A Netnography of Digital Popular Education on Instagram: Arabic Sexual and Reproductive Health Education

Rana El-Zoheiry

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

McGill University, Montreal

August 2021

A thesis subnitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts

Table of Contents

Abstract

This thesis is about popular education in social media spaces. Situated at the intersection of critical education and social media, this thesis examines literature on popular education, feminist approaches to popular education, and social media affordances and platform politics, to theoretically frame the study of how digital popular education on Instagram takes place. The research focuses on two main tenets of popular education: dialogue and knowledge production. To research how dialogue and knowledge production unfolds in popular education on Instagram, the thesis focuses on the specific case of Mother Being (@thisismotherbeing), which is an educational initiative for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Egypt and the broader Arab world. By conducting an in-depth netnography of Mother Being, this research shows how popular education on Instagram involves the facilitation of critical dialogue, the creation of educational content that is emotionally engaging and rooted in people's lived realities, and the complex negotiation of tensions in knowledge production. This research has implications for the literature on popular education and social media, upon which future research can build to further explore how digital popular education on Instagram and other social media sites takes place.

Résumé

Cette thèse concerne l'éducation populaire à travers le réseautage social. Etant issue de la section de l'éducation critique et les moyens Médias, elle examine l'effet de la littérature et l'introduction des approches féministes dans l'éducation populaire ainsi que la potentialité des Médias et la plateforme politique par rapport au cadre théorique d'étudier comment l'éducation populaire numérique prend lieu sur Instagram. La recherche se concentre sur deux principes d'éducation populaire: le dialogue et la production des connaissances. Afin de chercher comment lesdits principes se présentent dans ce type d'éducation sur Instagram, la thèse jette la lumière sur le cas spécifique de Mother Being (@thisismotherbeing), qui est une initiative éducationnelle portant sur la santé sexuelle et reproductive (SSR) en Egypte et au monde arabe. Etudiant profondément la méthode netnographique du Mother Being, cette recherche démontre comment l'éducation populaire sur Instagram permet à un dialogue critique ainsi qu'une création d'un contenu éducationnel qui ne manque pas d'émotions et qui est directement lié aux réalités vécues par de vraies personnes; sans négliger la négociation complexe des tensions dues à la production des connaissances. Cette recherche comporte sur l'implication de la littérature dans l'éducation populaire et le réseautage social ce qui permettra à une recherche future capable de guider vers l'exploration de plus de méthodes numériques éducatives populaires sur Instagram et d'autres réseaux sociaux afin de savoir comment elles se présentent sur cet horizon virtuel.

This thesis is dedicated to my father who was my first teacher and biggest inspiration.
Forever in my heart and on my mind, until we meet again.
I love you ∞

Acknowledgements

الْحَمْدُ للهِ الَّذِي بِنِعْمَتِهِ تَتِمُّ الصَّالِحَاتُ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا مُبَارَكًا فِيهِ

This is my last and favorite part of writing this thesis. It is the culmination of an adventure that began in August 2019 in Montreal and is ending now, two years later, in Cairo. Nothing would have been possible without my family, friends and mentors to whom I am immensely grateful.

Thank you to my supervisor, Bronwen Low, for her critical feedback, support and flexibility throughout the writing of this thesis. It has been such a positive experience working with you.

To my mother, Hala, I love you so much. None of this would have been possible without you. None of this would make sense without you. Thank you for your unconditional love, care, support, stories and humor, they grounded me and kept me safe, especially during the times when I felt incapable of finishing what I started. Thank you for your constant prayers, for never taking this seriously, for reminding me that I mattered more to you than anything I did or wrote, for pushing me to take breaks and go out when I had ridiculous plans of writing for days on end. I'm very lucky to have you, Mama, and I love you forever.

To my sisters, Sara and Dina, I love you immeasurably. You've been there for me through it all, from the days when I used to press the power button on our old computer while you played, to the days you had to take me to reception class while I cried and clutched on to you, to now! Thank you for your love, kindness, humor and unconditional support. You inspire me in ways you'll never know. To Sara, thank you for being my go-to and home in MTL, I was never alone because you were only a few floors up and always looking out for me. To Dina, you were never not with me, you were always here for me. To Mohamed and Mohamed, thank you for being my family.

To the lights of my life, Alya, Nadine, Adam, Malek and Yunis, you make my heart bounce with joy. Being your aunt is my favorite thing in the world. I love you more than you'll ever know.

To my best friend and comrade, Ayah. We planned this MA together years before I started it, and you were by my side every step of the way. From C town depressions to 352456 more kunafas than we could ever eat, I wouldn't have done it without you. Thank you for your radical love, for being my family, for being the first reader of everything I write (and don't write), for wanting to break the world and reimagine it with me, for reminding me that we are more than anything we'll ever create. I love you, my dawg. Here's to growing older and weirder together, with Ahmed and Memo questioning our social sci fi ever so casually.

To my best friend and sister, Alaa, I made it this far with your love and encouragement. Thank you for being my person, for believing in me from the very beginning, for gently pushing me to

be my best self, and for making me see myself wonderfully through your eyes for the past 11 years. Thank you for never leaving my side, for going on adventures with me, for entertaining my obsessions, and alleviating my anxieties with your love and humor. This wouldn't have been possible without you. I love you, Lulu. Here's to countless more years of being my sister, growing older and traveling the world together.

To my first McGill friend, flatmate and family by choice, Hiba. Thank you for sticking with me from the very beginning, for your love, care, humor and support. Living with you has been a lovely adventure marked by our singing and dancing, long summer walks, rants about everything, eating lunch together and watching TV shows (Alithia!). Thank you for being my partner in crime in everything, I love you mon amie.

To my friend, brother and CherBrooke trio partner, Mohanad. Thank you for your love, care, friendship, and humor. You inspire me with your radical ideas, your love for your family, your creativity, and your apple with cinnamon chicken recipe. My two years in MTL are marked with your jokes and unforgettable lunchtime contributions. I love you, bro.

To my best friend and favorite poet, Ali. Thank you for staying by my side in the dark and showing me the way through with your love, wisdom, humor, kindness, and care. This wouldn't have been possible without you. Thank you for inspiring me, for believing in me, for being my confidante, for sharing your art and poetry with me, for encouraging me to write with your unmatched tips, and for being a true friend. I love you, Ali.

To my wonderful friends from school and university, Heba, Rana, Rana and Hadil. Thank you for your love and kindness. Thank you for always seeing the best in me. Your friendship is one of a kind and it has kept me going despite the distance and periods of quiet. I love you.

To my amazing friend and storyteller, Yehia. This thesis would not have been the same without you. Thank you for being the first to read my analysis, your feedback has inspired numerous drafts and pushed me to write with my heart and soul. Thank you for your friendship, care, and humor, Yehia. I wish you sunny fields of mangoes and plenty of stories to chase after.

To Yolla, Menna, Dania, Amani and the many other friends I haven't mentioned, thank you for your friendship. I love you.

To my beautiful aunt, Tante Toto, I love you more than you'll ever know. To my Uncle Tamer and Faten, thank you for everything you do for us, I love and appreciate you. To all of my father's friends, Uncle Wael, Tante Eman, Uncle Mamdouh, Uncle Mohsen, Dr. Mashael, you are my family too.

To Ayesha, Hiba, Farah, Lisa, Tom and Richard, I learned so much from you. Thank you for all the laughter and the good times. To Elham, Marianne, Sara, Ebtihaj, thank you for your support.

To Abdul, my good friend and chess partner, thank you for always reaching out. See you in Pakistan.

To Chloe, thank you for being the coolest, keeping me company in academia and inspiring me with your ideas about the world. To Aileen, thank you for your care and support throughout this adventure. To the rest of my cohort, congratulations to all of us!

To the rest of my friends in MTL, Rima, Shaima, Jehan, Ahmed, thank you for being there for me.

To Aziz Choudry, you are no longer with us, but you will never stop inspiring me and everyone who has ever crossed paths with you. To my professors at McGill and AUK, thank you for teaching me. I am truly grateful to you.

