making.

Critical or mocking messages directed at feminist ideas were recorded in 10 instances (14%), reflecting the presence of resistant or dismissive narratives toward feminism. Finally, victim-blaming discourses - those holding women responsible for the violence they experience or justifying the aggression against them - appeared in 5 cases (7%). Although this percentage is small, it indicates a dangerous discourse that requires attention and confrontation. The table below illustrates the distribution of these messages.

Table 2: Distribution of supportive and Negative narratives in Egypt

Gender Messages	Number of messages	Percentages of coded messages	Narrative Direction
Supportive feminist ideas	28	39%	Supporting narratives
Empowerment and independence of women	11	15%	
Traditional gender roles	31	44%	Negative narratives
Toxic masculinity	19	13.5 %	
Gender stereotypes	16	11.3%	
Criticism of feminist ideas	10	14%	
Victim blaming	5	7%	
Gender-based violence	21	30%%	Neutral

In **Jordan**, quantitative analysis of the media samples indicates variation across platforms in the representation of gender-based violence and feminist themes, with differing narrative emphases observed in drama and films, news articles, songs, digital trends, advertisements, and talk shows.

Overall, empowerment- and feminist-oriented narratives were more prevalent in analysed news articles, songs, advertisements, and talk shows, while drama and films more frequently addressed gender-based violence through narratives of

emotional victimhood. Digital trends reflected a mixed pattern, combining activist discourse with continued engagement with gender-based violence. The table below presents the detailed percentage distribution of media samples by platform and narrative focus.

Table 3: Distribution of dominant narratives in Jordan

Platform	% of total sample	Focusing on empowerment/ feminist themes	Dominant Narrative Type
Drama/films	8.3%	40%	Emotional victimhood and moral reconciliation
News articles	25%	73.3%	Institutional framing of reform and legal accountability
Songs	25%	86.7%	Idealized femininity and emotional endurance
Digital Trends	25%	46.7%	Activist and resistance-oriented discourse
Advertisements	10%	80%	Consumerized gender roles and moralization of beauty
Talk Shows	6.7%	75%	Personal testimonies and domestic framing of gender issues

Youth interaction with these narratives varied across the sample. The data show that supportive responses to feminist narratives accounted for 40% of the analyzed content, appearing primarily through hashtags, especially following cases of femicide, positive engagement with health-related campaigns, and praise for the series "AlRawabi School for Girls," which aired on Netflix.

Conversely, sarcastic responses to pro-feminist narratives made up 25% of the total samples. These responses were evident in memes such as "dry molokhia," attacks on women participating in political life, and jokes related to commercials, including slogans such as "Osama's Rice: We promise you won't get divorced." Such content attempts to link a woman's value to marriage and domestic roles, reinforcing traditional expectations such as cooking and household responsibilities.

Critical and neutral responses accounted for the remaining 35% of the overall sample. These were reflected in online debates surrounding the series "Nof," as well as in TikTok songs that expressed diverse and sometimes conflicting viewpoints,

ranging from support for alternative feminist narratives to the reinforcement of traditional values. This division was particularly evident in the TV series "Nof," where some YouTube users praised the heroine's boldness, while others criticized her for challenging Bedouin and tribal traditions.

In **Lebanon**, analysis of 104 media samples shows a varied distribution of narratives related to feminism and gender. Narratives supportive of feminism accounted for 38.8% of the sample and primarily included themes of women's empowerment and calls for independence, which appeared more frequently on digital platforms. Negative narratives represented 14.5% of the sample and included content that commodified women, confined them to traditional domestic roles, or emphasised physical appearance and emotionality. An example of this framing was observed in the Beirut Beer advertisement "Pasta is not Macaroni," as well as in broader portrayals of women as overly emotional beings across multiple media platforms.

Neutral narratives constituted the largest share of the sample, with 46.7% of media content analysed lacking a clear feminist or anti-feminist stance, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 4: Distribution of supportive and negative narratives in Lebanon

Category	Total Items	Feminist-Supporting (No.)	Feminist-Supporting (%)	Harmful Narratives (No.)	Harmful Narratives (%)
TV Series / Movies	10	4	40%	5	50%
Newspaper Articles / News Items	2	1	50%	0	0%
Popular Trends	46	4	9%	9	20%
Commercial Advertisements	9	1	11%	0	0%
Songs	5	2	40%	0	0%
Talk Shows	6	5	83%	1	17%

In **Portugal**, analysis of 83 media samples reveals a strong presence of narratives supportive of feminism. When considering dominant (single) coding, narratives supportive of feminism accounted for 40% of the sample, including 22% that were explicitly supportive and 18% that promoted women's empowerment and

independence. In contrast, anti-feminist narratives appeared in 60% of items under dominant coding, reflected in the continued presence of gender-based violence, traditional gender roles, toxic masculinity, or gender stereotypes. The table below illustrates the distribution of supportive and negative narratives regarding feminism in Portuguese media.

Due to the use of multiple coding, individual media items in the Portuguese sample may reflect more than one narrative orientation; percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Table 5: Distribution of supportive and negative narratives in Portugal

Narrative Orientation	Narrative Type	No. of Items	% of Total Media Sample
Narratives SUPPORTING feminism	Explicit feminist or gender-equality framing	65	77.4%
	Female empowerment / autonomy	36	42.9%
	Survivor-centred or thematic GBV framing	30	35.7%
	Body-positive / counter-stereotypical portrayals	1	1.2%
	Subtotal: Pro-feminist narratives	75	89.3%
Narratives AGAINST feminism	Feminist ideas mocked, delegitimized, or framed as foreign	1	1.2%

	Traditional gender roles valorized	9	10.7%
	Gender stereotypes (appearance, dependence, emotionality)	22	26.2%
	Toxic masculinity / dominance narratives	7	8.3%
	Victim Blaming (explicit or implicit)	1	1.2%
	Romanticization of control (jealousy, surveillance)	6	7.1%
	Subtotal: Anti-feminist narratives	39	46.4%
Neutral / ambiguous	Gender present but no clear feminist orientation	4	4.8%

In **Romania**, analysis of 130 samples from selected media outlets shows that narratives supportive of feminism constitute 19% of the total sample. These included content framed explicitly within feminist discourse, as well as narratives promoting gender equality through women's empowerment and independence, or addressing gender-related issues such as body positivity, survivor-centred perspectives, and gender-based violence.

In contrast, negative narratives towards feminism constituted 75% of the sample, representing a substantial majority. These narratives ranged from mocking or delegitimising feminist ideas to reinforcing traditional gender roles and stereotypes

related to appearance, subjugation and emotionality. They also included representations of toxic masculinity and dominance, as well as explicit or implicit victim-blaming narratives that romanticise control through jealousy and surveillance.

The remaining 6% of the media content was classified as neutral, addressing gender-related issues without a clear feminist or anti-feminist framing, as illustrated in the table below.

Table 6: Distribution of supportive and negative narratives in Romania

Narrative Orientation	Narrative Type	No. of Items	% of Total Media Sample
Narratives Supporting Feminism	Explicit feminist or gender-equality framing	7	5%
	Female empowerment/autonomy	12	9%
	Survivor-centred or thematic GBV framing	1	0.8%
	Body-positive / counter-stereotypical portrayals	5	3.8%
Subtotal: Pro-Feminist Narratives		25	19%
Narratives Against Feminism	Feminist ideas mocked, delegitimized, or framed as foreign	18	13%
	Traditional gender roles were valorized	78	60%
	Gender stereotypes (appearance, dependence, emotionality)	92	70%
	Toxic masculinity/dominance narratives	30	23%

	Victim Blaming (explicit or implicit)	17	13%
	Romanticization of control (jealousy, surveillance)	22	16%
Subtotal: Anti-Feminist Narratives		97	75%
Neutral / Ambiguous	Gender present, but no clear feminist orientation	8	6%

In **Tunisia**, the analysis does not point to a single dominant trend in media narratives on gender and feminism but instead reveals a polarised and uneven discursive landscape. Although Tunisia is frequently presented in official discourse as a regional leader in women's rights, within the limits of the sampled material, reform-oriented or transformative gender discourse was largely absent in 73% of the content, giving prominence to what may be described as an "achievement narrative." This narrative emphasizes legal milestones, such as the Personal Status Code, while offering limited engagement with current social and economic inequalities.

Differences between media types are notable. A substantial share of official media content (68%) tends to reinforce the achievement narrative, whereas independent media (74%) more frequently adopt a "crisis narrative," highlighting gaps between legal frameworks and lived realities. This latter framing is reflected in the recurrence of toxic masculinity narratives (45%), beauty standards and body policing (44%) and internalised misogyny (35%), alongside critique of state and institutional failures in 28% of the sample. Although youth-led feminist counter-narratives (31%) and representations of shared gender responsibility (18%) are present, they remain less prominent within the overall media environment.

Overall, the findings suggest that media discourse in Tunisia oscillates between symbolic recognition of women's rights and critical accounts of persistent inequalities. Rather than reflecting a coherent reformist trajectory, the sampled content points to a fragmented debate, shaped by the coexistence of celebratory and critical frames, and constrained by the limited scope of the analyzed material.

II.   Dominant Narratives in the Media

The data collected from national reports reveal common narratives across the six countries included in the study, including victim-blaming and the attribution of responsibility for violence to women, the framing of feminism as a threat to traditional values and the romanticization of control as a means for normalizing coercive behaviour.

