

Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes through Moroccan Facebook Groups: A Netnographic Analysis

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Abstract

The growing use and popularity of Facebook have transformed users into prosumers, blending the roles of both consumers and producers after historically being perceived as passive recipients of media texts. Facebook groups, in particular, offer people the opportunity to make the most of their digital footprint as they are involved in shared interest communities where they are more encouraged to share personal content and respond to other members' posts. This study strives to particularly explore, describe, analyze, and interpret the way Facebook groups can contribute to the deconstruction of gender stereotypes within the Moroccan context. For this purpose, we used netnography to delve deeper into the way members of two popular Moroccan Facebook groups, MTC and LA SUPERBE, use their online voices to tackle gender stereotypes. The findings illustrate that although many members of both genders tend to foster gender roles primarily through the use of gendered and sexist comments, others react actively against them, demonstrating their intent to make shared online platforms a space for women's empowerment and gender activism. Further findings reveal that women are more likely than men to redouble their efforts toward deconstructing gender stereotypes which appear to be harming women more than men.

Keywords

Social Media, Facebook Groups, Gender Stereotypes, Media Analysis, Netnography, Morocco

1. Introduction

As one of the most compelling online communication tools, Facebook has

played a major role in disseminating an array of social, cultural, and political messages, resulting in a wide range of revised perceptions and belief systems (Lupton & Southerton, 2021). Founded in 2004, Facebook started as an online social networking site through which people create new social relationships or simply strengthen existing ones. As more specificities are added, users become more inclined to adopt the platform as a normative component of their daily routines.

In less than a decade, Facebook has evolved from a simple online outlet, designed specifically to establish and strengthen existing social circles to a crucial 21st-century platform for free speech, online activism, advocacy, and social change (Boyd & Ellison, 2010: p. 18). Facebook did not limit its use to building social relationships; it eventually developed into a powerful communication channel through which every individual can have a voice that they are rarely afforded in the real world (Dumitrica, 2020: p. 583). As a result of giving different communities a global voice, they are now speaking up not only for themselves but also for the many other silenced groups who are forced to conform to societal norms and rules that are beyond their control. Accordingly, Facebook is not only for building personal connections but also for making social, cultural, and political changes.

Empowering women, debunking gender stereotypes, and fighting against the system of patriarchy are among the most commonly discussed issues in the virtual world. From #NotAllMen to #MeToo to #HeForShe, social media has been shown to have a significant impact on a nation's social, cultural, and political systems (Dumitrica, 2020: p. 584). Like hashtags, Facebook groups act as a significant form of social media activism (Da Silva & Barbosa, 2015: p. 186), especially that it is an interest-based community platform where a group of people with shared interests form a community with specific rules of engagement that guarantee the group's authenticity, consistency, and active engagement (Castillo De Mesa et al., 2020). Facebook groups provide users with the ultimate freedom to join the group that best serves their needs at that specific moment which can only be explained through a careful explanation of the uses and gratifications theory.

1.1. From Passive Consumers to Prosumers: A Look at the Uses and Gratifications Theory

With the rapid growth of modern technologies and the widespread use of social media, one can no longer differentiate between a producer and a consumer. Witnessing this blurred distinction between the two notions inspired Alvin Toffler in 1982 to form the blend word "prosumer" in his book "The Third Wave". Adapting this blend word to the digital world, most social media users, if not all of them, are both content creators and content consumers, as they simultaneously perform both roles (Fergie et al., 2016: p. 48). The shift from being passive consumers to becoming prosumers gives social media users more power and control over their social media usage.

Dissociating audiences from the aspect of passivity when it comes to their daily media consumption reflects the main principles of Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications Theory. As opposed to the different media effects theories that grant the media more aipower, control, and influence over its audience, the uses and gratifications theory reversed the role by raising the question of "why do people use the media?" instead of "what do the media do to people?" (Luo, 2020: p. 560). Hence, the UGT is more about assuring the agency, humanity, and cognition of audiences after they have been deprived of such paramount humanistic features.