Chapter 1: Mother Being as Digital Popular Education

The 2011 Egyptian revolution initiated me and many other millennials into a lifelong journey of emancipatory (un)learning online. The online blogs, activist websites, and social media content were my pathway to immersing myself in the online communities and networks of politically active Egyptians. I shared, screenshotted, and bookmarked hundreds of online blog posts, videos, discussion threads, web pages, memes, and articles about the social issues and grassroots resistance in Egypt. I followed the accounts of activists, citizen journalists, grassroots initiatives, and any person or group that had something interesting, informative or satirical to say. The vocabulary of the revolution gave many people the language they needed to critically reflect on the world around them. The revolution had taught, politicized and energized many, and it showed online through the wealth of political educational content being created and circulated by all sorts of people on social media.

Writing about the role of social media in facilitating critical learning about the Occupy Wall Street movement, Hall (2012) states that "although articles and books of a more academic nature are emerging daily, they will not replace the hashtag world in the hacking of our consciousness" (p. 128). Critical learning that takes place within social movements or from knowledge produced by them is referred to as 'social movement learning' (Choudry, 2015; Foley, 1999). Despite the significant role that social media plays in social movement learning and the consequent 'hacking of our consciousness,' critical educational research tends to focus on the negative aspects of social media and digital technology more broadly (e.g. McLaren & Jandric, 2020). It is also a western-dominated focus in that it tends to overlook the fact that social media platforms represent one of the main outlets for creative expression and participation in politically repressive contexts in the Global South.

The recent proliferation of educational activities and content in line with social movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) and the feminist movement in Egypt represents an opportune moment to critically examine the role of social media in social movement learning, specifically popular education. Popular education is a form of radical learning that takes place in non-formal spaces and is rooted in grassroots social movements (Kane, 2001). It differs from social movement informal/incidental learning in that it usually refers to deliberately educational events such as workshops and discussion circles. In reality, informal and non-formal learning take place in all sorts of fluid and interrelated ways that defy any rigid categorization (Choudry, 2015), but

differentiation (not binarism) is imperative for practical reasons. Inspired by the non-formal social movement learning that is taking place online, the focus of this research is on *digital* popular education.

Digital Popular Education

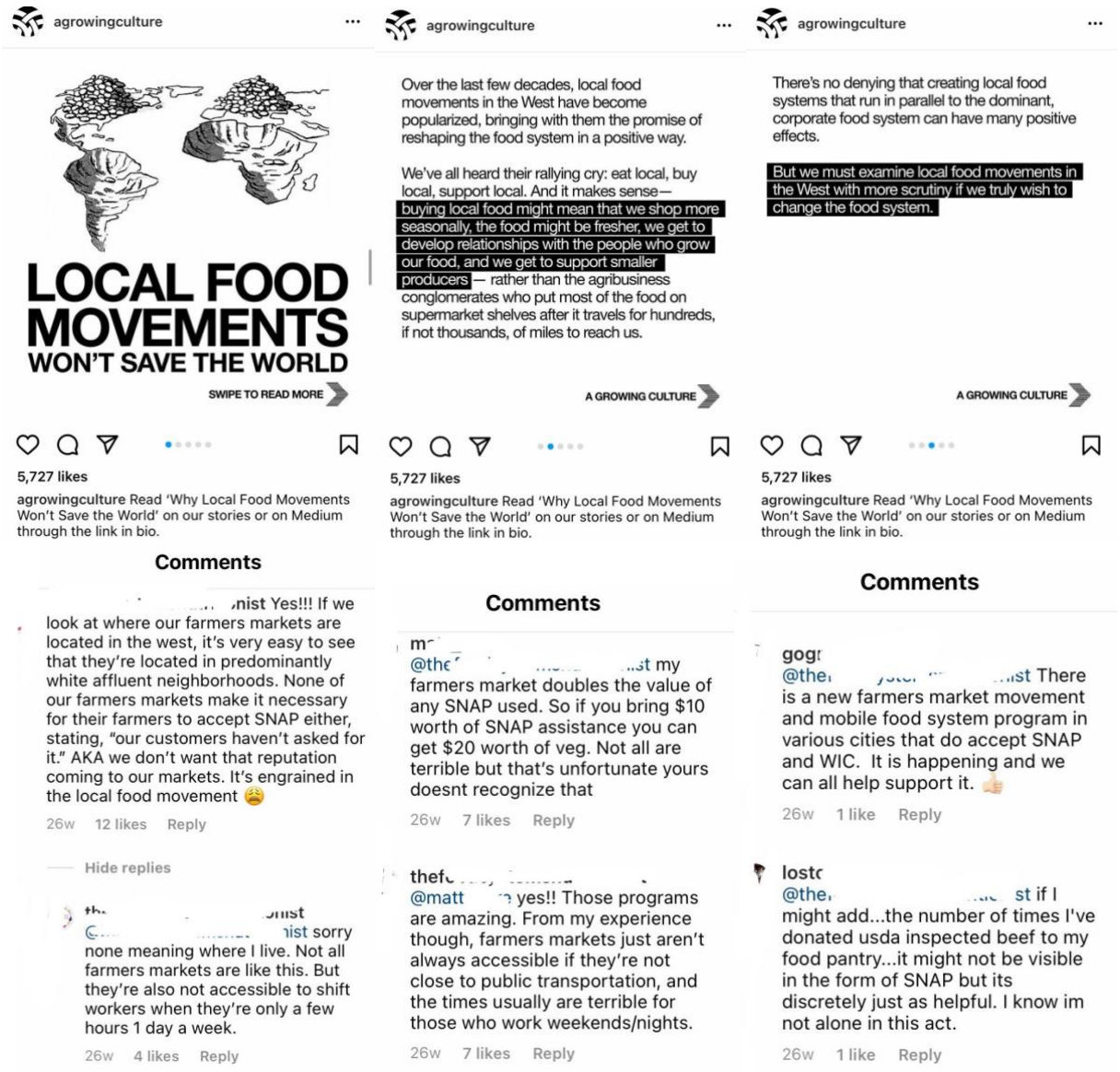
I use the term 'digital' to emphasize how popular education is being wholly initiated and facilitated through uniquely digital practices in online spaces. In using 'digital popular education,' I am differentiating between the dialogical, real-time communicative, and creative nature of popular education facilitated by the affordances of social media platforms, and the almost static nature of uploaded critical educational content on websites - considered to be a form of social movement learning in the literature (e.g. Irving & English, 2011; Hunt & Kaercher, 2012; Horsman, 2012). Whereas research on social media and social movements has mainly focused on Twitter and Facebook, many activists, popular educators, grassroots collectives, and everyday people who were not previously political, are now also using Instagram for critical conversations and content creation (Nguyen, 2020; Gallucci, 2020).

Instagram as a platform is mainly researched in the fields of business and marketing. When it comes to education, it has garnered the attention of researchers in the medical field who have explored existing Instagram accounts that provide medical education and examined the learning that takes place as a result (Kamel Boulos et al., 2016; Shafer et al., 2018; Douglas et al., 2019). These studies are the beginnings of researching Instagram as an educational platform, which is an opportune moment given that outside the academic realm, people are using Instagram for popular education on a daily basis. To illustrate, Figure 1 and Figure 2 below show two different examples of what popular education on Instagram looks like.

Education on Instagram is not limited to informative or thought-provoking posts, but crucially involves conversations that people have in the comments section. As described above, popular education refers to non-formal learning that is political, committed to liberation, and involves critical dialogue and participatory knowledge production (Kane, 2012). Guided by these tenets, it is therefore important to explore the extent to which Instagram enables digital popular education through critical dialogue and participatory knowledge production. What kind of model of digital popular education are we seeing on Instagram? What opportunities and challenges are there? How do social media affordances enable or limit digital popular education?