1. Gender-Based Violence Narratives

Across the six countries, media coverage of gender-based violence reflects several recurring narratives, including incidental framing that isolates violence from its structural causes, awareness-oriented narratives that warn against violence without offering accountability, and, more rarely, empowerment-focused counter-narratives.

In Jordan, gender-based violence represented 20% of the analyzed material, with 12 of the 60 samples addressing this issue, reflecting increased media attention to gender-based violence across various outlets and news programs. In Portugal, gender-based violence accounted for 31% of the total 83 media samples examined, clearly and explicitly mentioned, with most media supporting feminist ideas by showcasing independent, capable, and successful women. In Tunisia, gender-based violence was not presented as a singular phenomenon but in multiple forms. The analysis indicates that 65% of media discourse related to women focuses on diagnosing problems without offering practical solutions, generating frustration, especially among youth seeking concrete answers.

In Romania, the percentage of samples explicitly mentioning incidents of gender-based violence or prevention measures did not exceed 2%, while only 1% of the materials referenced penalties, judicial rulings, or protective measures. Moreover, over 80% of these samples relied on "incidental framing" (focusing on the incident as an isolated event), with women primarily depicted as victims rather than as voices with experience or authority. In TikTok and Instagram samples, gender stereotypes and coercive dynamics dominated, while models of feminist activism appeared minimally. In Lebanon, despite the presence of gender-based violence in media materials, digital platforms and NGOs attempted to dismantle the roots of this type of violence. In Egypt, messages related to gender-based violence constituted 30% of the 71 samples analyzed, characterized by a warning and awareness tone. Across countries, discussions of the root causes of gender-based violence remain weak and rare.

2. Victim-Blaming Narrative

According to the aggregated data from the countries included in the report, except for Lebanon, where this pattern did not emerge, victim-blaming narratives tend to dominate the selected media materials. This narrative often attributes responsibility for assault away from perpetrators and onto victims, using varying justifications to explain or legitimise this blame, rather than examining the actions of the perpetrators or the structural conditions that enable such violence. This process occurs within a broader logic of scapegoating, as described by several scholars. Similar patterns can also be observed in other contexts outside the countries covered by the report,[4] where some women internalise these narratives and blame themselves for the violence they experience. This self-blame redirects responsibility away from the perpetrators and toward women's behaviour, appearance, or personal choices.[5] The absence of strong alternative narratives that challenge harmful or misleading representations of feminism may contribute to the persistence of such internalised blame among women, including within the countries examined in this study.

In Jordan, despite the considerable sympathy surrounding the murder of university student Iman Al-Rasheed at Al-Ahliyya Amman University in northern Jordan, some media narratives nevertheless attempted to place blame on the victim. In Tunisia, symbolic violence appeared in some media and social statements within the analyzed sample, which acted to exonerate a perpetrator and criminalise the victim.

In Portugal, some journalistic articles were found to justify the aggressor's behaviour by referring to factors such as alcohol consumption, trauma or stress, ultimately shifting responsibility onto the victim by questioning her behaviour or way of dressing. Such framing in the press contributes to the reproduction of the victim-blaming narrative. A similar pattern was observed in Romania, where covert forms of victim-blaming appeared in 13% of the analyzed media sample. In these cases, coverage tended to emphasize the victim's circumstances rather than holding perpetrators accountable. The diagram below illustrates the prevalence of victim-blaming narratives across the countries included in the report.

Table 7: Victim-blaming narratives in the countries covered by the study.

Country	Percentages

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[4] Rape Crisis Ireland, *Gender Stereotypes and CEDAW: Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, February 2025, p. 4, https://www.rapecrisisireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/RCI_UN-CEDAW_Gender-Stereotypes_February-2025-1.pdf

[5] *Ibid*

Jordan	30%
Romania	13%
Egypt	7%
Lebanon	0%
Portugal	0%
Tunisia	0%

Note: A zero value does not indicate the absence of harmful framing, but rather the absence of explicitly coded victim-blaming narratives within the analyzed sample.

In Egypt, **the victim-blaming discourse** appeared in a limited number of messages that blame women for the violence they experience, accounting for 7% of the total messages analyzed. These messages often took the form of implicit justifications for the assault, such as referencing women's behavior, clothing, or perceived deviation from social norms, thus reinforcing the logic of victim-blaming. Despite the relative scarcity of these messages, their danger lies in legitimizing violence and shifting responsibility away from the perpetrators, which is a concerning indicator of the persistence of certain cultural structures that hinder the achievement of justice. It is noted that in both European and Arab contexts, this narrative is dominant, posing a serious risk of justifying any subsequent violence directed at women.

3. Romanticization as a Tool for Control and Normalization of Coercion

Among the recurring and dominant narratives identified, romanticization emerged as a mechanism for reinforcing dominance and normalizing coercive behavior. This narrative was not prominently observed in the analyzed samples from Portugal.

In Jordan, romantic songs functioned as cultural tools that idealized femininity while implicitly normalizing control and possessiveness. The romanticization of jealousy and control was evident in the songs and digital trends identified in the Romanian sample, where this narrative accounted for 12% of the total media content analyzed. Many TikTok clips depicted partners checking each other's phones or restricting social interactions, framing surveillance and limitation as expressions of love and care. Similarly, song lyrics frequently portrayed love as possession or dominance

rather than mutual respect. These narratives implicitly legitimize "coercive control," a form of abuse identified by Dobash and Dobash (2004) as foundational to many abusive relationships. Although such depictions are not explicitly framed as gender-based violence, they normalize acceptance of surveillance and control among young audiences as ordinary elements of intimate relationships. Research indicates that coercive control often precedes more severe forms of physical or sexual violence, making its normalization in entertainment content a significant concern for prevention efforts.

In Lebanon, romantic narratives frequently intersected with gendered expectations of emotionality, where women were portrayed as inherently more emotional and valued primarily for beauty, romance, or caregiving. Within this framing, emotional expression and dependence were implicitly linked to acceptability and desirability, while challenges to patriarchal authority were met with criticism (Seale, 2002). In contrast, the data from Portugal did not show this narrative; instead, several television series attempted to present alternative narratives in favor of emerging feminist ideas. In Egypt, elements of this narrative appeared in a limited number of songs (18%), where female attractiveness was associated with submission or weakness, while masculinity was linked to control and power, reflecting a romanticized framing of unequal gender relations.

4. Feminism as a Threat to Traditional Values

Among the recurring narratives identified in the analyzed media content, feminism is represented as a threat to traditional values in several of the countries covered by the report. With the exception of Tunisia and Lebanon, where this narrative did not emerge within the analyzed sample, it was prominent in the remaining countries. In Jordan, women are portrayed as permitted to resist injustice only within the confines of traditional family values, without transgressing patriarchal authority or openly challenging established social norms, particularly within dramatic works.

In Portugal, feminism is portrayed as a threat to tradition or masculinity in certain conservative or reactionary narratives, particularly on social media and in advertisements (such as sexist beer ads or anti-abortion campaigns). For example, in March 2025, three out of five episodes of a popular late-night talk show included remarks suggesting that feminist demands had "gone too far," framing them as a risk to "harmony between men and women."

In Romania, the collected data revealed a dominant narrative positioning feminism and women's rights as undermining socially valued traditions. This framing appeared implicitly in political discourse, where femininity was associated with weakness or disloyalty in contrast to ideals of strength, patriotism, and authority traditionally coded

as masculine. A widely circulated statement by politician George Simion—"I am a fighter, not a woman, nor a traitor"—illustrates this framing by positioning femininity, and by extension feminist claims to equality, as incompatible with strength and national loyalty. Within this logic, demands for gender equality are implicitly constructed as threats to the nation and its traditional values. Media outlets reproduced and circulated this statement as part of an "electoral display," largely without critical interrogation, thereby reinforcing the association between feminism, femininity, and political illegitimacy.

In Egypt, this narrative appeared in 14% of the analyzed samples, where feminism was framed as a threat to the traditional social order. Such discourse reflects not only resistance to gender equality but also contributes to the circulation of distorted representations of feminism, portraying it as incompatible with cultural, religious, or national values.

5. Women's Value as Appearance-Based

One of the prevailing narratives identified in the aggregated data from the six countries is the framing of a woman's value as primarily derived from her external appearance.

In Jordan, 80% of the analyzed advertisement-related samples reproduced traditional stereotypes linking women to beauty, domesticity, or service roles. For example, the Osama Rice advertisement includes the slogan *"We promise you won't get divorced!,"* implicitly tying women's value to obedience, appearance, and conformity to marital expectations. In Romania, media content such as talk shows frequently evaluated female figures primarily in terms of physical attractiveness, marginalizing women's intellectual, political, or professional contributions. This emphasis reinforces what Goffman (1979) described as "gender display," a mode of public representation that confines femininity within aesthetic and sexualized boundaries. Such objectification indirectly undermines feminist demands for equality by positioning women as decorative figures rather than as sources of authority or influence.

In Egypt, this narrative appeared in films, television series, and advertisements, accounting for 19% of the analyzed samples. Women were frequently portrayed through repetitive and unchallenged stereotypes, such as being overly focused on their appearance or defined primarily through their relationship to men. These representations are presented as self-evident social realities, contributing to their normalization and entrenchment in public consciousness.