In the 1970s, Blumler, Katz, and Gurevitch identified five pivotal needs that audiences seek to fulfill through their media usage (Luo, 2020: pp: 561-564): cognitive needs which reflect audiences' need to attain knowledge, effective needs which can be described as the need to feel loved, admired, wanted, and respected, social integrative needs which express the need to build and maintain strong social circles, personal integrative needs which convey people's need to explore their identity as well as the different aspects that can help them boost their self-esteem, credibility, respect, and social status, last but not least, tension free needs that motivate individuals to use the media solely to escape from their actual realities that may be filled with stress, insecurities, anxiety, and social pressure.

Gratifying the aforementioned needs through the use of a specific medium or an online platform is believed to be "the driving forces behind the existence and continuation of a particular medium" (Menon & Meghana, 2021). Therefore, it is the user's needs that drive a particular medium to update its features and services, as the more users' needs are gratified, the more loyal they become to that medium. Of the many different modern social networking sites, Facebook remains the most active and widely adopted online platform (Ellison, 2007: p. 213). The success of Facebook is mainly due to the changes it regularly implements to better adapt to human needs.

Facebook enables individuals to explore different unexplored facets of their identities, to help in changing the way certain social and cultural issues are perceived, and to reach and have an impact on a wide audience through one's regular and powerful online presence. It gives them what most people have been deprived of which is the freedom of choice. On Facebook, people are free to choose a name, a profile picture, a friends list, their relationship status, and most importantly, they are free to express themselves in all the ways possible. Accordingly, Facebook allows people to be seen, heard, and either admired or criticized, depending on the information they choose to share publicly. By sharing certain information on Facebook, people can perceive themselves from an outsider's lens through the likes, comments, reactions, and messages they get after the content they choose to share (Menon, 2022; Moon et al., 2022).

Undergoing the feeling of being watched and judged based on certain personal opinions may surround users with diverse social pressures that urge some of them to invest even more effort when representing themselves online, as every

uttered word counts and matters. Understanding the value of a single word motivates many people to choose their words wisely to prevent any misinterpretations that can negatively impact their online identity and status.

One of the most common topics that most Facebook groups address, be they mixed or single-gender groups, is gender issues. As with any other patriarchal society, Morocco has always been a male-dominated country (Herouach, 2020). Despite women's active participation in several domains that were monopolized by men, women in Morocco are often perceived from a stereotypical perspective which can only be explained through Eagly's social role theory.

1.2. Understanding Gender Stereotypes through Social Role Theory

Social role theory argues that socialization is the main reason behind gender stereotypes and bias (Eagly & Wood, 2016). From birth to childhood, human beings are usually confronted with a set of cultural practices that they are unable to resist. The socialization process seeks to familiarize members of a particular society with a diverse number of societal norms and rules, including gender expectations that dictate the way women and men should think, act, and react in different situations (Eagly & Wood, 2012: p. 460). Learning from an early age that women are socially and culturally unexpected to take initiative in most situations, occupy specific professional positions, and take leadership roles impacts to a very large extent people's overall perception of gender, perpetuating unintentionally the long-existing gender roles and stereotypes. Accordingly, both gender roles and gender stereotypes are internalized through the socialization process.

Another pivotal reason behind gender roles and stereotypes that the theory carefully addresses is sex differences (Eagly & Wood, 2016: p. 410). Anthropologists found that physical sex differences have contributed largely to the construction and reconstruction of gender roles. They explained the way people tend to, historically, associate men with power, authority, and leadership roles mainly because of their physical capabilities and strength while associating women with excessive sensitivity, domestic tasks, and care work due to their reproductive system and the overall functioning system of their body (Eagly & Wood, 2016: p. 415). Therefore, empowering women and contributing to gender equality necessitates combating first and foremost gender stereotypes which can be realized through diverse modern and compelling techniques, mainly social media which is used by millions of people from all over the world.

Given this, this paper is a netnographic study of the way Moroccan Facebook groups contribute to the deconstruction of gender stereotypes. It is an attempt to explore, describe, analyze, and interpret gender representation in two selected Moroccan Facebook groups, with a particular focus on the way members' online participation in the group can act as a catalyst for social change. Hence, the study tends to observe the online social interaction of two Facebook communities which are carefully selected due to their popularity, consistency, relevance to

the studied topic, and active engagement.

