



# INTRODUCTION

Gender dynamics in Lebanon are complex and multi-dimensional. On the one hand, women in Lebanon are considered to have more rights and freedoms than women in other surrounding nations, from their ability to travel in certain parts of the country to the way they can dress in public. In 2019, as a most recent example, Lebanon appointed the first female interior minister in its new government, which was described as a “point of pride for all women” in Lebanon (The Guardian, 2019). On the other hand, Lebanese women continue to face discrimination on the basis of their gender. Specifically, in light of Lebanon’s reputation for being liberal by regional standards, the role of Lebanese women in politics and their rights in public life in general remain under the influence of a misogynistic, patriarchal social code (Avis, 2017). Lebanon women are also restricted by various laws and regulations as well as sectarian dynamics, socio-cultural values, and public policies, amongst others constraints (USAID, 2012). Most notably, current laws in Lebanon prohibit Lebanese women who marry foreigners from passing their nationality to their children. This, in turn, has a negative impact on various aspects of their children’s’ and spouse’s lives (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

### CORPUS-ASSISTED CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CACDA)

Corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) was used to uncover linguistic patterns in online conversations relating to the discussions about gender and Lebanon (for more on CACDA, see Thomas, 2015).

CACDA combines conventional quantitative corpus linguistic techniques with conventional qualitative critical discourse analytic methods. It provides an effective way of mapping out frequency information and association patterns related to linguistic phenomena that appear within large volumes of electronically encoded text.

CACDA can be used to identify word pairings that appear frequently within a data set and their statistical significance. It also allows for an analysis of how statistically significant word pairs are used in context.<sup>1</sup>

# YOUTUBE

Included in this research brief is an analysis of online conversations that appear on [YouTube](#), which is an open source, a publicly available video-sharing website.

As of January 2019, YouTube counted over 1.9 billion active monthly users, as well as over 30 million daily active users, over 50 million users creating and sharing content on the platform.<sup>ii</sup> YouTube was recently ranked as the second most visited site in the world.<sup>iii</sup>

YouTube users are able to search for and watch an array of videos, as well as like/comment/share other videos, create their own personalized YouTube channel and upload videos to their channel, create playlists to organize videos, and customize what they see on their personal account pages by subscribing to YouTube channels and users. In addition, YouTube users can play video games, tune into live video and music streams, explore family-friendly videos and playlists, or download a virtual reality app, as but a few examples.<sup>iv</sup>

# REDDIT

This research brief also included an analysis of the online conversations appearing on [reddit](#), and an open source, publicly available website that is largely understood as a hybrid forum-based social network/news aggregator site.

As of November 2017, reddit counted over 330 million active monthly users, 138 thousand active communities (subreddits), and was ranked as the fifth most visited site in the United States.<sup>v</sup>

Registered reddit users are able to customize what they see on their personal account pages by subscribing to 'subreddits'. Any registered user may create a subreddit on any topic and under such categories as: educational subreddits, entertainment subreddits, discussion subreddits, and humour and image-sharing subreddits.

Registered reddit users are also able to submit content to the site in the form of a link (e.g., link to a news article, photo, video) or as a text ("self") post. Once content has been submitted, registered users can then vote it 'up' or 'down', which moves this content to a different rank on the website's pages. Users are encouraged to 'upvote' content if they think that it contributes to the conversation and to 'downvote' content if they think that it is off-topic; in short, "the popularity and prominence of material on the site are determined by voting from the reddit community" (Duggan & Smith, 2013, p. 2).

Registered users are equally able to comment on one another's content and to vote on these comments, thus enabling discussion and accentuation of issues that users themselves deem relevant and meaningful.

# FACEBOOK

Also included in this research brief is an analysis of online conversations appearing on [Facebook](#), an open source, publicly available online social media and social networking website.

As of December 2018, Facebook counted over 2.32 billion active monthly users, with an average of 1.52 billion users logging onto Facebook daily and five new profiles created every second.<sup>vi</sup> Facebook was recently ranked as the third most visited site in the world.<sup>vii</sup>

Facebook users are able to maintain a list of friends who – depending on the privacy settings – may see the content on a users' profile, as well as upload photos and maintain photo albums that friends can view, and engage in interactive online chats. In addition, Facebook users can support group/fan/business pages, stream live videos, download apps to play video games, and engage in social media marketing campaigns, as but a few examples.

## DATA SETS

Four data sets were used to uncover linguistic patterns in online conversations pertaining to gender and Lebanon:

- (1) YouTube data (English)
- (2) Reddit data (English)
- (3) YouTube data (Arabic)
- (4) Facebook data (Arabic)

English conversations that covered topics about gender and Lebanon were sampled using a combination of the following search terms: woman, women, man, and men.