Figure 1

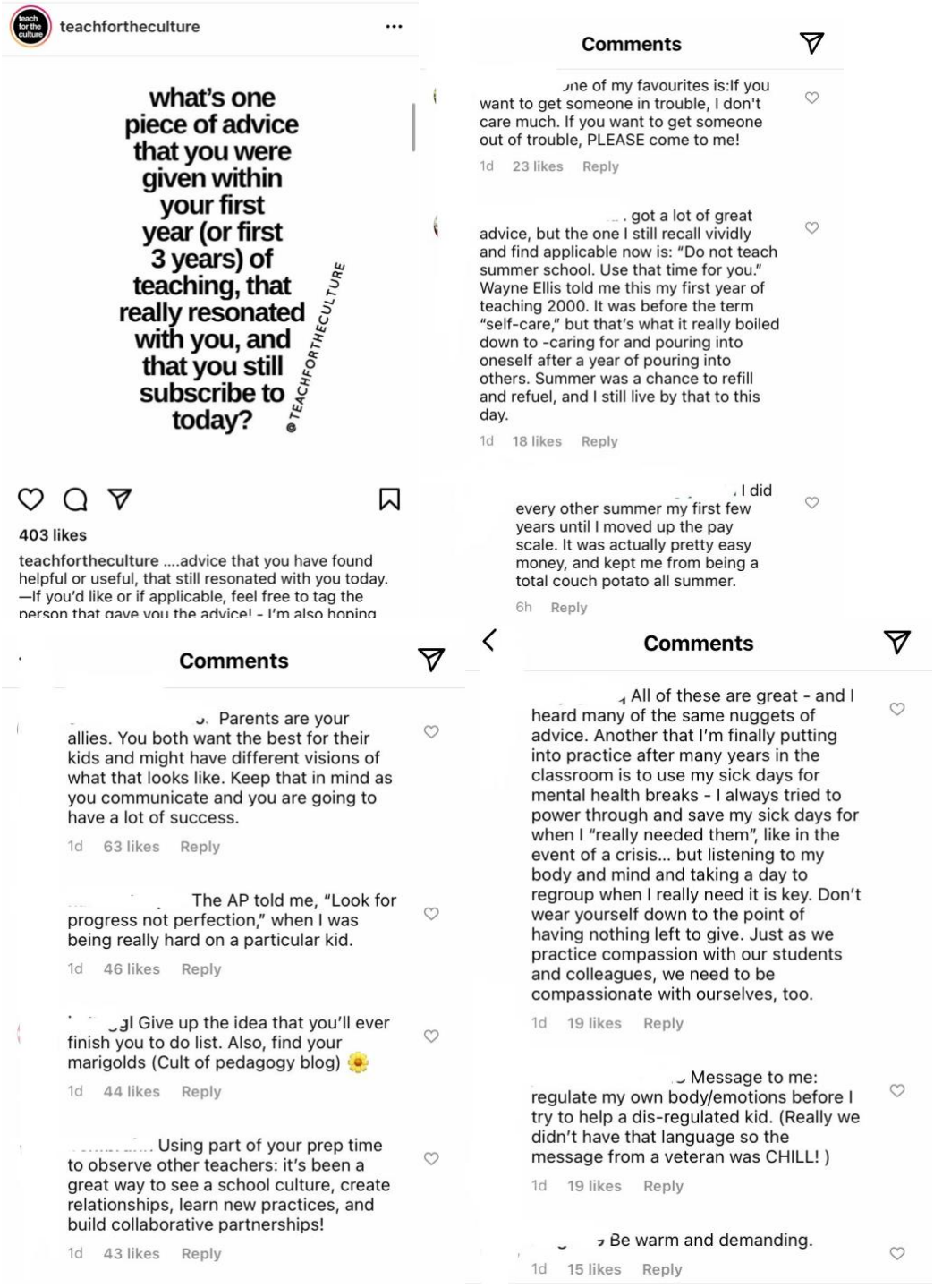
Example of popular education on Instagram from @agrowingculture



Note. Commenters' Instagram handles (names) do not show for anonymity purposes.

Figure 2

Example of popular education on Instagram from @teachfortheculture



Note. Commenters' Instagram handles (names) do not show for anonymity purposes.

A particularly influential Instagram account is Mother Being, or @thisismotherbeing. Mother Being is an educational platform based in Egypt that provides "reproductive and sexual health education for the Arab World," as stated in the Instagram account bio (which is a brief

description found at the top of any Instagram account). The account was created by Nour Emam, an Egyptian doula and sex educator, in December 2019. It rose to prominence in July 2020 in the midst of a wave of digital feminist activism in Egypt and has since grown to become one of the most popular platforms for Arabic sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education online, with more than a quarter of a million of followers. Politically, it is firmly committed to Arab women's empowerment and sexual and reproductive health rights. The content includes scientific and cultural information about topics such as safe sex, sexual pleasure, STDs, pregnancy, obstetric violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and more.

With its founder based in Egypt, it is important to note that Mother Being exists -along with other digital feminist intiatives- in the midst of a politically repressive context. Aside from the general lack of internet freedom in Egypt, with censorship, website blocking and user arrests by the government (Freedom House, 2020), authorities now frequently target female social media influencers and have recently imprisoned two on charges such as "public indecency," "inciting debauchery" and "undermining family values" (Begum, 2021). In spite of this, Mother Being continues to grow and is frequently cited by alternative media outlets as being an educational, empowering and daring feminist platform for sex education in Egypt and the Arab world. Its work is particularly urgent given the state of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Egypt.

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Education in Egypt

El-Hameed (2015) describes how prevalent sexual violence is in Egypt, stating that reportedly more than nine out of every ten ever-married women aged 15-49 have been circumcised. She also states how according to the "Survey of Young People in Egypt," more than 70% of young men and 57% of young women in Egypt believe that female circumcision is necessary. Furthermore, the rate of HIV infection is still on the rise in Egypt, making it one of the few countries in the world with rising HIV numbers (El-Hameed, 2015). These statistics are not surprising, given that young people receive very limited SRH education at school and rely on alternative sources of information such as parents, friends, inappropriate websites and social media that may be misleading or inaccurate (Wahba & Roudi-Fahimi, 2012). Bader (2020) states how, according to UNESCO, the implementation of comprehensive sex education (another term for SRH education) in low- and middle-income countries can improve knowledge HIV/AIDS, STIs, and contraception and promote positive gender norms that enable young people to make safe and informed choices about their reproductive health.

In an extensive report published by the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), Roushdy (2013) states several challenges that face the implementation of comprehensive sexual education grassroots initiatives in Egypt. These challenges include: social resistance to the open discussion of sexuality; the limited number of youth that have access to NGOs that provide SRH education and the lack of coordination among these NGOs; the health-oriented approach of SRH initiatives that mainly rely on physicians without including people such as sexologists and anthropologists to design more comprehensive educational programs; and, the lack of sustainability of these initiatives due to the lack of state funding and their reliance on international donor agencies. The barriers to the institutionalization of SRH education including a lack of national spending on it, combined with the overarching challenges that face SRH grassroots initiatives, paint a picture of the difficult situation in Egypt.

In spite of these challenges, the research by Bader (2020) suggests that the benefits of any SRH education program can be maximized by including young people in the program design, implementation, and evaluation, tailoring the program to young people's needs and preferences, adapting the program to the local sociocultural context, carefully selecting and training program educators, and linking the program to youth-friendly services. Wahba and Roudi-Fahimi (2012) similarly argue that SRH education programs in Egypt must provide clear and age-appropriate science-based sexuality education that is culturally relevant. According to the interviews Roushdy (2013) conducted with NGO representatives, it seems that young people are curious about sex education more than reproductive health, often anonymously asking questions about topics such as masturbation and homosexual relations. This further shows the importance of including young people in the design and implementation of SRH education programs.

Researching @thisismotherbeing

In this thesis about digital popular education, I research Mother Being because of its popularity and impact by conducting an in-depth netnography. Netnography (Kozinets, 2010) is a qualitative research methodology that is rooted in ethnographic principles and adapted for research in virtual settings. Situated at the intersection of critical education and social media, my netnographic research of Mother Being attempts to address the following specific questions about digital popular education on Instagram:

- RQ1: How does dialogue between and among content creators as popular educators, and followers as learners take place?

- RQ2: How is knowledge produced collectively? In what ways is knowledge negotiated between and among content creators and followers?

Through my netnographic research of Mother Being, I attempt to address the gap in educational literature about popular education on social media. The long struggle for liberation is the main force that is driving me to explore how the social media we use in our everyday lives can be creatively and critically used to facilitate popular education - an education for liberation.

First, to provide a theoretical basis and context for my netnographic research about popular education, I will review literature in chapter two about popular education, feminist approaches to popular education, social media affordances and platform politics. In chapter three, I discuss the methodology of netnography and the data collection and analysis methods I use for conducting the netnography, while paying attention to the challenges and ethical considerations involved. Chapter four provides an in-depth analysis of the themes that emerged from the netnographic research of dialogue and knowledge production on Mother Being. In chapter five, I situate the findings and implications of the netnography in relation to the literature on popular education and social media, and I discuss the research limitations and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2: Popular Education in Social Media Spaces

Defining Popular Education

Popular education is a form of critical, participatory education for social change that engages people as critical subjects in the fight for liberation from oppression. Historically, in the early 20th century, popular education usually referred to either 'popular universities' which were set up by university students in several Latin American countries to teach working class people about leftist ideas, or literacy programs led by state entities as well as independent communities to teach less privileged people how to read and write (Wiggins, 2011). However, with the rise of various social movements and critical ideas such as Freire's in the 1960s and after, popular education became known as an education for social change that is embedded in the struggle for liberation by social movements in different parts of the world (Kane, 2012).