2. Method

The present paper seeks to explore the use of Facebook groups as a platform for social activism among Moroccans. More particularly, it attempts to analyze the way Moroccans' online interactions on Facebook groups can help in dismantling the different gender stereotypes that have existed for decades. Given this, investigating the social phenomenon of gender within the Moroccan social media context necessitates a qualitative netnographic analysis of gender-related social interactions on the selected Facebook groups.

Invented in the 1900s by Robert V. Kozinets, netnography is defined as “a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to the study of cultures and communities emerging through electronic networks” (Kozinets, 2002: p. 62). In a similar way to traditional ethnography, which focuses on generating the social and cultural perspectives of insiders about a specific phenomenon in a physical setting, netnography is an approach that focuses on self-immersion into virtual worlds in order to gain a more thorough understanding of particular social practices, norms, and views. Netnography is, therefore, a descriptive and interpretive qualitative method that seeks to understand and explore cultures, communities, and different social phenomena that dominate the social media landscape (Boelstorff et al., 2012: pp. 53-55).

Understanding a particular phenomenon through people's online interactions requires following a set of netnographic research practices that helped in comprehensively demystifying the phenomenon of gender in Facebook groups. In this regard, Kozinets (2010) proposes six methodological stages of netnography: “research planning, entrée, data collection, interpretation, ensuring ethical standards, and research representation” (Bowler, 2010: p. 1272). Following the six netnographic steps, this study aims at studying the actions, reactions, and interactions of the selected groups' members to unveil the way gender stereotypes are represented, addressed, and debunked.

Having developed an overall research plan which consists of the research focus, questions, objectives, and a review of previous research, we tackled the first two recommended stages of netnographic research. After defining the scope of the present study, locating the community that will be under exploration is the first part of netnographic data collection (Bowler, 2010: p. 1273). To meet this requirement, two well-known Moroccan Facebook groups were carefully selected due to their popularity in the Moroccan social media sphere, the quality content they are known for, the active engagement of their members, and their reputation when compared to many other Moroccan Facebook groups. The first one is named “MTC: Moroccan Travelers Community” which consists of over 343K members with an average of 40 posts per day, as stated in the group activity section. As its name implies, MTC is dedicated specifically to Moroccans who

do not simply travel to get entertained but who perceive traveling as a way of life, a self-reflection experience, and a life-changing journey (MTC, 2016). The second selected Facebook group is “LA SUPERBE” which is recognized nationally as an empowering group created by women for women. It has over 738K members who actively discuss every single issue related to women, including and primarily subjects that can help women grow, both personally and professionally.

The two selected online communities were under observation for a period of 14 weeks which enabled us to comprehensively understand the different aspects of Moroccan Facebook groups and the way Moroccan users’ interactions can, in different ways, either reinforce or decipher the long-existing gender stereotypes. To better understand and explain the way Facebook groups communicate gender issues, both implicitly and explicitly, we immersed ourselves in the chosen online communities, using participant observation. We became members of the groups a few months before conducting the study which enabled us to access a wide range of materials that helped us tremendously in collecting in-depth data. More precisely, we observed the way group members interact with each other every time a member uploads a post, inducing the wide variety of engagements per post.

Moving to data analysis and interpretations, we analyzed over 50 posts per group after carefully selecting the posts based on a set of criteria, namely their relevance to the studied topic and the amount of engagement based on the average rate. We then took screenshots of every selected post together with the reactions it receives, enabling us to better describe, analyze, and interpret our observations. Due to the detected similarities of many posts per group, thematic analysis was used to help us code all the collected data and organize it into categories, based on common themes.

Kozinets (2010) insisted that all the previously stated stages must adhere to the ethical principles of netnographic research. Since the two selected Facebook groups are private, obtaining informed consent is a mandatory step to ensure ethical netnographic research. Before starting the study, we contacted the groups’ admins, informing them about the study’s objectives and requirements and requesting their consent to make use of all the group’s content. The admins of both groups responded promptly with a yes confirmation, emphasizing their interest in this study and insisting on the anonymity of all participants as well as a guarantee of confidentiality. As requested, the admins uploaded a post before starting the research, informing the members that a study will be conducted for a period of 14 weeks. They also pinned the post throughout the whole observational process so that all new members would be informed.