Across contexts, this appearance-based valuation of women weakens recognition of their professional, intellectual, and social contributions, reinforcing gender hierarchies and limiting the space for alternative narratives centered on women's agency and authority.

6. Mockery of Feminist Discourse

Narratives based on mockery, sarcasm, and trivialization of feminist ideas emerged as a recurring pattern in some of the countries included in the report, functioning as a strategy to delegitimize feminist discourse by presenting it as exaggerated, foreign, or socially disruptive. This narrative was observed across all countries analyzed, particularly within youth-oriented and digital media.

In Portugal, mockery of feminist discourse was particularly visible through meme culture on digital platforms such as $\mathbb{X}$ and TikTok. Memes and sarcastic videos frequently portrayed feminist concepts such as "toxic masculinity" and "patriarchy" as exaggerated, outdated, or disconnected from everyday realities. Under the guise of humor or "common sense," such content mocks feminist terminology and reframes feminism as a niche or overly ideological position, thereby trivializing gender inequality and undermining the legitimacy of feminist claims.

In Jordan, dramatic works such as *Al-Rawabi School for Girls* became targets of mockery among youth audiences, with the series frequently described as "Western propaganda" or as a distortion of Jordanian values. These reactions framed feminist themes as externally imposed and culturally incompatible, weakening their credibility through ridicule rather than direct opposition.

In Lebanon, mockery appeared in commercial content, such as the Beirut Beer advertisement, which used humor to question women's capabilities and confine them to domestic or service-oriented roles. This form of ironic framing reinforces traditional gender hierarchies while masking discriminatory messages as harmless entertainment.

In Egypt, mockery-based critiques of feminist discourse were most prevalent in digital content, accounting for approximately 40% of the messages classified within this narrative. Such content relied heavily on sarcasm, exaggeration, and simplification to circulate conservative or anti-feminist views, particularly on social media platforms. Advertisements followed at 30%, continuing to reproduce stereotypes or negative portrayals of women through humor. Dramatic works contributed 20%, while talk shows accounted for 10%, indicating relatively greater caution in more formal broadcast formats. Overall, mockery and humor functioned as

key mechanisms through which feminist discourse was challenged, diluted, or dismissed, especially within youth-oriented digital spaces.

7. Feminism as a threat to religion and moral order

Among the dominant narratives identified in the aggregated data are conservative religious narratives that frame feminism as incompatible with religious beliefs and prevailing moral values. With the exception of Jordan and Romania, where this narrative did not emerge prominently in the analyzed sample, such narratives appeared across four of the countries covered by the report.

In Portugal, feminism is often portrayed as "foreign" or externally imposed, disconnected from Portugal's Catholic heritage, or as a threat to the traditional family structure. Discussions frequently invoke fears of the "collapse of traditional roles" and social cohesion.

In Tunisia, the analyzed data indicate that feminism is sometimes portrayed as a rebellion against religious values, positioning feminist demands as a challenge to moral order rather than as claims for rights or justice. This framing draws on religious norms to delegitimize feminist discourse, even when not articulated through formal religious authority.

In Lebanon, the data suggest an overlap between conservative religious values and gender representations, where women's roles are frequently framed through moral expectations linked to religion. In this context, religious discourse intersects with class and cultural norms to reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting the space for feminist interpretations of women's agency.

In Egypt, religiously motivated anti-feminist narratives were particularly prominent, with feminist discourse repeatedly framed as a threat to religious and national identity. These narratives were actively circulated by influencers and public figures, including religious preachers with large social media followings, who frequently undermined feminism through moral condemnation and mockery, reinforcing its portrayal as incompatible with religious values and even national identity.

III.   Alternative Feminist Narratives

Alternative narratives produced in the media play a crucial role in confronting distorted representations of feminism and gender. These alternative narratives challenge dominant patriarchal frames by offering counter-representations of women's roles, agency, and value. The aggregated data from the national reports

indicate that such narratives emerge unevenly across contexts but contribute to balancing prevailing discourses where they appear.

1. Resistance to Patriarchal Authority

One of the key alternative narratives identified across several countries involves challenging patriarchal authority and traditional gender hierarchies. While feminist narratives questioning patriarchal structures were present in Romania, Lebanon, and Egypt, their visibility within the analyzed sample was limited, and some media content continued to reproduce patriarchal norms, thereby constraining the transformative potential of these narratives.

In Jordan, alternative narratives directly challenge patriarchal authority by opposing representations that confine women to traditional roles, particularly in dramatic works.

In Portugal, challenges to patriarchal systems were more clearly articulated through television series, podcasts, and locally produced music, all of which shared a focus on questioning gender norms and power relations. Series such as *3 Mulheres*, *Sisi*, and *A Generala* also depict women actively interrogating patriarchal structures across different historical and cultural contexts, emphasizing resistance, autonomy, and collective agency. Podcasts similarly function as spaces for sustained critique of patriarchal constraints.

In Tunisia, this counter-narrative also recurred in dramatic works, notably in the series *Ruqoj,* where patriarchal authority is depicted as a social construct open to challenge. A scene in which the character Shams sarcastically responds to her father's attempt to impose marriage by saying "You marry him!" explicitly rejects patriarchal control, reframing obedience as neither natural nor inevitable.

2. Women as Breakers of Social Taboos

Another prominent alternative narrative presents women as active challengers of social taboos and restrictive norms. This narrative emerged most clearly in Jordan, particularly in series such as *Al-Rawabi School for Girls* and *Al-Hara*, where female characters openly contest societal expectations. This framing was reinforced through digital activism, including hashtags following the murder of Iman Al-Rasheed, which called for accountability and addressed the structural roots of violence against women.

In Tunisia, similar challenges to social constraints were identified in music and digital trends, where stigmatized behaviors were reframed as expressions of agency rather than moral failure. In Portugal, selected cultural products within the analyzed sample framed women's autonomy and self-expression as empowerment, emphasizing liberation from restrictive norms rather than transgression for its own sake.

3. Challenging the Objectification of Women

The rejection of women's objectification and the reduction of their value to physical appearance constituted another significant alternative narrative identified in four of the six countries analyzed. This narrative did not emerge prominently in the Jordanian or Egyptian samples, where objectifying representations remained largely unchallenged.

In Portugal, while some advertisements featured only thin, attractive white women, disregarding diversity in body types, age, and ethnicity, music and songs in the analyzed sample presented narratives rejecting the objectification of women.

In Tunisia, alternative narratives rejecting the objectification of women also emerged in digital culture. Feminist users and youth actively criticized viral media content that reduced women to their bodies or framed them primarily in terms of honour. This was evident in reactions to a widely circulated interview with a male singer (often referred to online as the "Cheb Tirara interview"), in which women were discussed through moralizing and objectifying language linked to appearance and honour. The interview sparked significant backlash, with many users explicitly rejecting such discourse and using the clip to denounce the normalization of symbolic violence and the reduction of women's value to bodily or moral judgments.

In Romania, objectification was criticized as undermining the feminist movement's demands for equality, portraying women solely as aesthetic objects rather than as influential figures.

In Lebanon, analysis revealed a strong link between beauty, commodification, and gender representation. Feminist initiatives and NGOs actively rejected narratives that confine women's value to appearance, emphasizing instead women's political, intellectual, and social contributions.

Across these contexts, alternative narratives converged around the recognition that objectification limits women's agency and reinforces structural inequality.

IV.   Media and Its Role in Shaping Feminist Narratives

The expansion of both digital and traditional media has led to a rise in both positive feminist narratives and distorted or misleading ones. Analysis of samples drawn from

six traditional and digital media platforms reveals both the reproduction of distorted feminist narratives and the presence of resistance to them. This section of the report examines the selected media platforms and outlines the dominant narratives observed within each.

1. Television

Television remains a key medium for shaping feminist narratives in the six countries included in the report, with its influence particularly pronounced in Arab contexts such as Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia. Religious and social occasions, especially Ramadan, intensify audience engagement with television drama. In Egypt, for example, Ramadan programming places strong emphasis on family life, marriage, women, and social relationships, with the number of television series broadcast during Ramadan 2025 ranging between 37 and 39 dramas.

Egyptian television dramas frequently reproduce stereotypical gender representations, with the series "Nos El Shab Esmo Mohammad" (Half of the People Are Called Mohamed) being a clear example of how gender stereotypes are reinforced through comedic drama. The plot revolves around a married man who engages in parallel romantic relationships with several women, presented in a light-hearted and sarcastic tone. The male protagonist is portrayed as clever and adventurous, while female characters are reduced to stereotypes of naiveté, excessive emotionality, or negative aggression. By framing male infidelity as a source of humor, the series normalizes double standards in romantic relationships while overlooking their moral and psychological implications.

However, not all television drama follows this pattern. The series "80 K" addresses women's financial independence and the patriarchal constraints that limit it. Nevertheless, narratives promoting women's empowerment and independence remain relatively scarce in Egyptian television, appearing in only 11 instances from the selected sample (15%), indicating limited representation of women as independent actors capable of leadership and decision-making.

In Jordan, television series such as "Al-Rawabi School for Girls," "Nawaf," "Sabr Al Azoub," "Al-Hara," and "Nemr Ben Odwan" depict women in roles that oscillate between liberation and preserving traditions. This reflects an ongoing negotiation between inherited social norms and the desire for change.