Given the broadness of what popular education could look like, different terms are sometimes used to describe it, like "'community education', 'radical adult education', education for change', 'people's education', 'liberatory' or 'emancipatory education', 'transformative education', 'education for empowerment', etc." (Walters & Manicom, 1996, p. 2). While these terms could be used to describe popular education, they could also be used to describe very different forms of education. To avoid any conceptual confusion, I limited my search for literature to books and articles that specifically discuss "popular education" as an independent form of educational theory and practice. Based on the selected literature, there are three different characteristics that I will use to narrow down the definition of popular education:

- **It takes place in informal spaces.** First, popular education takes place in informal spaces such as grassroots organizations, community centers, cultural circles and gatherings, and more recently, online platforms (Kane, 2001, Walters & Manicom, 1996; Manicom & Walters, 2012; Von Kotze & Walters, 2017; Oscar, 2010). Because popular education is an education that is accessible and grounded in the everyday lives of people, it therefore takes place in such informal spaces that are open and inclusive (Kane, 2012).
- **It is intentional.** Second, popular education is deliberately pedagogical. Whereas informal learning, for example, could involve incidental learning that takes place as we engage in different social activities, popular education is more intentional. Popular education takes place in all sorts of fields such as human rights, climate change,

community development, health, etc. In that sense, popular education is a dynamic, educational and communicative endeavor that is crucial to transformative social change in any field of development (Kane, 2001).

- **It is embedded in social struggle**. Third, popular education is usually embedded in social movements and struggles for liberation from oppression (Foley, 1998). Popular education is also more broadly understood as an education that is organized by different groups of politically or socially active people fighting specific oppressions, not necessarily specific social movements (Manicom & Walters, 2012; Von Kotze & Walters, 2017).

Theoretical Overlap: Popular Education and Critical Pedagogy

Much of the theorization and practice of popular education as critical education for social transformation originated in Latin America, especially during the time when Freire was leading literacy campaigns and writing about critical education (Oscar, 2010). Most if not all books and articles on popular education selected for this research refer to the power and influence of Freire's ideas on the development of popular education as an educational field. In Latin America, Freire's ideas were used by teachers and activists to theorize and practice popular education, whereas crossing borders to the West, they were used by university academics to develop the theory of critical pedagogy (Choules, 2007). Despite sharing common roots, there are several differences: on the one hand, popular education is more practice-based, takes place in informal learning spaces, and is mainly concerned with adult education in political contexts; on the other hand, critical pedagogy is more theoretical, practiced within formal education (schools and universities), and mainly concerned with formal teachers and students (Wiggins, 2011).

While these differences are significant, both popular education and critical pedagogy are theoretically intertwined through their shared roots in Freire's ideas and what came to be known as critical pedagogy in the West. Any in-depth exploration of popular education warrants a review of the theoretical work of critical pedagogy, inasmuch as it relates to Freire's ideas and the feminist critique of critial pedagogy (since it forms the basis of feminist popular education). First, I will briefly discuss the theoretical underpinnings of Freire's ideas to formulate a basis for the main literature discussion on popular education.

Freirean Beginnings

Freire's critical pedagogy (2018) is based on several philosophical assumptions. Centrally, he asserts that our vocation in life as human beings both individually and collectively is to continuously strive to become more human and authentic as we work together to build a more humanizing world. Dehumanization, according to Freire, is a distortion of our natural inclination which leads to the creation of complex, oppressive structures that violently deny people their freedom and humanity. The people that benefit from these oppressive structures are the "oppressors," whose greed for power and money leads them to dehumanize and oppress others, becoming less and less human themselves. This is how the oppressor-oppressed contradiction emerges: two opposite poles, with the oppressors accumulating power and dehumanizing the oppressed, and the oppressed continuously disempowered, struggling to survive and further losing themselves to the very structures that are oppressing them. Oppressors will continue to be inhumane and dehumanizing, but it is the oppressed with their yearning for freedom that have the power to fix this distorted reality and fight for the restoration of humanity and liberation for everyone.

The second philosophical assumption of critical pedagogy is that oppressive structures are not fixed and indestructible but rather are historically situated and constantly changing. This assumption is based on dialectical theory, according to which people and the world they live are inextricably linked and dialectically related (McLaren, 2009). In other words, people cannot exist outside the world they live in because they are constantly shaped by it, and the world as we know it cannot exist without us because it is people who make and shape the world. Of course, this dialectical relation is fraught with constant tension because people and the world shape each other depending on the power dynamics in society. People that have more power are able to more strongly impose their culture (ways of knowing, language, symbols, meanings) in society than less powerful groups of people (Giroux, 1988). The dominant culture in a given society (re)produces, and is (re)produced by, the complex set of social structures (class, gender, race, etc.). To Freire, an emancipatory education should prepare us to fight for power to transform the dominant culture and create a just society based on equitable social relations.

Thirdly, critical pedagogy is based on the assumption that education is inherently political (Shor, 1993). Every aspect of education is based on a political decision that is (re)produced and (re)produces the broader social context in which we are learning: teacher-student relationships, teaching methods, educational goals, educational content, the language used, the conditions and

aesthetics of the physical environment where education happens, the implicit and explicit discourses that are learned and practiced. Whether in school or outside of school, what and how we learn and for what purpose is never politically neutral. Based on this powerful notion of education being an inherently political act, what Freire's critical pedagogy -and by extension popular education- attempts to create is an education with both political aims (humanization and emancipation) and pedagogical aims (open dialogue, shared power between teachers and students, problem-posing, etc.) (Oscar, 2010).

Theory and Practice of Popular Education

Dialogue

In their discussion on adult education, Kirkwood and Kirkwood (2011) state that dialogue is the means through which people reconceive themselves as subjects with the capacity to know, act, and transform society. Whereas in traditional education people are treated as empty, neutral objects waiting to be filled with knowledge by society's experts, Freirean-based education brings people together in dialogue as creative agents of their own learning and destinies (Shor, 1993). Put succinctly by Wink (2011), dialogue is "talk that changes us or our context. Dialogue is profound, wise, insightful conversation" (p. 65). The potential for dialogue to "change us" stems from the simple yet powerful idea that having deep conversations with each other is an act of self-affirmation, an affirmation that who we are, our thoughts, opinions, ideas and lived realities are worthy. Dialogue is the antidote to the self-negation people experience in traditional education where mainly educators speak and participants listen, educators transmit and participants absorb (Shor, 1993). Dialogue, in contrast to monological traditional education, enables the levelling of power in dialogue between and among educators and participants.

Despite the potential for creating horizontal power relations, only dialogue that involves people as subjects engaged in praxis is "critical" dialogue, and critical dialogue is what is at the heart of popular education. Kincheloe (2008) defines praxis as "a process of action-reflection-action that is central to the development of a consciousness of power and how it operates" (p. 124). People develop this "consciousness of power" or critical consciousness through dialogue in which they collectively (re)construct deeper understandings of how power matrices underlying structures of oppression, shape, and are simultaneously shaped by their languages and actions (Shor, 1993). Praxis is therefore a never-ending intellectual, emotional and physical labor; through dialogue, people continuously engage in the "invention and re-invention [of knowledge] through the restless,

impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry [in the world, with the world, and with each other]" (Freire, 2018, p. 72). Without dialogue, there would be no praxis, and without praxis there would be no critical consciousness or transformative action.

The notion of dialogue as an empowering act, however, has been contested by feminist educators as being too simplistic, if not an outright "repressive myth" (Ellsworth, 1989; Weiler, 1991). In attempting to implement critical pedagogy in a university classroom, Ellsworth (1989) argues that not all voices or discourses in the classroom can be given equal weight in dialogue because some of them are oppressive. Oppressive discourses, according to Weiler (1991), are rooted at the intersection of different forms of oppression and the complex power relations that produce them. Giroux (1993) similarly argues that Freirean binaries such as "oppressor-oppressed" deemphasize "the mutually contradictory and multiple character of domination and struggle" (p. 178). It is therefore problematic to assume that dialogue is always empowering because not everyone can speak freely or equally, and the power relations that undergird students' subjectivities and opinions cannot be easily addressed through rationalist argument. Choules (2007) provides an example from her classroom where students from a dominant social group created an individualized discourse on discrimination, based on their experiences of "reverse racism", that denied structural oppression.