3. Analysis

The two selected groups function differently in terms of why the group was first created, who posts the most, to whom, for what purposes, and what kind of

reactions posts usually get. Such differences helped us tremendously in gaining in-depth cultural insights into the way gender stereotypes are communicated, regardless of the nature of the Facebook group.

The MTC group is more about people's adventurous experiences as travelers while LA SUPERBE revolves around women's issues, rights, responsibilities, and lifestyles. Accordingly, the first selected group is more narrowed than the second one. Unlike the MTC group which counts mostly on a combination of both texts and images to convey a particular message, LA SUPERBE communicates most of its messages through texts only, as the messages they tend to convey are more personal, emotional, profound, serious, and detailed. Still, the two groups tackle both implicitly and explicitly gender stereotypes which will be carefully demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

3.1. MTC: Common Themes

3.1.1. Dis-Gendering Cooking

A 14-week observational period revealed that most of the food-related posts were uploaded by men, demonstrating their camp cooking skills through a set of attached pictures with the standard caption, "Our modest meal", and a smiley face emoji. Not only did the photographs demonstrate the normalcy of men preparing a dish, but also their enjoyment during the washing of dishes and cleaning of the campsite.

Initially, such posts tended to receive numerous sarcastic, gendered, and sexist comments among which were "tell me something men can't do!" told repeatedly by male members, "looks delicious but you absolutely can't compete with us" followed by a winking face emoji and written by a female member, "6/10 but as a man, it's 10/10" told by a female member, "can you marry me?" commented by female members, "Modest meal?? I see", "Meanwhile your mother is worried about your eating behavior" followed by a face with tears of joy emoji, "who said we need a wife?" followed by "#lifegoals", "finally a man doing it right!" written by a female member, "Just checked whether I'm on the right group hahaha", and people tagging their female friends to compare both genders' cooking abilities.

Through sharing their cooking skills and experiences, male members are debunking the gender stereotype that always associates food making with women, not as a talent or a job but rather as an inherited social responsibility, contributing automatically to the revision of gender roles and norms. However, the comments were highly diverse, as some reflected the traditional patriarchal mindset that seeks to perpetuate gender roles over generations while others reflect their effort to change such mindsets.

As more similar posts are uploaded, members became accustomed to seeing men doing tasks that were historically attributed to women, as their reactions became more encouraging, empowering, unbiased, and favorable. This shift is primarily due to many members' constant denial of every sexist, gendered, and stereotyped comment. Under each of these comments, we observed several responses from both genders, but mostly from female members, reflecting their

frustration, anger, and disappointment whenever they encountered a gendered comment from a male member, let alone from female members who happily contribute to the reproduction of gender stereotypes. It was also observed over weeks that the same members constantly challenged sexism, gender roles, and gender stereotypes. Given this, people's initial responses to these posts reflect the uncommonness of seeing men in Morocco cooking, serving food, and doing the dishes. However, such reactions slowly vanished, as the more people are exposed to a specific message, the more likely they internalize the message, normalize it, and adapt to it.

3.1.2. Women as Self-Leaders

One of the most noteworthy observations is the significant number of female group members who represent Moroccan women as hikers, trippers, and solo travelers, reflecting their high level of self-leadership skills. Many female group members earned the badge of group experts due to their active and instructive engagement. One of them is known for cycling around the world which was her childhood dream that soon turned into a reality after a lot of hard work, sacrifices, and most importantly, self-belief. She regularly shared with the group her solo traveling experiences by uploading informative and detailed posts with aesthetically captured pictures. Most of her posts reflected also her social skills, as she managed to meet many people from different nationalities who warmly invited her into their houses, offering her the opportunity to represent Morocco, in general, and Moroccan women, in particular. Besides acting as a cultural ambassador, she also shared the importance of solo traveling in developing as well as improving one's self-reflection. Traveling the world by bicycle enabled her to evaluate her emotional, behavioral, and cognitive processes.