Arabic conversations that covered topics about gender and Lebanon were sampled using combinations of the following search terms: امرأة, زلّامة

All English and Arabic content within the data sets were created in 2018.

**Table 1. English YouTube data set overview**

Videos	Number of Words	Primary Language
25	274,184	English

The data sets used for the present analysis contained 25 English videos, which were drawn primarily from BBC News, Al Jazeera English, and RT.

**Table 2. English Reddit data set overview**

Conversation Threads	Number of Words	Primary Language
27	477,404	English

The data set used for the present analysis contained 27 conversation threads written in English, which were drawn primarily from the r/worldnews, r/news, and r/nrl subreddits.

**Table 3. Arabic YouTube data set overview**

Videos	Number of Words	Primary Language
35	720,087	Arabic

The data sets also contained 35 Arabic videos, which were drawn primarily from Aljazeera Programs, Al Arabiya, and Future TV News.

**Table 4. Arabic Facebook data set overview**

Conversation Threads	Number of Words	Primary Language
5	63,972	Arabic

The data set used for the present analysis contained 5 conversation threads written in Arabic.

## FINDINGS

An analysis of the discussions within the four data sets revealed that misogyny and gender issues were intertwined in much of the hateful discourse, with several salient terms emerging. Of these, the following three terms held associations that reveal particularly interesting discursive patterns pertaining to misogyny and gender and Lebanon: marriage, زواج; woman [women], امرأة; man [men], زلمة

In what follows, the key themes that emerged from the hateful discussions about marriage and women will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the differences across language text. Patterns relating to men were largely intertwined within the discussions about marriage and women.

## MARRIAGE; زواج

Marriage was discussed extensively in the data sets, both in the context of same-sex marriages and the nature and legality of marriages for heterosexual partners. A large proportion of this discourse was about the different kinds of marriages, their meanings and their perceived value and/or morality. Here, civil versus religious marriage, temporary marriage, and mut'ah marriage were discussed, which – in a number of instances – highlighted how religious figures such as sheiks and pastors use marriage-related issues to wield power over people who believe in that religion.

Representative comments include:

*Marriage originated in the Bible so don't take what was never ment for you!. I had no problem with gays and have homosexual friends but now to take something sacred between man and woman and try to make it ok for homosexuals is evil. The bible strictly forbids gays. Lebanon keep it real!*

*Gay marriage is rejected by all major world religions. Even the ancient Greeks, who claimed homosexual love was the truest form of love, did not have Gay marriage.*

و الطائفة خارج من المسيحي زواج منع هو سد بين ل المدني الزواج ترفض المسيحية العقيدة خارج من المسلمة تزوج لا حتى المدني الزواج ترفض الاسلامية العقيدة الطلاق بالاسماح عدم رجال ان الحلاقة تلك ملخص الشفوي المدني فرد الطلاق حق الرجل من ين تزوج لا حتى و ه طائفة يجب المدني الزواج ب هم احد رغبت و المدني الزواج ب يوافق قوا ما المسيحيين و المسلم بين الدين ان يدبوا الله و مجانبين . مدني يتزوج حتى يكفر ازم ل يعنى ه طائفة و ه دين من يخرج ان المدني الزواج و ه ايمان بين المؤمن يجمع ان ب ي سمحوا لا و هم تحت المنضوية يكفروا

الاج و السنة الهى فى نا عند زنى هي و حلال ه المتمع عند الشريعة ان ل هم يحاورم يقدرش ب رضو الهى يم ثلو علشان شريعة متجيش الم فروض ه كد زى ف ضدية فى يكون مال طونى اس تاذى ا ماعة شىء فى الاسلام ل ينتمو لا و مسلم بين غير هم لان ه الجماع و لسنة

Discussions about how religious leaders in Islam and Christianity use the law of marriage and divorce to control people emerged in the data sets. This created what was referred to as the phenomenon of “marriage tourism” in the Middle East, where both heterosexuals and homosexuals escape to Cyprus to get married and overcome the complicated rules about marriage.

Representative comments include:

*Can the women get divorce in the bible if the husband is abusive? The women have to commit adultery to be divorced and any one marry that women and will be called an adulator according to the Bible.*

*Incidentally, this is how Lebanon recognizes civil marriages between people of 2 different faiths- its constitution doesn't currently have a mechanism for civil marriage, but recognizes those carried out elsewhere. There's now an entire cottage industry of travel agents selling combined marriage/honeymoon trips to Cyprus for those who couldn't normally get married under Lebanese law.*



Another key component of these hateful discussions about women were gendered insults. Typically, language that involved violence towards females, denigrating females and dehumanizing LGBTQ+ people was used to insult men.