Initiating and facilitating dialogue is all the more difficult in popular education, where the people participating can reflect an even greater diversity of subjectivities than students in a university classroom such as Ellsworth's. In their work with women as feminist popular educators, Walters and Manicom (1996) discuss how power dynamics and cultural sensitivities affect women's voice/silence in dialogue. They claim that whereas women are usually loud and expressive in private spaces, they either choose to be silent or are silenced in public spaces, depending on the power dynamics at play. In her critique of critical pedagogy, Ellsworth (1989) argues that not all silence is a sign of lack of voicelessness or lack of critical thought. Silence can sometimes reflect a decision by less privileged groups to withhold participation in a dialogue that unfairly puts them on the defensive vis-a-vis dominant groups whose power unequally shapes the terms of the discussion to their favor. hooks (1994) further talks about how silence can reflect a refusal by the less privileged to play the role of epistemic authority on oppression, which forces them to invest intellectual and emotional labor on explaining to more privileged groups how oppression operates.

Another feminist critique of the nature of critical dialogue puts the spotlight on educators. Weiler (1991) argues that critical pedagogues do not adequately address the influence of educators' subjectivities (shaped by their class, race, gender, etc.) on the experience of dialogue and the broader educational experience, perceiving them instead as generic subjects. Similarly, Giroux (1993) finds Freire's notion of educators from the privileged class commiting "class suicide" to fight alongside the oppressed to be too absolutist and almost impossible given the complexity of subjectivities. This point is especially significant given that educators are tasked with posing problems to keep the dialogue going, and what questions they pose are necessarily influenced by their own ideologies (Kane, 2001). Walters (1996) asserts that, as people with their own historical situatedness, discourses and power indices, educators must be highly self-aware and critically conscious of the power dynamics between and among themselves and participants. This is especially important given that, according to Shor (1993) and bell hooks (1994), educators have a responsibility to participate in the dialogue and take just as much risk as participants at being vulnerable by sharing parts of themselves.

Power can be felt viscerally, with the particularities of body, posture, tone and word choice of an educator perpetuating the very power hierarchies they are attempting to dismantle (Horton et al., 1990; hooks, 1994); the complete opposite is also true, where educators from less privileged groups might lack any authority vis-a-vis participants, making their attempt at claiming authority an act of resistance to oppressive power relations (Weiler, 1991). Despite the complexity of power dynamics and how their interplay dictates what is liberatory/oppressive, the authority of educators should be limited to the extent to which it is used to co-create a space for dialogue and, more broadly, learning through which participants experience freedom (Freire, 1990 as cited in Horton et al., 1990).

The moment an educator's authority impedes the freedom of participants is the moment that their authority turns to authoritarianism, which is the opposite of liberatory education. With the guiding principle of using authority in the service of advancing participants' freedom, an educator's authority could be used to create safe spaces that promote respect and inclusion based on collectively negotiated ground rules (Plantenga, 2012; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2017). Similarly, Choules (2007) discusses how educators can exercise their authority to prevent dominant discourses from subsuming the dialogue by problematizing these dominant discourses in a

depersonalized way that keeps the dialogue flowing, and by addressing any underlying myths or disinformation by providing accurate information and encouraging research.

The ideas of Freire (2018) on liberatory education, coupled with the practice of feminist popular educators and critical pedagogues, provide a nuanced understanding of the limitations and possibilities of dialogue in popular education. To Beckett (2020), dialogue can play a transformative role in popular education if people are given the time and space to 'tantear,' which is Spanish term referring to "a tactile searching together in the dark, listening and feeling for each other toward a knowledge production dependent on the relationship over the direction or end goal" (p. 122). To tantear is to engage in deep and sustained conversations with the aim of learning about/from each other and forging meaningful relationships and deep connections with one another. To tantear is to engage in "political practices of relational meaning-making" that are less tangible than specific political acts such as protests but more crucial to forming powerful and sustainable collectives of people that will work together in the never-ending fight against oppression. While Freire (2018) does not spell out everything we need to know about oppression, as is only natural, his guiding values for how we should approach dialogue can help us to tantear, if they are taken to heart by everyone participating, educators and participants alike:

- Love - profound love for people, for justice, for the world. Love is an act of courage, a commitment to people and to justice
- Hope - hope keeps us going; hopelessness renders any conversation useless
- Humility - we cannot have authentic conversations with people if we think we know better than them or that they are ignorant

Knowledge Production

Learning from the ground up. Learning in popular education doesn't start with a textbook; unlike traditional education, popular education starts with the people, with who they are and what they know of the world from their daily life experiences (Freire, 2018). Medel-Anonuevo (1996) states how feminist popular education must start with women's concrete realities by enabling them to critically reflect on their experiences of being women and the nuances of the challenges they face in their lives. Horton and Freire (Horton et al., 1990) emphasize that while popular education starts with people's experiential knowledge, it doesn't stop there; for any learning to take place, popular education has to move people beyond what they know towards what they don't know, constantly expanding their critical consciousness. People must always be able

to make connections between what they know and what they're learning. If what they are learning is not relatable in any way, then popular education becomes just another form of traditional education, with educators acting like "experts" and alienating people.

Walters and Manicom (1996) argue that feminist popular education, or any popular education for that matter, should not start with abstract theoretical concepts or analyses. hooks (1994) argues how knowledge produced by academics (i.e. academic theory) is usually too obscure to speak to people's lived realities. Academia's exclusionary process of knowledge production, which takes place in "ivory towers," and the inaccessibility of what they produce, can lead people to think that theory-making is something only professionals can or should do, or that theory is irrelevant to emancipatory action. Choudry (2015) shows that theorizing is a social practice that social movements, activists, and socially engaged people organically participate in. Academics either refuse to acknowledge people's theorizing as theoretical enough, or worse, appropriate their insights and develop them into more abstract theories. Walters and Manicom (1996) state that feminist theory, as an example, has become too institutionalized, exclusive and distant from women. So instead of trickling down obscure theory to people, popular education starts with people's lives and encourages their authentic knowledge production for liberation.

To start with where people are, however, does not mean that texts (books, videos, music, podcasts, film, etc.) cannot be used for learning and sparking critical reflection, as long as they are understandable. In fact, to initiate conversation or to make an ongoing conversation more deliberately educational, popular educators have an important role to play. Freire (2018) talks about how educators need to search for the people's "generative themes," which he defines as "the concrete representation of...ideas, values, concepts, and hopes, as well as the obstacles which impede the people's full humanization" in the times they are living in (p. 101). Generative themes represent the things that define the moment we are living in, in terms of what we are struggling with, the contradictions we face, what we care about, what we hope for, what we are scared of, our values, ideas, etc. To search for generative themes is to "investigate people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality, which is their praxis" (Freire, 2018, p. 106).

Whereas traditional education tends to objectify people by studying *them* instead of studying *with them* what concerns them, Kincheloe (2008) and Freire (2018) caution against this sort of infantilizing approach and urge educators to work with participants as "co-investigators" in search for generative themes. Popular educators then represent these generative themes through

‘coded’ situations to spark people’s critical reflection as they start to relate them to their own concrete realities. ‘Coded’ situations are more abstract representations of the issues that people face, leaving space for critical and creative thought about them. This task, of searching for generative themes and encoding them for people to decode them, sounds difficult in theory, but it is very common in practice. An example of this is how activists as popular educators appropriate and remix cultural artefacts to create memes with political messages that people can decipher and relate to upon critical reflection. These representations are abstract in the sense that they are subtle, requiring people to interpret, decode, and critically reflect upon how they are relatable to their own concrete situations; they are not abstract in the sense that they are obscure or inaccessible or authoritative, like much of academic theory, but are rooted in people’s lives and emerge from their own ways of seeing reality. This is how popular education starts with the people, where they are at.

hooks (1994) writes about what feminist theory from the ground up means, which is applicable for any kind of theorizing for liberation:

> To me, this theory emerges from the concrete, from my efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to critically intervene in my life and the lives of others. This to me is what makes feminist transformation possible. Personal testimony, personal experience, is such fertile ground for the production of liberatory feminist theory because usually it forms the base of our theorymaking. While we work to resolve those issues (our need for literacy, for an end to violence against women and children, women's health and reproductive rights, our need for housing, for sexual freedom, etc. to name a few) that are most pressing in daily life, we engage in a critical process of theorizing that enables and empowers. (p. 70)

Popular education mends the false dichotomy between theory and practice by engaging people in their own authentic praxis from the ground up. The aim is not for us to move away from the concrete and become more and more abstract; the aim is to stay firmly grounded in reality while we constantly move between the abstract and concrete to develop a broader, more encompassing understanding of the world around us, and to act upon it to transform it.