As with most other posts, there were several encouraging and empowering comebacks but we also detected several sexist comments, primarily from male members, including "You're just an exception", "how come you're travelling alone? Don't you have a family?", "Still, you girls belong in the kitchen", "Come do solo trips here in Morocco, then talk to me about freedom and independence!" Most of these comments were turned into a debate, starting with the post writer who actively reacted to every single comment, be it a positive or a negative one, demonstrating her strong willingness to change such patriarchal and stereotyped ideologies through her regular posts. A number of other female members responded strongly against sexist comments, emphasizing the need to get over patriarchal sexism.

Another female member expressed, through several posts, her profound passion for the sport of canyoning which she carefully explained in one of the posts, presenting some recommendations, strategies, and skills for anyone who might be interested. As a multi-sport adventure that is not usually practiced by Moroccans, most members in the comment section were surprisingly asking her about the technicalities of the activity. Being able to practice canyoning means having the capacity to do other outdoor activities that include but are not limited

to swimming, hiking, and climbing. Accordingly, having a woman introduce others to this uncommonly practiced activity is in itself a big step toward redefining gender roles, as she debunked the stereotype that limits women to indoor activities that do not demand extra physical, emotional, and cognitive effort and capabilities.

3.1.3. Women's Financial Independence: A form of Empowerment

One of the leading questions most group members receive whenever they share an interesting travel experience is “where do you get the money from?”. As a response to this commonly asked question, an active female group member explained in a long paragraph the particularities of low-cost travel which inspired her tremendously to embark on this journey. She continued to emphasize that this type of travel mandates developing a diverse number of skills, including time management skills, planning skills, problem-solving skills, and self-leadership skills.

Another adventurous female group member uploaded a post on the same issue, emphasizing the importance of being financially independent before undertaking any adventurous experience. She described the way having part-time jobs while studying helped her tremendously in not only improving her financial status but also increasing her level of self-independence, self-esteem, and self-confidence. She continued to describe financial independence as the only way through which women, especially those belonging to highly patriarchal societies, can save themselves from masculine authority, societal pressure, and cultural expectations.

Such posts mostly received questions for further explanations, reflecting members' strong interest in knowing more about this topic. Other comments revealed the extent to which such posts inspired others, especially women, to take initiative and change the course of their lives, as they wrote: “that's what I'm talking about”, “you girl have no idea how you inspire us”, “your posts changed my life”, “it's because of you that I'm now able to both save money and treat myself”, “post more of this”, “you make us proud”, etc.

3.1.4. Feeling Empowered Through Solo Traveling

Sharing women's solo traveling experiences is among the top engaging topics in the group. Moroccan Facebook users are used to seeing men traveling alone while still getting amazed and astonished whenever seeing a woman doing a solo trip and that is mainly due to societal gender expectations that tend to give men more freedom, space, and control over their lives and decisions than women. Nevertheless, females' activities in this group reflect their intention to debunk several gender stereotypes that tend to widen the existing gender gap.

During the 14-week observation period, many female members took solo trips during their summer holidays, which some described as a new discovery, while others portrayed as a way of life. One of the most active members in the group who has a group expert badge shared regularly the way traveling alone helped

her grow as a woman, as she managed to experience the world through her lens without being influenced by others who unintentionally force their point of view. Hence, being the decision-maker in every step of the trip from planning it, to fully living it, to handling unexpected issues is the most empowering tool for everyone, especially women.

Both genders' responses were overwhelmingly supportive, favorable, and empowering, reflecting members' shared belief in the power of traveling as a means for self-development and self-empowerment. Many others, mostly female members, shared the way these posts inspired them to take their first solo trips. Their comments also convey their excitement and pride whenever they see women attaining things they were deprived of a few decades ago, giving them hope that Moroccan society's obsession with masculinity and patriarchy will eventually disappear.

3.2. LA SUPERBE: Common Themes

Unlike MTC, LA SUPERBE is an all-female group where members have more freedom of sharing without having to adhere to a specific theme, as long as the group's rules are respected. Given this, one can notice a range of raised topics about intimacy, infidelity, polygamy, arranged marriage, professional growth, studies, and more. With the new Facebook feature of anonymity, members are more encouraged to present more authentic and unfiltered content, creating a free and non-judgmental space where women can seek advice, help, support, empowerment, and self-reflection.