In Tunisia, too, television drama, especially during Ramadan, has become a powerful tool for shaping public discourse on sensitive social issues like gender, family roles,

and inter-gender relationships.[6] The roles in Tunisian television drama have evolved to mark a significant turning point in the understanding of symbolic violence and social stigma, particularly focusing on women's bodies, after previously offering only a superficial reading of comedic situations based on mockery and irony.

In Lebanon, even though television works like "For Death" and "With Blood" grant women central roles, they often depict female characters as emotionally fragile or sacrificial, contrasting with male characters who are exalted for their "self-control" or aggressiveness.

In Romania, international television series such as *Sex Education* and *Wednesday* present feminist narratives that address diversity and intersecting identities, including queer themes. In contrast, local productions such as *Vlad* or *Spy/Master* more frequently reproduce conservative gender roles, with national television networks at times reinforcing these narratives.

Overall, while television,particularly drama series, can serve as a space for progressive feminist discourse, it continues to reproduce traditional and conservative gender stereotypes across contexts.

2. Talk Shows

Across the six countries covered in the report, talk shows generally tended to reproduce narratives that are critical of or resistant to feminism, often relying on mockery, moral framing, or the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. While variations exist between programs and national contexts, feminist discourse is frequently marginalized or simplified within this media format.

In Jordan, talk shows represented 6.7% of the total sample and revealed a mixed approach to women's issues and gender-based violence. While some traditional programs limited discussions to superficial moral and social issues lacking structural depth or human rights dimensions, others displayed a more informed and impactful greater awareness and impact in defending women's rights and reshaping public discourse on equality. For instance, "Ta'a Al-Tanith" played a notable role in promoting awareness of women's legal and social rights, advocating policy reform, and advancing a rights-based discourse centered on justice and accountability. Similarly, programs such as "Hayhom" amplify the voices of women and youth in public discussions and expand the dialogue on gender issues and civic participation.

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[6] In Tunisia, the "Al-Hiwar Al-Tunisi", "Al-Ninah" and "Al-Wataniya" channels constitute the main pillar of the television scene in Tunisia, as they together attract the largest percentage of followers of traditional television content.

Despite these examples, a significant portion of Jordanian talk shows continued to frame domestic violence and gender discrimination primarily as moral or familial issues, without addressing their structural or legal causes. Approximately 25% of the episodes that addressed gender-based violence adopted a humanitarian or compassionate tone, yet failed to provide an institutional or rights-based analysis to dissect the root causes of the issue. As a result, Jordanian talk shows reflected two parallel trends: a traditional approach emphasizing moral values and social harmony, and a progressive approach that reframes women's issues in terms of rights, citizenship, and equality.

In Portugal, talk shows frequently promoted narratives portraying feminism as a threat to tradition or national values, or relied on irony and ridicule to dismiss feminist claims.

In Tunisia, while talk shows often featured women as elite commentators or public figures, rural women remained largely absent from media representation, accounting for marginalisation in approximately 85% of coverage, according to statistics from the "National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists."[7]

In Romania, talk shows such as La Măruță and Vorbește lumea, maintain a significant influence on the discourse of mainstream Romanian media, with daily audiences exceeding 500,000 viewers. These programs often frame gender-related issues through essentialist or traditional perspectives, reinforcing binary gender roles or sensationalising feminist perspectives.

In Lebanon, talk shows often function as spaces of moral judgement, where women's emotional expression becomes a subject of scrutiny. Female guests who challenge social norms, such as those discussing sex work or challenging modesty rules, are frequently subjected to stigmatising language ("whore" or "fallen woman") and moral condemnation, while male hosts and guests assume positions of authority. Discussions around women's clothing or personal relationships often devolve into assessments of female behaviour, with limited acknowledgment of the existence of structural inequalities. Although moments of resistance occur, such as the on-air confrontation between journalist Rima Karkhi and a biased male guest, which was widely celebrated by women as an act of empowerment, these instances remain exceptions rather than indicators of systemic change.

In Egypt, talk shows accounted for 10% of the total media content analyzed and frequently served as platforms for mocking or critiquing feminist narratives. This may

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[7] Fathia Al-Saidi, *The Image of Women and Their Presence in the Media* (2023),
https://shorturl.at/fCblm

indicate a degree of discipline or caution in the discourse directed through these programs compared to popular or entertainment content.

Overall, across all six countries, talk shows largely reinforced negative or conservative narratives about feminism, often aligned with editorial agendas that continue to confine women to traditional roles.

3. Commercial Advertisements

Commercial advertisements function not only as promotional tools but also as powerful cultural texts that shape perceptions of gender. Across the six countries, women appeared frequently in advertising content. While advertisements have the potential to challenge gender stereotypes and promote feminist narratives, the analyzed sample shows that this potential was realised only to a limited extent. More often, advertisements played a dual role as commercial drivers that construct femininity in line with consumer expectations, reinforcing rather than questioning dominant gender norms.

In Jordan, commercials played a significant role in shaping societal perceptions of gender, oscillating between empowerment and stereotyping. For example, the health awareness campaign *You Are Life*, launched by the Jordanian Ministry of Health, promoted women's autonomy by emphasizing their right to self-care, awareness and initiative beyond traditional caregiving roles. On the other hand, several advertisements reinforced restrictive gender norms. The *Osama Rice* ad linked marital stability to women's domestic performance, implying that a woman's value lies in her ability to cook and maintain the household. Similarly, the *Eat Ya Moza Rila* advertisement relied on sexual imagery, innuendo, and mockery, portraying women as objects of entertainment rather than as autonomous individuals deserving respect.

In Portugal, advertising content also reflected a dual dynamic. Some commercials reproduced discriminatory narratives, such as the Sagres Beer ad, which reinforced sexist representations, and the anti-abortion anthem *Obrigado Mãe!* ("Thank You, Mother!"), both of which undermined women's bodily autonomy. At the same time, other other campaigns challenged gender bias, including those centered on Catherine Switzer's story and initiatives addressing *sexismo*, which highlighted collective resistance to both historical and contemporary forms of discrimination. These contrasting approaches illustrate how advertising simultaneously functions as a site of feminist visibility and a space where harmful stereotypes persist.

In Tunisia, advertising narratives were largely structured around three dominant themes: women as primarily responsible for household labour, women portrayed as

overly emotional or inherently seductive, and women as folkloric symbols of cultural identity. Nonetheless, some campaigns offered alternative representations. The *Ghazala* advertisement, for example, reimagined men's roles within the family, while the *Lilas* diaper campaign acknowledged female exhaustion as a social reality requiring recognition rather than normalisation.

In Egypt, advertisements predominantly portrayed women in domestic roles, while men were presented as figures of authority, competence, and resilience. Analysis in Egypt and across the six countries suggests that when feminist narratives appeared in advertising, they were often secondary and instrumental, driven more by commercial profit and audience appeal than by a commitment to advancing gender equality.

In Romania, advertisements similarly demonstrated a dual function. While many campaigns perpetuated stereotypical images of women, others, such as *Dove* campaigns, promoted body positivity and alternative narratives that challenged narrow beauty standards. Advertising expenditure exceeded 600 million euros in 2023, with digital and television platforms capturing the largest share[8], underscoring the broad cultural reach of these messages.

Across contexts, commercials frequently depicted women exaggerating emotional responses to body image concerns, such as weight gain, engaging primarily in household tasks, or using beauty products to win men's affection. Such portrayals reinforce the notion that women's value lies in physical attractiveness and maintaining relationships. For example, perfume and cosmetics advertisements, particularly evident in Lebanon, often frame women's emotional fulfillment as dependent on male desire, while men are portrayed as rational, confident, and capable of problem-solving, even in household roles, such as depicting a man in the kitchen as an unusual event. Together, these patterns illustrate how commercial advertising continues to normalize gender hierarchies, even as selective campaigns attempt to challenge them.

4. Songs

Across the six countries included in the report, songs function as influential cultural tools that disseminate varied and often contradictory narratives about feminism and gender roles. Music operates both as a space for empowerment and as a mechanism for reinforcing traditional norms, depending on genre, context, and framing.

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[8] *Reuters Institute, Digital News Report 2024: Romania*, June 17, 2024.
https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/romania

In Jordan, songs play a dual role in either empowering women or reinforcing conventional gender expectations. Popular Jordanian folk songs often celebrate women in non-sexualized ways, embedding them positively within national and rural traditions. Songs such as *Haya Ala Haya* honor women's presence and contribution to communal life, portraying them as integral to Jordanian identity. Similarly, *Hanna Kibar Al-Balad* emphasizes women's active participation in national and social events, highlighting their role in community cohesion and nation-building. In contrast, songs such as *Ana Ummi Urduniya* reinforce traditional representations of women primarily as mothers confined to childcare and domestic responsibilities.

In Portugal, music genres including fado, rock, and hip-hop have provided spaces for articulating narratives of women's empowerment and resistance to restrictive gender norms. Within the analyzed sample, some songs emphasized women's leadership, autonomy, and independence, while others critically engaged with beauty standards and social expectations placed on women. These representations illustrate how music can function as a site of feminist expression, even as such narratives coexist with more traditional portrayals.