Knowledge and power. Knowledge and power are inextricably linked. Giroux (1988) discusses how knowledge, in the form of culture, discourse, language, meanings, symbols, and beliefs, is negotiated by power relations that are embodied in our social relations (class, race,

gender) and social practices. Knowledge is not simply a set of ideological or symbolic constructs; knowledge involves "methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control" that mediate and (re)produce power (Foucault, 1980, p. 102). This means that who we are (social relations and practices), what we know (discourses, language, meanings), and how we know it (scientific research, big data, police surveillance, etc.), are imbricated in power matrices. Still, Giroux (1988) argues that people are much more complex than to simply be products of power or reproducers of it. We cannot be simply reduced to our class, race, gender, language, culture. etc. How we are in the world, even if indicative of the power dynamics being negotiated, is not just an embodiment of power. People enact power and produce it in all sorts of unpredictable ways; people have agency to change the way things are.

An understanding of how knowledge and power interact is crucial to popular education. On one level, power relations between and among popular educators and participants affect the learning process and the knowledge being produced. Horsman (2012) highlights this through a story of popular education in the field of health, which is a key site of popular education: in Texas, U.S., a group of Spanish-speaking women, mostly poor and with low levels of literacy, were finding it difficult to access local health resources and information. To make access easier, a group of healthcare workers as popular educators worked together with the women to develop a health website that gathered the information they needed. Although the process was participatory, involving many conversations and deliberations, there were also many tensions.

First of all, some of the healthcare workers found it hard to accept or acknowledge the importance of any health information that was not considered medical, such as the alternative therapies that the women practiced. Second, they were not used to the participatory construction and evaluation of something as scientific as health information. These tensions reflect the power relations between scientific and non-scientific health knowledge, and professional and non-professional knowledge. They represent the struggle between the dominant discourse on how scientific, evidence-based information is neutral, and the subjugated discourse on how health information is socially situated.

In a different scenario, Medel-Anonuevo (1996) touches on the dynamics of knowledge and power in feminist popular education. They discuss how women's sexuality is a politically charged topic. Popular education on women's sexuality can be a site of resistance because the

knowledge that people are collectively producing directly challenges the patriarchal power and the dominant patriarchal discourses in society. Foley (1998) asserts, however, that popular education settings are always both sites of resistance and reproduction. Any analysis of popular education must necessarily involve a critical assessment of what power relations and discourses are being resisted/reproduced, how and why. Naturally, popular education will never be resistant to every kind of oppression, but it should always be a space where people produce knowledge in a way that is empowering, making them feel more self-aware and more critically conscious of the world around them.

Emotions matter too. Feminist popular educators discuss the importance of emotion in popular education (Walters & Manicom, 1996; Manicom & Walters, 2012; Miller & Toro, 2017). Their discussions are rooted in feminist epistemology and the feminist critique of critical pedagogy, some of which has been articulated by hooks (1994), Ellsworth (1989), and Weiler (1991) and described above. Feminist epistemology is critical of how patriarchal power influences how people, both men and women, understand themselves, the knowledge they value, and what they consider to be true. It is an epistemology that treats people's feelings and desires as sources of knowledge. Miller and Toro (2017) discuss how popular education has to engage people in conversations about their feelings, arguing how critical analyses of structural forces do not help if how people feel about them is left unexamined. Similarly, Walters (1996) asserts how body consciousness, spiritual connectedness, and emotional acknowledgement are all essential aspects of critical consciousness. Walters (1996) further states that people's emotional expression, which is a crucial component of feminist pedagogy, can lead to a stronger sense of community. Similarly, Miller and Toro (2017) highlight the need for popular education to address the heart, head, spirit and body, without which people would find it hard to relate to others' lives, feelings, and struggles.

While agreeing that our feelings are sources of knowledge, Weiler (1991) also discusses the importance of not just sharing how we feel but also critically examining what caused us to feel this way and in what ways our feelings might have been shaped by dominant discourses in society. This is because emotions, just like our thoughts and experiences, are socially situated, and it is important to understand them within their social context. hooks (1994) discusses the significance of emotions but from a very different angle. To her, it is not only important to address people's feelings, but education itself must be done in a way that engages people's minds and bodies, in a way that is pleasurable and joyful. The idea that joyful education is not serious enough is rooted

in the false Western mind/body split. Feminist popular education must therefore not only address how people feel, but also be joyful when possible. O'Donnell (2020) also discusses the importance of making space for feelings of sadness and discomfort in emancipatory action. Through the ethnographic vignettes of feminist popular education schools in Argentina, O'Donnell (2020) argues how anger and disillusionment catalyzed women's critical conversations about oppression. Therefore, whether making space for sadness or making learning joyful, popular education should engage people as whole beings, with minds, bodies, spirits, thoughts, experiences, feelings, desires, hopes and fears.

Burt et al. (2020) bring out a different perspective about the emotional nature of popular education by highlighting the work of popular educators. They describe popular education as a form of 'care work,' with care work defined as "relational work that is essential to the functioning of families, communities and society as a whole" (p. 14). Through vignettes about popular educators in South Africa, they show how popular educators' work with communities to raise critical consciousness, forge solidarities, and reimagine alternative futures is a form of care work because it involves deep listening, solidarity, hope, and nurturance – highly emotional labor. They discuss how the relational and emotional knowledge of care workers (such as popular educators, justice activists, mothers, etc.) is seldom acknowledged or remunerated because the formal economy of work mainly recognizes cognitive and technical knowledge. Despite the significance and highly skilled nature of popular education, popular educators remain undervalued.

Social Media

In this section, I provide an overview of the affordances and politics of social media platforms. The purpose of this overview is to briefly explain how the affordances of social media can facilitate content creation and sharing, mediate conversations between people, and the different dynamics that shape them. Given that my research involves analyzing authority in dialogical learning on a social media platform, I briefly discuss platform politics to explain how social media companies sometimes (ab)use their authority to censor, limit, or exclude content and people.

Social Media Affordances

Decades ago, Williams (2003) made the powerful argument -against techno deterministic narratives- that technology is rooted in, shaped by, and facilitates culture and social practice. Many years later, with the emergence of networked technologies, Tufekci (2017) made another powerful argument: networked technologies -as more than just tools- have restructured the way people

experience the world, and in turn, people actively and creatively mould and utilize these technologies in the ways that suit their needs. Drawing on both of these arguments, what is important to note is that cultural and social life lie at the intersection of people and technology. People fluidly traverse online/offline spaces as they actively participate in political, social, and cultural life (Castells, 2012). Social media sites, as networked technologies, are therefore places of negotiation and production of culture.

boyd (2010) describes how networked technologies, particularly social media sites, introduce new dynamics that shape the way people interact with each other: invisible audiences, collapsed contexts, blurred boundaries between public and private. 'Invisible audiences' refers to how people participate publicly online without knowing exactly who will be able to view the traces of their participation. Usually, people participate with an inexact idea of who their audience, or target audience, is. Collapsed contexts refer to the lack of spatial, social and temporal boundaries in online spaces. An example of a collapsed context is any of the social media 'feeds' that curate all sorts of different content in one place for users to engage with. In turn, people actively participate with the knowledge that their content will exist in the midst of collapsed contexts. The blurred boundaries between public and private refers to how public content is not always meant to be broadly visible, and sometimes content that needs to be broadly visible remains largely unseen.