3.2.1. Marriage as a Social Construct

Many anonymized members expressed how socially pressured they feel due to the socially constructed notion of marriage, most of whom focused on the way age became a social burden as they are in their 30s and still unmarried. Although some of them achieved academic success as well as financial stability and independence, they still feel socially and culturally isolated due to their marital status. Others expressed that they are simply not as interested in marriage as in getting educated or employed. Such posts usually receive over 500 comments that actively react to the member's concerns, presenting suggestions, sympathy, blame, advice, anger, and recommendations.

Most of these posts reflect the way the cultural idea of marriageable age affected them negatively, to the extent that some of them were considering arranged marriage, only to prevent the feeling of being excessively pressured by society. One of the members described in detail the way she had been working on her dream project. Once she launched it, she started noticing the way her family and surroundings did not celebrate her achievement as much as they would celebrate the concept of marriage. She then started getting criticized and blamed for building a career instead of getting married. At first, she stated that she did not consider their words but the more she got bombarded with such beliefs, the more she internalized them until she convinced herself that she should

get married the soonest possible. Knowing that she might be taking the wrong decision, as she became extremely manipulated by societal norms and roles through her surroundings, she sought help through the group, requesting prompt advice and recommendations that can better guide her to reconsider her thoughts and make the right decision.

Her post received over 700 comments, most of which were empowering and uplifting. The majority of members emphasized that being unmarried in the 30s or 40s should never concern women, especially in today's world where women have busier lives than ever before. Some of them urged her to concentrate on growing her project, as many women's ultimate wish is to achieve financial independence. Others expressed the daily issues they are forced to face as parents, let alone being a married couple who are unable to have a child. Oppositely, some comments blamed her for easily adopting such a mindset that perceives the worth of a woman through the lens of her marital status, underlining the extent to which it hurts to see female entrepreneurs holding such beliefs.

Exactly five days after uploading her first post, she posted another one thanking all the group members for every valuable piece of advice or comment they gave her. She described how she felt captivated by her surroundings' toxicity which affected her in several negative ways, making her believe that her worth is in getting married and having children. She also said that if she did not post on the group, she would already be married to a person of her family's choice only to meet others' the expectations of her family and society. However, the engagement she received on her post motivated her to reflect on herself and reevaluate her perception of her achievements, her life purposes, and her overall thinking.

3.2.2. Balancing between Professional Tasks and Domestic Ones

Balancing between work and family, especially as mothers, was among the top commonly discussed issues in the group. Many group members during the observational process shared the struggle behind being a working mom in a world where women have to carry more domestic responsibilities only because of their sex. Such posts received over 1000 comments, reflecting women's different perceptions of this issue. A large number of members gave patience as an answer, urging them to maximize their level of tolerance, emphasizing that women are born to perform such tasks. Such comments received numerous replies with angry emoji reactions, reflecting members' denial of such patriarchal mindsets. Others assured them that there is no possibility to balance work and family, reflecting on their own experiences and advising them to choose either of the jobs, as being a mother is also a full-time job except that it is an unpaid one. There are also a vast number of members who insist that this issue should concern both genders and not specifically women, recommending them to share the struggle with her husband in an attempt to find practical solutions that can satisfy both genders.

3.2.3. Women Leading the Group

Since its launching in 2015, LA SUPERBE received national attention from the

media, describing it as more than a simple online gathering of women. It is rather an empowering group that seeks to not only support Moroccan women but also deconstruct different gender stereotypes that tend to eternalize the system of patriarchy (Hajji, 2021). In one of the introductory posts on the group's concept, one of the admins emphasized that La Superbe is a group made by women and for women. It gathers thousands of women from all over Morocco, most of whom are lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, teachers, coaches, engineers, managers, Ph.D. students, and journalists. Having such a diverse community helped tremendously in making the group more enlightening, informative, engaging, and all-encompassing.