Representative comments include:

*...if a zoofag presents his AIDS anus to a dog and the dog chooses to penetrate. It started as LGB community.*

*If animals have butt sex, that makes it natural. Unnatural would have to be like... idk.. having sex with man made materials... like a pocket pussy.*

العلم و مكان ل امي به و اطلع ما كل ما الكول كل بي بي ان ماير رحم ال ناس كلام صريح صريح كلام  
 يذكن يذكن نسوان له خاص و ما يخلص ناس ل كلام بس عمري من اصغر و ه ذاعم و 23 عمري  
 روحي ل عدقه لب شد لعان الزواج الم تزوجه ت قول من اعصابي يذير شديي اك ثري ذكن يذكن  
 ه امان قطه ل عريس كرقم عط يني اسد تقرار الزواج الدين اكمال اج الاز ,, راح تيج ذبخ و اطلقني  
 مشارك سوي خلي تعلقني ال شاف

## DISCUSSIONS ACROSS LANGUAGES; اللغات عبر اللغات

Worth noting was that the above discussed themes were noticeably different across languages.

In the Arabic data sets, the hateful content was mainly about politics and entertainment, and the words most significantly collocated with women were sexist, condescending and rape-promoting. Swear expressions—even those used by women—always involved violating someone’s mother, sister or wife. Furthermore, the negative comments and sentiments seemed to be layered in this context. While all women were mentioned negatively, whether in regular social norms, where women are less than men, or whether they “deserved rape”, because they belonged to certain undesired groups—women of different backgrounds had different layers.

In addition, Lebanese women were oftentimes referred to in sexist and/or predatory terms, wherein women – whose virtue, according to users, was associated with their men and family’s honor – were framed as sexual objects, all in an effort to insult their families. Within this context, hateful discussions were oftentimes related to women and virginity,

Representative comments include:

الجديش السوري بل بنان داعس على روس ال ل بنان بة ول يل نهار كان عم يذيك ب ال نسوان كان  
 ال ل بنان يات و يا اخو ال شرموطة الجديش السوري ما كان يذغ تصب ال ل بنان يات متل ما اذت هلق عم  
 تذكي عن ال سوريات ب ال عكس ن سوان كون كاذو ي جول عنا و ي بوسوز اب نال ح تى نرضى  
 و كل الرجال ال ل بنان ية طنططات و ب يذ تاكو و ما عم ي بسطوهون و ل صراحة ان يكون قال ل يش ل ان  
 شد باب ناما ق صروف يهون

الشرم يطامك و اختك مثل الناس كل تفكر و دعارة بت شد تغل اختك يمكن دعارة بل شد تغلو  
 في نهان و ولادكن الله من ما ب خاف و ي لي اي دين عي ذلكن الله الوك يل ن عم و الله ن احسب  
 عيب ال سورتي بين اهلنا على في فرجها الله ظالم كل ع الله راسي ه رافع و ي ذية سورتي هف لسط قد امكن  
 و ك بير الله بس ي سد تضع فوه ب ي صيرو الزمن على يه ي جير لما الاذ سان و ي صير عم الي كل  
 ”لا بنان جر ص تو“

Hateful discussions in the English data sets were slightly different than those in the Arabic data sets, as the former revolved mainly around politics. Yet despite the fact that an analysis of the English data sets revealed similarly negative sentiments about gender, the extent of the material was less than that found in the Arabic data sets.

## CONCLUSION

Online discussions that were analyzed as part of this research brief highlight the extent to which misogyny and gender issues were intertwined in much of the overtly and covertly hateful discourse, with discussions about marriage and the role of men and women at the forefront of the hateful sentiment. In the online space, issues relating to the role(s) of women in Lebanon mirror the tensions that are found in the public domain in the offline world, especially those related to religion. Yet hateful sentiment was noticeably different across languages, wherein Arabic content was noticeably more negative than the English content.

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## URLS

[YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/) [http://www.youtube.com/]

[Reddit](http://www.reddit.com/) [http://www.reddit.com/]

[Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/) [http://www.facebook.com/]

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> For a full discussion of CACDA methodology, see the resources on the [Project Someone: Prejudice du jour web page](https://projectsomeone.ca/prejudicedujour). [https://projectsomeone.ca/prejudicedujour]

<sup>ii</sup> See <https://www.omnicoreagency.com/youtube-statistics/>

<sup>iii</sup> See <https://www.alexa.com/topsites>

<sup>iv</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/experiences/>

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.redditinc.com/press>

<sup>vi</sup> See <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>

<sup>vii</sup> See <https://www.alexa.com/topsites>