Social media sites also host what can be described as "participatory culture" (Jenkins, 2007). 'Participatory culture' is how Jenkins (2007) referred to digital culture in the early 21st century and defined it as being one where:

1. There are relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
2. There is strong support for creating and sharing what you create with others
3. There is some kind of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced gets passed along to newbies and novices
4. Members feel their contributions matter
5. Members feel some degree of social connection with each other at least to the degree to which they care what other people think about what they have created. (p. 24)

While a full exploration of how social media sites are sites of participatory culture is beyond the scope of this research, it is important to note how their accessibility, the multimodal content they enable the creation and circulation of, the countless communities they host (such as Facebook groups, for e.g.), the social connections they mediate, are all affordances that make participatory

culture possible online. At the same time, however, Jenkins is reluctant to refer to the digital culture of web 2.0 as being "participatory" (as cited in Rose, 2013). He argues that social media sites generate profit from people's participation and the content they create while simultaneously stifling their free expression and ownership of the content. While it is undeniable that social media sites facilitate participatory culture -or many aspects of it- through the affordances they provide, the companies that own them have "set restrictions or extracted tolls from [people's] participation in ways which have been highly destructive" (Jenkins, 2013 qtd. as cited in Rose, 2013).

Platform Politics

Gillespie (2010) argues that social media companies manipulate the term 'platform' in their discourse that seeks to glorify them as open and accessible platforms for free participation while pushing aside the fact that their governance systems are black-boxed in that users have little understanding or control over how they operate. Throughout my research, I use the term 'platform' because it is now commonly used by people to simultaneously refer to either social media sites (e.g. Instagram) or online accounts or pages on social media sites (e.g. the Mother Being 'platform'). People use the term 'platform' because social media sites do, indeed, provide them with unprecedented opportunities for participation and free expression, just not in any unproblematic or absolute sense.

One of the problematic aspects of social media platforms relates to their content moderation systems. Content moderation involves the censorship of content, removal of content, or the suspension of users' accounts. Myers West (2018) discusses how social media platforms do not provide clear guidelines or means of recourse for users to understand the reasons behind the censorship or removal of their content and to appeal such action. Surveying 519 users who have experienced content moderation on various social media platforms, Myers West (2018) shows that many users were not provided with clear reasons for why their content was removed or accounts suspended. Moreover, the system of appeals was not helpful in that users were further provided with unclear or generic reasons for why their content was removed. It is worth noting that Instagram only provides channels for appeals for user account suspension but not content removal (such as posts, stories, etc.).

Content moderation is partially governed by opaque algorithms. Middlebrook (2020) describes how content moderation on Instagram happens in the form of shadowbanning, defined as "experiencing a sudden dip in likes, views, and comments [which is] a form of algorithmic

censorship." She argues how shadowbanning has negative implications for queer people and women of color who experience disproportionate shadowbanning for posting content that is loosely defined as "sexual content" while at the same time allowing similar content to remain visible when posted by mainstream communities. Similarly, data rights groups have recently denounced Twitter and Instagram's discriminatory algorithmic censorship that has resulted in content by marginalized Palestinian communities about Israeli apartheid to be removed, censored or shadowbanned (Gebeily, 2021). Such practices of algorithmic censorship by social media platforms reveal the tenuous relation between platforms and users, and the political leanings that affect how algorithms work.

In relation to the opaqueness of algorithms, Duffy et al. (2021) discuss how 'platformized creative laborers' or creative laborers as content creators on social media platforms, are subjected to the precarity of platform algorithms. Since visibility (measured in metrics) is crucial for the success of content creators, unclear changes in the algorithmic systems of social media platforms can negatively impact the visibility of content creators. As previously discussed, such algorithmic changes can also relate to censorship in the form of shadowbanning. Either way, opaque algorithmic changes that lower visibility can significantly impact creative laborers economically (Myers West, 2018; Duffy et al., 2021). Content moderation, however, is critically affected by user practices. Myers West (2018) explains how social media platforms primarily rely on users to flag content that they deem inappropriate (e.g. hate speech, incitements to violence, graphic content) to identify content that needs to be moderated by platforms (i.e. censored or removed). While the reliance on users' flagging is a form of communal moderation, it subjects people -especially members of marginalized communities- to targeting based on identity and beliefs.

Chapter 3: Conducting Netnography

Methodological Approach and Principles

Postill and Pink (2012) argue that much of the research in which social media are constituted as a research site mainly employs two methods: web content analysis of large data sets and social network analysis. These methods usually result in useful statistical insight about digital phenomena but are less suited to addressing research questions of how, what and why. Wang and Liu (2021) argue that the glorification and oft-chosen quantitative methods in social media research which results in Big Data "risks "losing the trees for the forest" and contributes to the marginalization of conducting ethnography and qualitative data analysis on social media" (p. 2). Similarly, Garcia et al. (2009) argue that a small portion of the research on internet and computer-mediated communication is qualitative, and an even smaller portion of this is ethnographic research. Postill and Pink (2012) further argue that "social media are part of what can be characterised as the 'messy web', resulting in an equally complex online ethnography process" (p. 125). They attribute this 'messiness' of social media to how they span across multiple web platforms, involve multimodal content and diverse forms of communication, and extend to the offline world by virtue of how embedded they are in material contexts. The nature of my research questions, coupled with the messy nature of social media, influenced my choice to conduct a form of online ethnographic research called "netnography."

Ethnography as a research methodology refers to an exploratory form of qualitative research in which the researcher studies "social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities" (Reeves et al, 2008, p. 512). Geertz (1973) described how ethnographic research is an exploratory quest for "thick descriptions" - descriptions that capture the complexity of the inexact, irregular, multilayered and overlapping social and cultural phenomena around us. Drawing on the importance of providing thick descriptions in relation to social media research, Wang and Liu (2021) argue that "social science data collection and analysis on social media need not only the bird's-eye view provided by data scientists, but also the day-to-day ethnographic work of "living on the sites"" (p. 2). In choosing to 'live on the sites' for my social media research, I am mainly guided by the principles of the research approach of 'netnography' (Kozinets, 2010; Kozinets, 2019; Kozinets et al., 2014; Kozinets et al., 2020).

Combining the terms "Internet" and "ethnography," the approach of 'netnography' is defined by Kozinets (2010) as "participant-observational research based in online fieldwork" that aims to provide an "ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon" (p. 60). Netnographic research involves 'thick descriptions' of the meaning behind online social interactions, relationships and cultural artifacts, and how they are mediated by social media affordances, platforms and algorithms. Netnography is different from other forms of online ethnographic research because it centers the study of online 'traces' which is what people leave behind when they "post images, video, or text online, or when they comment, share, or do anything else that is accessible online to anonymous or networked others" (Kozinets, 2019, p. 16). It is an approach that foregrounds the distinctive characteristics of social media qualitative data and the use of digital methods in doing ethnographic research online. Other forms of online ethnography such as Pink et al.'s digital ethnography (2016) and Hine's (redefined) virtual ethnography (2016) decenter online data in favor of exploring the role of digital and social media in people's everyday lives, materialities, and feelings. This kind of research usually traverses online/offline spaces and partially focuses on online data.

Given that my research focuses specifically on *digital* ways of dialogue and knowledge production on social media, I chose netnography from among the other approaches to online ethnography. While netnography has roots in business and marketing research, it has been used in other fields such as education and has shown to be an important research methodology for research that involves social media or online data. It does not affect the criticality of this research since it centrally involves important ethnographic principles such as immersion and reflexivity (discussed below) and pushes researchers to carefully consider how best to approach online data in relation to their research question. Netnography's focus on online data is particularly important in relation to my research because the subject of my netnography -a public Instagram account- exists online only, with participants (Instagram followers) having no (knowable) offline contact directly related to or organized by the platform. This further shows the significance of online data for netnography in this case. Kozinets (2010) provides guiding criteria for the kind of online data that netnographies can meaningfully explore. He states how researchers should favor researching online communities that are:

(1) relevant, they relate to your research focus and question(s)

(2) active, they have recent and regular communications

(3) interactive, they have a flow of communications between participants

(4) substantial, they have a critical mass of communicators and an energetic feel

(5) heterogeneous, they have a number of different participants

(6) data-rich, offering more detailed or descriptively rich data. (p. 89)

The public Instagram account named Mother Being which I chose to conduct a netnography about fits all the criteria listed by Kozinets (2010). It is an account that provides educational content about SRH and women's empowerment, and therefore is immediately relevant to my research focus on popular education. Mother Being is an active account, with new posts, Instagram stories, and other forms of content almost every day or every other day. It is both interactive and substantial in that it currently has 267,000 followers (that are on the rise) and the comments section across the various posts on the account is always filled with tens to hundreds and sometimes over a thousand comments. Mother Being is heterogeneous in how it targets people in the "Arab World" and provides content in both Arabic and English. While I cannot confirm how 'heterogenous' it is with statistics, it is enough to note that people who participate in the comments write in different languages (Arabic and English), use different dialects and reflect different internet cultures indicating a broad age range. Mother Being is data-rich in that it includes textual, visual and audiovisual content and numerous conversations across the thousands of comments by followers that engage with the posts.