Throughout a 14-week observational period, different group members used Facebook live streams to communicate different issues that concern women particularly, inviting experts in different fields. The most examined topics were domestic violence from a legal perspective, marriage, starting a business in Morocco as a woman, parenting styles, infidelity, gender differences, insecurities, and mental health. These live streams usually motivate members to share their own experiences on the tackled topic so that other members can benefit from the entire discussion.

"Dealing with unhealthy marriage" was one of the most engaging Facebook lives on the group, as it was tackled not only from a legal perspective but also from a religious and cultural standpoint. One of the members wrote that the worst decision she made was getting married, as she ended up living with a narcissist who enjoyed harming her in all ways after she sacrificed her family, her job, her social relationships, and her overall dreams only to meet his expectations. Many members reacted to this post, requesting the live moderators to address this situation, and they did. The streamers (a male sociologist, a male psychologist, and a female lawyer) started by asking her a set of questions to identify whether she felt ready to get out of such a toxic relationship. They then suggested starting divorce procedures as the first step of healing. Once she gets her divorce, they insisted on finding the right therapist who can help her regain her self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, and humanity. Only then, she would feel relieved, they said.

They also urged all members regardless of their marital status to never sacrifice something for someone who would not do the same, especially when it comes to their financial independence. Insisting on women's financial independence reflects the extent to which women's freedom in patriarchal societies can primarily be attained through achieving financial independence. They continued to illustrate that marriage is a partnership between two individuals, not a battle where men are expected to prove their masculinity by controlling and oppressing women. Hence, as soon as a woman notices that she is being deprived of her freedom, cognition, and independence, she should immediately take control of the situation before getting controlled by it. They added that like marriage, divorce is a life experience that should never hold women back. Instead, a divorced woman can achieve far more goals than a miserable married woman.

The comments on this life conveyed just how inspired, motivated, and empowered women felt, as they were tagging one another, confirming the streamers' statements, interacting positively with their talk, and explicitly expressing the degree to which they needed to hear those words. This increasing social interaction communicates the powerful role of Facebook groups in actively tackling gender stereotypes by raising awareness about several issues that concern women the most. Live streams are particularly used to create a stronger bond between group members who feel that they are finally heard and actively responded to.

4. Conclusion

In this study, we investigated the way Moroccan Facebook users' online participation can contribute to deconstructing gender stereotypes. For this purpose, an observational study was conducted over a period of 14 weeks on two Moroccan Facebook groups, yielding a variety of themes and conclusions. Considering the differences in scope between the two groups, each group was analyzed separately but contributed equally to raising the group's awareness of gender issues.

Our analysis revealed that gender was a key detail in almost every uploaded content in both groups. Although many members tended to foster gender roles and stereotypes primarily through the use of gendered and sexist comments, many others reacted actively against them, demonstrating their intent to make shared online platforms a space for women's empowerment and gender activism. This finding indicates that many members perceive Facebook groups more than just a simple social network where one can build social connections. They rather consider it a dynamic platform for activism and empowerment, as evidenced by many members' active, empowering, and influential online interactions.

Furthermore, it was evident that most members of both groups actively challenged various forms of male domination and female subordination that tend to reinforce and perpetuate gender stereotypes. Creating an all-female group that has been recognized nationally as a powerful women digital empowerment platform is in itself an important step toward changing traditional gender roles and norms, as it aims to raise women's awareness of a wide range of issues, including their position, worth, and rights. Similarly, the mixed-gender group contributes actively to dismantling several gender stereotypes, mainly implicitly, by displaying gender through personal lived experiences and activities that were traditionally categorized into either feminine or masculine. Results have also shown that women are more likely to redouble their efforts toward deconstructing gender stereotypes which appear to be concerning and harming women more than men.

Although the research attained its purposes, there were some inevitable limitations. The first one concerns time constraints. Conducting a netnographic study of two Facebook groups in a period of 14 weeks was extremely challenging, especially that we generated a large amount of data that demanded a careful screening and selection process. Hence, if time allowed, we would prolong the

observational period and include more diverse Facebook groups for more generalized and valid results. The second one is related to our use of netnography which makes the study's findings limited by the authors' analytical and interpretive capabilities. Therefore, future studies could fruitfully explore this topic further by applying a mixed-method approach that can help in producing more reliable, valid, and generalized findings.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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