In Romania, popular music charts often reflected narratives associated with hypermasculinity or the romanticization of control, particularly within genres such as manele and urban trap. These songs often reproduce gendered power dynamics that normalize male dominance and emotional control within relationships. YouTube has emerged as the dominant music platform in Romania, with over 90% user engagement, while Spotify usage is estimated at approximately 1.5 to 2 million active listeners[9], amplifying the reach of these narratives.

In Lebanon, music frequently portrays women as emotionally dependent partners or jealous friends, while men are depicted as noble victims or possessive figures. Songs commonly normalise jealousy and control through phrases equating possessiveness with love, like "I love you and I'm jealous of you," while women's jealousy is diminished and branded as "a form of hysterical drama." Music often places women into negative or emotional molds. Songs such as *Ya Khayal* center male desire and agency, presenting men as initiators of romance and authority, and reinforcing traditional expectations of female submissiveness and obedience.

In Egypt, songs constituted 28% of the gender-related messages identified in the analyzed media sample. Within this category, some songs promote a strong image of women, particularly in contemporary rap and youth-oriented genres, while others reinforce patterns of male dominance or symbolic violence. These contrasting representations illustrate how music reflects broader societal tensions, where

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[9] Statista, https://www.statista.com

alternative feminist expressions coexist with traditional and patriarchal narratives. Overall, Egyptian music mirrors the wider media landscape, in which emerging empowering messages remain constrained by deeply rooted gender norms.

5. Journalism and News Media

Journalism and news media play an important role in shaping public understanding of women's issues and advocating for their rights. Across the analyzed sample, journalistic content revealed a clear duality: while some coverage adopted a rights-based and awareness-raising approach, other materials reproduced harmful narratives, particularly victim-blaming or individualized framings of violence.

In Jordan, journalistic content made up 25% of the total sample and demonstrated this dual character. While 26.7% of the articles explicitly addressed gender-based violence - through topics such as marital rape and reproductive rights - the majority (73.3%) focused on women's empowerment, rights, and institutional reforms. However, only 10% of these articles critiqued patriarchal authority, while the rest echoed a celebratory official narrative that promotes women's achievements. This discrepancy reveals that despite the increasing visibility of women in the media, forms of systemic inequality remain insufficiently explored.

In Portugal, journalistic coverage provided a more comprehensive engagement with feminist issues, addressing both progress and ongoing challenges. Systemic gender-based violence, ranging from sexual assault and street harassment to domestic abuse, was a central theme. News articles frequently incorporated activist perspectives, critiqued victim-blaming narratives, and questioned lenient judicial rulings. Calls for legal reform, including the recognition of femicide as a distinct crime, featured prominently, positioning journalism as an important site of feminist advocacy and accountability.

In Tunisia, journalism has been used to systematically document daily instances of violence against women, notably through platforms such as Haqaiq Online. By transforming isolated incidents into structured data, this reporting reframes gender-based violence as a widespread and recurring phenomenon rather than a series of exceptional cases. The cumulative effect of this coverage contributes to public recognition of violence against women as a social crisis rather than an individual anomaly.

In Romania, major news outlets such as Digi24, Libertatea, and Adevărul reach large audiences, exceeding one million monthly users. Despite this reach, coverage of gender-based violence and feminist activism often lacks an institutional or structural perspective. In some cases, reporting reproduces misleading narratives, including

implicit victim-blaming, by emphasizing personal circumstances over perpetrators' accountability or systemic causes.

In Lebanon, feminist media initiatives such as NO2TA Feminist Lab have played a significant role in producing alternative journalistic narratives. By offering accessible feminist content and providing training for journalists, filmmakers, and activists, these platforms promote a human rights–based approach to gender issues. Their work emphasizes women's agency, independence, and collective empowerment, directly challenging mainstream media's tendency to focus on appearance, romance, or moral judgment.

In Egypt, journalistic coverage generally adopted a supportive and awareness-raising tone, particularly in relation to protecting women from violence. However, women were often portrayed primarily as a vulnerable group in need of protection rather than as active agents with political and social authority. While this approach contributes to public awareness, it also risks reinforcing paternalistic frameworks that stop short of challenging the structural roots of gender inequality.

6. Social Media Platforms

Digital platforms play a central role in shaping, amplifying, and contesting feminist narratives, particularly among youth. Across the six countries included in the report, social media functioned as a contested space in which feminist advocacy, resistance, mockery, and the reproduction of traditional gender norms coexist. Each platform contributed differently to the circulation of gender-related narratives, depending on its format, audience, and dominant modes of interaction.

- ● TikTok

TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential platforms for the dissemination and contestation of feminist narratives, especially among younger audiences. In Jordan, feminist and mainstream gender-related narratives accounted for 35% of the 60 media samples analyzed. Hashtags such as #Iman_Irshid, #Screams_of_Jordanian_Women, and #You_Won't_Break_Me were crucial parts of activist content (53.3%).

In Portugal, TikTok hosted both feminist activism and counter-discourses.While campaigns addressing street harassment and online threats gained visibility, some young content creators positioned themselves as "rational" critics of what they described as "toxic feminism," often reframing feminist demands as excessive and advocating for "men's rights" under the rhetoric of equality. A notable moment of feminist mobilization followed a public harassment incident in Funchal, which triggered widespread TikTok engagement. Young women shared testimonies through

videos and anonymous platforms such as the *Mural de Testemunhos* ("Wall of Testimonies"), contributing to the public documentation of survivors' experiences and challenging the culture of silence.

In Romania, TikTok's use is widespread among the population, nearly 47% of the population regularly engaging with the platform[10]. Hashtags such as #feminism, #bodypositivity, and #tradewife circulate simultaneously, revealing ideological tension within digital gender discourse.

In Lebanon, where young people tend to use TikTok, content tended to prioritize beauty and marketing-oriented representations of women, indicating a reductionist framing that emphasizes appearance over agency.

In Egypt, TikTok has become a primary platform for shaping and circulating public discourse, especially among youth. Short videos, hashtags, memes, and personal stories spread across these platforms, making them an important source for monitoring transformations or conflicts regarding gender values. Furthermore, it has a broader youth audience beyond traditional media coverage. TikTok functioned as a major arena for youth engagement with gender issues within the analyzed sample. During high-profile harassment cases, such as the *Fairmont Girl* incident, the platform was widely used to circulate testimonies, hashtags, and personal narratives, making it a key space for monitoring shifts and tensions in gender norms.

- **Instagram**

Overall, Instagram contributed to the dissemination of positive feminist narratives, particularly in relation to health campaigns and awareness-raising initiatives, while simultaneously reinforcing stereotypical beauty standards. In Jordan, university students used Instagram to engage with interactive segments from talk shows like *Ta'a Al-Tanith*, inquiring about gender laws and workplace harassment. In Portugal, the platform has been utilized to document feminist activism through youth-led campaigns centered around survivors, addressing issues such as toxic masculinity, menstrual health, and harassment. These initiatives illustrate how feminist discourse on Instagram not only responds to existing norms but also actively participates in constructing new ones.

In Tunisia, Instagram use ranged from 20% to 25% of the sampled materials and functioned as a key space for debates around the female body within what is often referred to as the "body economy" (Rosalind and Scharff, 2011). While dominant beauty standards persisted, some users presented alternative representations, such

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[10] Business Forum, *TikTok tops 9 million active users in Romania*, September 5, 2025. https://www.businessforum.ro/tiktok-tops-9-million-active-users-in-romania

as women athletes or professionals in male-dominated fields, contributing to a partial rebalancing of representation. In Romania, Instagram was used effectively to expand outreach for HPV vaccination targeting young people, reflecting greater acceptance when feminist issues are framed through health and prevention. However, the platform also reproduced coercive control and featured limited feminist activism.

In Lebanon, Instagram data indicated a strong commodification of women's emotions, particularly through humorous Reels and beauty influencer content. Videos portraying women's emotional "breakdowns" related to weight gain or romantic relationships were frequently framed as humorous entertainment. In contrast, men were often depicted as emotionally restrained, financially stable, and intellectually authoritative. This gendered emotional divide is reinforced within influencer culture, where women's emotional expression is tied to consumption and aesthetics, while men's value is associated with power and intellect.

- ● X (Twitter)

Platform X played a notable role in the circulation of both mainstream and alternative feminist narratives, with the exception of Lebanon and Tunisia, where its presence was limited in the analyzed sample. In Jordan, hashtags such as #Iman_Irshid, #Screams_of_Jordanian_Women, and #You_Won't_Break_Me emerged as significant parts of activist content (53.3%), although counter-narratives attempting to blame victims also appeared.

In Portugal, youth were active in spreading feminist and gender narratives, both in support and opposition, through hashtags like **#NãoÉNormal** (#NotNormal), **#FeminismoÉParaTodos** (#FeminismIsForEveryone), and local variations of **#MeToo** (#EuTambém). These hashtags inspired young people to share their personal experiences with gender-based violence, harassment, and unfair treatment in workplaces.

In Romania, hashtags like #Feminism, #BodyPositivity, and #TradWife spread simultaneously, reflecting ideological tensions within digital gender discourse. The platform's algorithmic structure amplifies both progressive and regressive trends. In Egypt, the #MeToo movement marked a significant turning point in public discussions of sexual violence. The movement's impact extended to the Egyptian context, where young women engaged with the hashtag and launched localized versions (like #I_Too), contributing to increased awareness of digital rights and feminist advocacy among younger generations.

- ● Facebook

Facebook functioned as a major space for circulating both positive feminist narratives and misleading or hostile discourse, with the exception of Portugal and Lebanon, where it was not included in the selected sample. In Jordan, Facebook was a key space for circulating and discussing feminist narratives due to its interactive nature. Despite its use for disseminating gender policies and awareness content, it was also used to mock women in politics. A widely circulated meme targeting a female Member of Parliament centered on the phrase "Where's the Molokhia?" became a national joke, exemplifying how women are celebrated in nurturing roles but ridiculed when they seek political power.

In Egypt, Facebook was filled with extensive posts from youth, particularly young women, during harassment incidents such as the "Fairmont Girl" case, where they used hashtags like #Me_Too to document their personal experiences and express solidarity with victims while calling for accountability from perpetrators.[11]

- ● YouTube

YouTube emerged as a space for conflicting gender narratives across several countries.

In Jordan, viewer comments on drama series such as *Nawaf* revealed polarized reactions, with some praising female characters' courage while others criticized them for "defying tribal norms." In Portugal, an increasing number of influencers with medium to large followings used YouTube to criticize feminism, framing themselves as rational voices warning against "toxic feminism" or promoting "men's rights," often attracting audiences who feel alienated by feminist discourse.

In Tunisia, the platform was used to document conflicting cultural currents. For example, you can find the song "Aroubiya," which longs for a strict patriarchal system, alongside the song "Ya Layl," which laments the ruins of that system.

In Romania, YouTube dominates the music landscape, with over 90% user reach. Popular genres such as manele and urban trap frequently promoted hypermasculinity or romanticized control, reinforcing traditional gender norms. In Egypt, talk shows and songs, especially those circulating on YouTube, serve as influential spaces where social issues, including gender relations, are debated by widely followed public figures, contributing either to the reinforcement or questioning of mainstream gender discourse.

- ● Podcasts

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[11] Sky News, Controversy in Egypt after the Public Prosecution closed the Fairmont girl case | #Platforms, May 2021, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5iJDWg0n68

Podcasts were only included in the analyzed sample in Tunisia and Portugal. In Tunisia, the importance of podcasts lies not only in their mass appeal but also in their qualitative depth. They represent a shift from "displaying" gender-based representations to "analyzing" them. For example, the analyzed podcast *Bergoulia* framed masculinity as a social construct rather than a biological given, equipping young audiences with conceptual tools to challenge stereotypes in ways traditional media often do not.

Despite the diversity of their orientations and contents, feminist podcasts in Portugal share a common goal of challenging patriarchal power and promoting gender equality. Programs such as *Grita, Mulher* relies on the testimonies of survivors to highlight forms of gender-based violence, *Mulher PodeCast* uses informal dialogues to attract young audiences, *Ponto de Luz* focuses on educational issues from a feminist perspective. Collectively, these podcasts addressed themes including intersectionality, bodily autonomy, and violence, underscoring their growing importance within contemporary rights-based media discourse.

V.   Gaps in Gender Representation in Media and Barriers to Change

The data collected from the six countries included in the report reveal persistent gaps in gender representation across media platforms. These gaps are reflected in fragmented and inconsistent portrayals of women, indicating that increased awareness of women's rights and incremental legal or social gains have not translated into balanced or transformative media representation. Instead, dominant media narratives continue to reproduce traditional frameworks that limit women's visibility, authority, and agency.

▪ **Dominance of Traditional Gender Roles**

One of the most significant gaps identified across the sampled media materials is the continued dominance of traditional gender roles. In Jordan, television series such as *Sabr Al-'Adoob* and *Al-Hara* portray female characters through values of patience, endurance, and sacrifice, reinforcing a conception of femininity closely tied to suffering. Entertainment media including television dramas, talk shows, and advertisements frequently reproduce these stereotypes. Bedouin series, in particular, depict men as leaders and decision-makers, while women are represented as silent victims or symbols of honor and sacrifice. Even when women appear as strong characters, as in the series *Nawaf*, their empowerment remains confined within tribal and honor-based frameworks. Advertising can further entrench these roles, reducing women's value to domestic performance and marital stability, illustrating how commercial messaging reinforces restrictive gender expectations.

In Portugal, women are similarly confined to stereotypical images within traditional roles that encapsulate them in motherhood, often depicted as tools for male consumption, and additionally as victims frequently stripped of their personal identities, transforming them into mere statistics. Similar patterns were observed in Tunisia, where traditional gender portrayals persist across multiple media formats.

In Romania, advertisements predominantly depict women in domestic caregiving roles, framing deviations from these roles as undesirable. In Lebanon, media representations reflect an ongoing negotiation between preserving traditional roles and resisting them. Advertisements such as *Pasta msh maakarona* confine women to domestic labor while affirming men's professional and social authority, reinforcing a rigid separation between private and public spheres. These patterns align with broader findings that Lebanese advertising favors masculine agency (Melki et al., 2023) while portraying women as emotionally weak or subordinate.

In Egypt, 44% of the media messages in the analyzed sample reinforced stereotypes portraying women primarily as mothers, wives, or subordinate figures. These representations were most prevalent in advertisements (42% of the total traditional gender messages), followed by songs and television series. The key barrier here is not women's absence from media narratives, but rather their inclusion within narrowly defined and socially desirable traditional roles. Although some dramatic works have challenged these depictions and gained public approval, such examples remain limited and do not yet outweigh dominant conservative frameworks.

- ▪ Neglect of Cyber Violence

Another major gap identified in the data is the marginalization of cyber violence in media representation. With the exception of Tunisia and Lebanon, where this gap was less evident, cyber violence remains largely underreported or superficially addressed. In Portugal, despite high rates of online harassment affecting women and LGBTQ+ youth, cyber violence is often sensationalized or ignored rather than examined as a systemic form of gender-based harm. In Jordan, daily instances of online harassment and digital abuse are frequently overlooked, receiving attention only when cases provoke widespread public outrage, such as the murder of Iman Al-Rasheed. As a result, the structural and continuous nature of cyber violence remains largely invisible.

In Romania, media coverage of cyber violence is limited despite rising rates of digital harassment. This neglect stems from two main obstacles: the lack of conceptual and technical understanding among journalists to interpret online harassment as violence, trivializing online harm as "jokes" or dismissing it as private disputes, and

limited funding for feminist initiatives, which weakens civil society's capacity to produce counter-narratives or advocate for sustained coverage. Consequently, young audiences are left without adequate guidance to interpret or resist digital forms of gender-based violence.

In Egypt, although gender-based violence appeared in approximately 30% of the analyzed media messages, coverage often remained confined to awareness-oriented or cautious journalistic treatments with limited mass appeal. When addressed in drama or talk shows, violence is frequently framed through the lens of preserving "family cohesion," prioritizing silence or tolerance over accountability and justice. This framing undermines the potential of media discourse to challenge the structural and cultural roots of violence.

- **Lack of Representation of Women as Experts or Opinion Leaders**

Despite women's growing participation in public life across the six countries, a significant gap persists in their representation as experts, opinion leaders, or authoritative voices in the media. With the exception of Portugal, this gap was evident across all contexts analyzed. In Jordan, political coverage of women remains limited, with female parliamentarians often marginalized or subjected to trivialization. The widely circulated "dried molokhia" incident illustrates how women in politics are framed through mockery rather than through substantive engagement with their legislative roles. This reflects a male-dominated editorial agenda reinforced by gender imbalances in senior media leadership.

In Tunisia, women's media presence is largely confined to elite or victim-centered representations, limiting portrayals of women as economically or socially ambitious actors. In Romania, women were rarely cited as experts or decision-makers across the 130 analyzed materials. Instead, they were primarily depicted as victims, healthcare recipients, or subjects of appearance-based commentary. Political coverage overwhelmingly featured male voices, with women appearing mainly in contexts of sexist controversy, such as the circulation of George Simion's post-election statement. Women's perspectives in these stories were secondary or absent altogether.

In Egypt, although supportive messages for women's empowerment (15%) and broader feminist ideas (39%) were present, women were predominantly portrayed in relation to men as victims, partners, or dependents rather than as independent leaders or decision-makers. Even representations of successful women were often accompanied by implicit negative framing, such as emotional isolation, family failure, or moral suspicion. These patterns drain leadership portrayals of substance and

reinforce doubts about women's capacity to balance professional success with personal life.

Overall, gender representation in the media has yet to produce sustained alternative narratives that position women as producers of knowledge, leaders of public opinion, or agents of structural change. Positive images tend to appear as symbolic or exceptional cases, disconnected from broader systems driving cultural transformation. This limits their transformative potential and keeps women's media presence confined within traditional or conditional roles.

VI.   Challenges & Obstacles to Change

Although alternative feminist narratives inspire hope for change and challenge dominant representations, significant obstacles continue to limit their impact. Across the six countries included in the report, these challenges are deeply rooted in institutional structures, market dynamics, cultural norms, and political contexts. This section outlines the main barriers to change as identified in each country.

1. Jordan

In Jordan, obstacles to transforming media narratives on gender are both structural and cultural. Media institutions remain largely shaped by male-dominated newsrooms and editorial boards, resulting in coverage priorities that reflect patriarchal perspectives. The absence of gender-sensitive journalism training contributes to the continued reproduction of stereotypes and limits journalists' ability to frame women's rights as structural or political issues.

Politics is still widely perceived as a male domain, a perception reinforced by media coverage that marginalizes women's political participation. Direct and indirect censorship further constrains change, as media outlets often avoid discussing sensitive topics such as domestic violence or cyber harassment due to fears of legal repercussions or social backlash. These issues are frequently treated as taboos rather than public concerns.

Limited funding for investigative journalism and feminist media projects restricts the production of sustained, in-depth reporting. Inequalities in career advancement within media institutions favor male leadership, while the absence of institutional gender policies: such as quotas or leadership guarantees—perpetuates exclusion. Meaningful reform in Jordan therefore requires both institutional restructuring and broader cultural shifts; without this dual approach, media will continue to reproduce patriarchal norms rather than challenge them.

2. Portugal

In Portugal, challenges to change persist despite the visibility of feminist discourse. Men continue to dominate decision-making positions within media leadership, despite the increasing number of women in Portuguese media, particularly in broadcasting and film production, shaping editorial agendas and narrative priorities. Resistance to fully integrating gender-sensitive reporting remains evident, often rooted in conservative social norms.

Women's issues are frequently treated as "special interest" topics, confined to opinion pieces or lifestyle sections rather than central news coverage. Even productions that address feminist themes—such as the historical series *Three Women*—are often shaped by male-led creative teams, influencing how women's autonomy and agency are portrayed.

Market pressures further complicate change. Media outlets increasingly prioritize content that maximizes engagement and advertising revenue, encouraging sensationalism and reinforcing stereotypes. Feminist content can also provoke strong backlash, particularly in contexts influenced by Catholic heritage or nationalist rhetoric, where feminism is framed as foreign or excessive. Digital resistance from conservative influencers amplifies this hostility, pushing many journalists and artists toward "safe feminism" that avoids challenging deeper power structures. This discomfort is particularly evident regarding intersectional feminism connected to race, reproductive autonomy, and LGBTQ+ rights.

3. Tunisia

In Tunisia, the logic of the media market constitutes a major barrier to change. Media production is largely profit-driven, and advertisers favor content that avoids controversy. As a result, producers often reproduce familiar stereotypes rather than risk audience backlash by challenging traditional values.

Political polarization further constrains feminist discourse. Women's rights are frequently instrumentalized in ideological struggles, portrayed either as symbols of modernization for international audiences or as threats to national identity by conservative factions. Any attempt at constructive criticism may soon be labeled as either "betrayal" of the homeland or "collaboration" with the West. This polarization discourages nuanced debate and suppresses critical voices.

Deep-rooted cultural resistance also plays a significant role. Narratives of patriarchal nostalgia resonate with segments of society who perceive feminism as an attack on family structures, religious values, and social order. Within media institutions, a lack of specialized training in gender issues leads to unintentional but harmful framing,

including victim-blaming language and sensationalist coverage that exposes victims' identities and exacerbates harm.

4. Romania

In Romania, male dominance in newsroom leadership limits the diversity of perspectives shaping media content. Commercial pressures favor sensationalist narratives, discouraging investment in counter-narratives that challenge dominant gender norms. While women may occupy visible leadership roles within media organizations, this does not necessarily translate into progressive content.

Journalists often lack adequate training to contextualize gender-based violence or feminist issues, resulting in superficial or misleading coverage. Weak institutional support for feminist media initiatives further entrenches these gaps, allowing traditional narratives to persist despite women's increased participation in politics and professional life.

5. Lebanon

In Lebanon, market-driven media logic constrains gender representation by framing women within narrow roles centered on beauty and emotionality. At the same time, men are frequently portrayed as symbols of power, control, and authority, marginalizing feminist perspectives.

These dynamics are reinforced through popular culture, including music and advertising, which often celebrate masculine dominance while confining women to expressive or decorative roles. Such representations limit the space for alternative narratives that challenge gender hierarchies.

6. Egypt

In Egypt, one of the primary obstacles to change is the dominance of patriarchal and conservative religious discourse, particularly on social media. Feminist activists are frequently subjected to mockery, personal attacks, and moral judgment, with their experiences reframed as evidence of personal failure or misconduct. This hostile digital environment discourages engagement and spills over into traditional media, which often avoids contentious gender debates to protect audience share or funding.

Additionally, there is a lack of sustained investment in feminist and independent media production. The absence of institutional support and long-term funding confines feminist initiatives to short-lived digital campaigns or individual efforts. As a result, alternative narratives struggle to accumulate sufficient visibility and continuity to effectively challenge dominant stereotypes.

VII.   Youth Interaction with Feminist Narratives in Media

Youth interaction with gender representation in the media constitutes a space of both risk and opportunity (Tortajada, Araüna, & Martínez, 2013). Aggregated data from the country reports indicate that young people are not passive consumers of media content. Instead, they actively interpret, negotiate, and, in some cases, produce alternative narratives that challenge derogatory or exclusionary representations, particularly within digital environments.

In Jordan, where more than 60% of the population is under the age of thirty, youth engagement with gender representation is characterized by active negotiation rather than outright rejection or acceptance. Through comments, hashtags, memes, and online discussions, young people reinterpret feminist and gender narratives, turning popular culture into a dynamic arena for generational dialogue and conflict between inherited traditions and modern aspirations.

In Portugal, youth play an increasingly central role in shaping debates around gender and feminism. Their engagement spans activism, peer-led educational initiatives, and social media campaigns, alongside resistance and skepticism. Digital platforms function as the primary space for these interactions, where expressions of solidarity coexist with irony, backlash, and critique, reflecting broader societal tensions between progressive ideas and traditional values.

In Tunisia, youth interaction with feminist narratives emerges as a complex and emotionally charged process. Analysis of youth-oriented content suggests increased awareness coupled with ambivalence, particularly in relation to emotional vulnerability and social expectations. The widespread popularity of the song *"Ya Layl,"* provides a "safe haven" for young men pressured to be strong "men" while they actually struggle with vulnerability and emotional pain, illustrates this dynamic. Beyond its artistic success, the song functions as a cultural space where young men can acknowledge vulnerability in contrast to dominant norms of masculinity, while young women engage with the narrative through empathy and the hope for more humane and egalitarian relationships. Here, youth interaction operates less as political confrontation and more as emotional negotiation.

In Romania, youth responses tend to downplay structural gender inequality, influenced in part by digital content that romanticizes control and traditional relationship dynamics. Although supportive feminist responses exist, they remain fragmented and marginal. This highlights the need for stronger media literacy initiatives and the development of coherent alternative feminist narratives within youth-oriented media spaces, offering frameworks that move beyond normalization or rejection.

In Lebanon, youth interaction with gender narratives was most evident through music, which often reinforced stereotypical representations. Popular songs frequently portray women in romanticized, emotional, or aestheticized roles, while men are associated with authority or desire. Such representations risk shaping young audiences' self-perception and expectations, particularly by linking women's value to appearance and romantic availability.

In Egypt, youth engagement with feminist and gender-related media discourse has intensified, especially within digital spaces. This interaction ranges from active support and participation to resistance and rejection, reflecting deep social and cultural polarization around gender equality. Youth responses oscillate between enthusiastic advocacy and sharp opposition, indicating a state of cultural fluidity and tension. In this context, initiatives that promote critical media literacy and provide safe spaces for dialogue are essential, given the strong influence of digital platforms on the formation of attitudes and values among younger generations.

VIII. Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the collected data demonstrates that dominant negative narratives about feminism continue to prevail across both traditional and digital media platforms. Although alternative feminist narratives are emerging—driven in part by increased awareness and youth engagement—these developments have not yet significantly weakened entrenched negative portrayals. This persistence is linked to several structural factors, including limited engagement with the root causes of gender-based violence, the underrepresentation of women as experts and decision-makers in media institutions, and the continued influence of religious or cultural discourses that resist progressive feminist perspectives.

Across the six countries, women are frequently portrayed as less competent or experienced than men and are often confined to traditional roles associated with domesticity, emotion, sacrifice, or supportive functions. At the same time, the data indicate that digital media and feminist initiatives are actively attempting to challenge these representations and disrupt dominant narratives, even if their impact remains uneven and limited. Sustaining and expanding these efforts requires increased institutional, financial, and social support, as well as the consolidation of existing gains.

Youth participation emerges as a particularly significant factor in this process. Young audiences are not engaging negatively with feminist narratives; rather, their interaction reflects curiosity, negotiation, and, in many cases, support. This

underscores the importance of investing in awareness-raising, media literacy, and inclusive spaces for dialogue, as youth engagement represents a key opportunity for fostering more equitable and transformative gender narratives in the future.

IX. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following strategic recommendations are proposed to address the structural barriers identified in gender representation and feminist narratives across media platforms in the six countries covered by the report:

1. Strengthen Gender-Sensitive Media Governance

Media institutions should adopt and enforce gender-sensitive codes of conduct that promote ethical reporting, balanced representation, and accountability. This includes increasing women's representation in editorial leadership and decision-making positions and addressing male dominance within newsroom cultures.

2. Invest in Feminist and Investigative Media

Governments, donors, and private stakeholders should increase sustainable funding for investigative journalism and independent feminist media initiatives. Long-term financial support is essential to enable in-depth reporting, counter dominant narratives, and support alternative feminist voices, particularly in digital spaces.

3. Enhance Gender-Sensitive Training and Media Literacy

Comprehensive gender-focused training programs should be provided to journalists, editors, content creators, and media managers. These programs should address gender-based violence, digital harm, ethical storytelling, and non-stereotypical representation. Media literacy initiatives targeting youth are also crucial to foster critical engagement with gender narratives.

4. Regulate Gender Representation in Advertising and Cultural Production

Clear guidelines for advertising agencies and commercial content producers should be developed and enforced to prevent the reproduction of harmful stereotypes and the commodification of women. Regulatory bodies should monitor compliance and encourage inclusive and diverse portrayals.

5. Align Legal Frameworks with International Human Rights Standards

National laws should be aligned with international human rights instruments, including conventions related to women's and girls' rights. This includes establishing and enforcing legal protections against all forms of gender-based violence and ensuring the full legal recognition of women's economic, social, and cultural rights.

6. Promote Gender-Responsive Economic Policies and Budgeting

Countries should adopt gender-sensitive indicators to measure poverty and inequality and implement gender-responsive budgeting to ensure adequate resource allocation for advancing women's rights. Immediate obligations to eliminate discrimination and guarantee minimum economic and social rights must be fulfilled.

7. Engage Youth as Agents of Change

Youth should be actively involved in media campaigns, advocacy initiatives, and awareness-raising efforts aimed at challenging harmful narratives and promoting feminist discourse. Supporting safe spaces for dialogue and youth-led media initiatives can amplify alternative narratives and foster long-term cultural change.

8. Establish Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability Mechanisms

Robust monitoring and evaluation systems should be developed to systematically collect data on gender representation in media and popular culture.

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Appendices

First: Appendices for Jordan

1. Jordan Country Report: Available at the following link: https://shorturl.at/wpOKI

2. Table Supporting and Negative Narratives

Narrative	% Of Total Sample
Supporting Narratives	28%
Negative Narratives	72%

3. Comparison Between Different Platforms

Platform	Of total sample %	Addressing GBV %	Focusing on empowerment/feminist themes	Dominant Narrative Type
Drama/films	8.3%	60%	40%	Emotional victimhood and moral reconciliation
News articles	25%	26.7%	73.3%	institutional framing of reform and legal accountability
Songs	25%	13.3%	86.7%	Idealized femininity and emotional endurance
Digital Trends	25%	53.3%	46.7%	Activist and resistance-oriented discourse
Advertisements	10%	20%	80%	Consumer zed gender roles and moralization of beauty
Talk Shows	6.7%	25%	75%	Personal testimonies and domestic framing of gender issues

4. Youth Response Patterns

Response Type	Percentage of Mentions	Examples
Supportive / Solidarity Responses	40%	Hashtags after femicides, positive sharing of health campaigns, AL Rawabi appreciation posts
Critical / Divided Responses	35%	Online debates around Nof, TikTok song remixes with mixed views

Mocking / Rejection Responses	25%	"Dry Molokhia" memes, backlash against women in politics, Osama Rice ad jokes

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Second: Appendices for Portugal

Portugal Country Report: Available at the following link: https://shorturl.at/OLrrm

The figures are based on multiple coding, meaning that a single media item may contribute to more than one narrative category; therefore, subtotals exceed 100%.

Table: Supporting and Negative Narratives

Narrative Category (Coded Indicator)	Narrative Direction	Description/Framing i Media
Feminist ideas	Supporting	Explicit support for feminism, gender equality, and women's rights; challenges patriarchal norms and promotes structural change
Female empowerment/autonomy	Supporting	Women are portrayed as independent, capable decision-makers, leaders, or agents of change
Gender-based violence (GBV)	Supporting	GBV framed critically, centring survivors, condemning perpetrators, and highlighting systemic causes
Toxic masculinity	Supporting	Masculine norms are portrayed as harmful; critiques of aggression, emotional repression, and entitlement
Feminist ideas	Negative	Feminism mocked, delegitimised, or framed as excessive, divisive, or threatening to social order
Traditional gender roles	Negative	Reinforcement of women as caregivers, passive figures, or morally bound to family/domestic roles
Use of gender stereotypes	Negative	Simplified or essentialist portrayals of women or men (e.g. emotional women, dominant men)
Victim-blaming (implicit)	Negative	Responsibility subtly shifted to survivors through language, omission, or focus on personal behavior.

Third: Appendices for Tunisia

Tunisia country report: available at the following link: https://shorturl.at/mHWPf

Table

Table 1: Gender / Feminist Themes in Tunisian Media

Gender / Feminist Theme	Number of Samples	Percentage (%)
Traditional gender roles (women as caregivers, homemakers)	46	59%
Gender-based violence (rape, abuse, harassment, feminicide)	41	53%
Women portrayed as victims rather than agents	38	49%
Explicit feminist / empowerment discourse	29	37%
Toxic masculinity (control, domination, violence)	35	45%
Beauty standards & body policing	34	44%
Internalized misogyny (women reproducing sexism)	27	35%
Critique of the state / institutions failing women	22	28%
Audience backlash against sexist portrayals	36	46%
Positive reception of feminist representation	26	33%
Shared gender responsibility (men caregiving / domestic work)	14	18%
Youth-led feminist counter-narratives	24	31%

Table 2: Tunisian Media Themes by Type

Movies & Series :

Theme	Percentage (%)
Gender-based violence	61%
Patriarchy critique	56%
Complex female protagonists	44%
Reproduction of conservative norms	39%

Advertisements :

Theme	Percentage (%)
Traditional gender roles	69%
Women linked to domestic labor	63%

Theme	Percentage (%)
Empowerment messaging	31%
Audience criticism	50%

Influencers & Social Media Trends :

Theme	Percentage (%)
Beauty / body norms	65%
Misogynistic discourse	55%
Feminist resistance	30%
Public controversy / backlash	60%

Songs & Music Videos

Theme	Percentage (%)
Emotional stereotyping of women	50%
Male narrative dominance	43%
Empowerment messages	29%

Articles & Reports :

Theme	Percentage (%)
Feminicide & violence focus	60%
Gap between laws and reality	50%
Feminism as political tool	30%
Policy / rights-based critique	40%

Fourth: Appendices for Romania

Romania Country Report: Available at the following link: https://shorturl.at/UARAl

Table on quantification of patterns

Narrative/Theme	No. of Mentions	% of Total Media Sample
Feminist ideas (supportive)	7	5%
Feminist ideas (mocking/critical)	18	13%
GBV (explicit or implied)	6	4%
GBV (symbolic)	68	50%
Traditional gender roles	78	60%
Female empowerment/autonomy	12	9%
Toxic masculinity	30	23%
Victim Blaming (explicit or subtle)	17	13%
Use of gender stereotypes	92	70%
Women portrayed primarily as victims	45	34%
Women portrayed as experts / authorities	11	8.5%
Romantization of control (jealousy, surveillance)	22	16%
Legal accountability mentioned (police, penalties)	1	0.8%

2. Narratives: Supporting feminism vs Against Feminism

Narrative Orientation	Narrative Type	No. of Items	% of Total Media Sample
Narratives SUPPORTING feminism	Explicit feminist or gender-equality framing	7	5%
	Female empowerment /	12	9%

	autonomy		
	Survivor-centred or thematic GBV framing	1	0.8%
	Body-positive / counter-stereotypical portrayals	5	3.8%
Subtotal: Pro-feminist narratives		25	19%
Narratives AGAINST feminism	Feminist ideas mocked, delegitimized, or framed as foreign	18	13%
	Traditional gender roles valorized	78	60%
	Gender stereotypes (appearance, dependence, emotionality)	92	70%
	Toxic masculinity / dominance narratives	30	23%
	Victim Blaming (explicit or implicit)	17	13%
	Romanticization of control (jealousy, surveillance)	22	16%
Subtotal: Anti-feminist narratives		97	75%
Neutral / ambiguous	Gender present but no clear feminist orientation	8	6%

Fifth: Appendices for Lebanon

Lebanon country report: available at the following link: https://shorturl.at/5tZqT

Table

Category	Total Items	Feminist-Supporting (No.)	Feminist-Supporting (%)	Harmful Narratives (No.)	Harmful Narratives (%)
TV Series / Movies	10	4	40%	5	50%
Newspaper Articles / News Items	2	1	50%	0	0%
Popular Trends	46	4	9%	9	20%
Commercial Advertisements	9	1	11%	0	0%
Songs	5	2	40%	0	0%
Talk Shows	6	5	83%	1	17%

1.3 References

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Sixth: Appendices for Egypt

Egypt country report: Available at the following link: https://h7.cl/1hka3
Table Supporting and Negative Narratives

Gender Messages	Number of messages	Percentages	Narrative Direction
Supportive feminist ideas	28	39%	Supporting narratives
Empowerment and independence of women	11	15%	
Traditional gender roles	31	44%	Negative narratives
Toxic masculinity	19	13.5 %	
Gender stereotypes	16	11.3%	
Criticism of feminist ideas	10	14%	
Victim blaming	5	7%	
Gender-based violence	21	30%%	Neutral