In my research, I acknowledge Postill and Pink's (2012) problematization of the use of 'community' to refer to collectives of people in virtual spaces because of its 'feel good' connotations, various meanings across disciplines, and assumption about how people relate to the space and to each other. They argue how "the term 'community' is better interrogated in terms of its local meanings for research participants than as representing an empirical social unit open to analysis" (p. 5). While my research involved analyzing the Mother Being platform as an 'empirical social unit,' I refrain from referring to it as a 'community' for several reasons: 1) no Mother Being followers were involved in my netnography as research participants and therefore no grounded exploration of community on the platform; 2) Mother Being is a public Instagram account which means that the boundaries of this online space are very fluid; 3) people can engage with Mother Being content from their personal IG feeds without necessarily visiting the page, which leads to questions about the experience of space and community on Instagram; 4) Instagram as a social

media platform is underresearched, and so it is difficult to understand what 'community' means or feels like in that context other than from personal experience.

Conducting a netnography, and indeed any form of online ethnography, has implications for two key ethnographic principles: immersion and reflexivity.

- *Immersion*. Immersion in the ethnographic field involves being present for a period of time in the field in order to "conduct research that goes beyond isolated impressions, fleeting encounters, and retrospective reporting" (Hine, 2016, p. 26). To be immersed in an online setting is to be attuned to "social structures, codes of etiquettes, particular ways of speaking, and unique rituals and identities" (Kozinets et al., 2014, p. 266). The most common ethnographic method of immersion is field observation, documented in the form of fieldnotes (Emerson et al., 2011). Kozinets et al. (2014) state that the choice of field observation in online settings can be conducted in participatory or non-participatory ways, depending on the nature of the research.
- *Reflexivity*. Davies (2002) defines reflexivity as "a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference" (p. 4). In turning back on themselves, ethnographers don't simply examine their biases but also explore how their sociocultural circumstances influence the topics and people they choose to research and the construction of the story that their data tells. Kozinets (2010) defines reflexivity as "the extent to which the netnographic text acknowledges the role of the researcher and is open to alternative interpretations," indicating that reflexivity is not only practiced throughout the research but also actively demonstrated in the netnographic text (p. 169). May and Perry (2014) explain how, from a feminist perspective, critical reflexivity does not arise from a position of disinterest; an interested and engaged ethnographer is in a better position to be critically reflexive about their research.

I describe later in the section how I applied these principles in my research practice.

Data Collection Methods

Kozinets (2010) lists three kinds of netnographic data: archival data, elicited data, and fieldnote data. Archival data refer to data that the researcher was not involved in creating or prompting such as the cultural conversations and posts that members of an online community participate in. Collection of archival data may involve either participant or non-participant observation. Elicited data are data that are co-created by the researcher and members of the online

community through interviews or any such data collection methods. Fieldnote data refer to the researcher's personal, reflexive and descriptive notes that they record during their observation of the fieldsite. Generally, Kozinets (2020) states how netnography requires 'rigor without methodolatry,' with methodolatry referring to "the preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual substance of the [research] story being told" (Janesick, 1994 qtd. as cited in Kozinets, 2020, p. 20). Rigorous and adaptable, netnography can involve either the exclusive collection of archival and fieldnote data, or the collection of all three kinds of data. The choice of which data to collect, and subsequently which methods to use, is contingent upon the nature of the research.

Lehner-Mear (2020) describes how her netnography of discussion forums on parenting websites involved "a non-participatory, unobtrusive, observational approach" of immersion and interpretive analysis of contextualized data (p. 126). She chose this approach because it suited her research question of what mothers' perspectives were about children's homework as expressed through an empowering medium such as online forums where they might be able to forgo hegemonic discourses. Tenderich et al. (2019) similarly describe how their netnography of the digital practices of people with diabetes involved immersing themselves in the fieldsite and taking "an observational "deep dive" into online conversations to identify themes, sentiments, perceptions" (p. 187). In doing so, they captured and analyzed hundreds of diabetes-related posts on various social media platforms. If communication in online communities continues to take place -sometimes in real-time- throughout the period of netnographic immersion and observation, it problematizes the notion that the collection of archival data, as Costello et al. (2017) argue, is a 'passive' form of netnography. Kozinets (2010) argues that

> there is a spectrum of engagement and involvement in online and related off-line communities that ranges from reading messages regularly and in real time (as opposed to downloading them en masse to be searched and automatically coded), following links, rating, replying to other members via e-mail or other one-on-one communications, offering short comments, offering long comments, joining in and contributing to community activities, to becoming an organizer, expert, or recognized voice of the community.participant observation. (p. 96)

In light of my research aim to understand how digital popular education takes place on social media, I chose to immerse myself through participant field observation in the space of

Mother Being and collect textual and audiovisual data. I describe myself as a 'participant' because I am an active member (Instagram follower) of Mother Being, mainly participating by 'liking' posts and discussing them with friends (face-to-face) when relevant to our conversations. I am also an active member in the sense that the archival data I collected consisted of posts and comments that were made during my observation rather than only before my entry into the space of Mother Being. Below I detail the methods I used for observing the field and collecting textual and audiovisual data.

Online Participant Field Observation

For field observation, I decided to use my personal IG account. I had been closely following Mother Being since July 2020, before I decided in December 2020 to conduct my research about the platform. Therefore, I was already familiar with the 'social structures, codes of etiquettes, particular ways of speaking, and unique rituals and identities' on the platform. It made transitioning to rigorous field observation smooth. I started my field observation in early January 2021 and ended it in early June 2021. During my observation, I continued to use my personal IG account because I wanted my field observation to be similar to the experience of other followers, which meant that I continued to interact with my family, friends, and the many other public accounts that I followed on IG along with Mother Being. Using my personal IG account enabled me to experience context collapse and the 'messy' nature of IG while at the same time visiting the Mother Being account on a daily basis. I mainly used my phone for field observation and undertook the following activities:

- **Watched the platform's IG stories every day or every other day**. IG stories were crucial because it was how Nour (Mother Being founder) interacted with followers through story q&a's and lives, commented on people's reactions to the content, shared news, shared new posts, showed support for women's rights, announced new classes, shared reflections, mentioned collaborators and partners, and other random things.
- **Read new posts and people's corresponding comments**. Keeping track of new posts as they were posted (instead of in hindsight) allowed me to stay up to date on the latest conversations taking place on the platform and understand the context behind Nour's IG stories.
- **Took field notes and screenshots of any relevant data**. Since I mainly used my phone for field observation, I created a chat with myself on WhatsApp to be able to record my

field notes at any time. I recorded them in the form of written messages or recorded voice notes and categorized them using keywords that made them easily searchable later on. To record any relevant data in the IG stories, I took screenshots. Screenshots were crucial because unless saved in the 'highlights,' IG stories are only available to view for 24 hours before they disappear. I marked the screenshots by 'favoriting' them all, which made them separately available in the Favorites photo album and therefore easily accessible.

- **Followed similar public IG accounts that Mother Being followed**. This enabled me to gain an understanding of what other similar platforms were doing and map out the 'ecology' of Arabic SRH education on IG, locating Mother Being among them.
- **Surveyed the public IG accounts and influencers that mentioned Mother Being in their stories**. Through my observation of the Mother Being IG stories in which Nour and her team shared others' story mentions of the platform, I followed the leads to their accounts. This enabled me to gain an understanding of how others felt the significance and impact of Mother Being.

Textual and Audiovisual Data

The data I collected mainly consisted of posts and comments. I decided to focus my collection on posts that were 'substantial' or had a 'critical mass of communicators' engaging in conversations. Tenderich et al. (2019) describe how their criteria for selecting textual and audiovisual data was based on the impact of posts as measured by the number of shares, likes and comments they received. Due to the fact that Instagram continues to change the availability of the number of likes on posts (sometimes hiding it from followers and sometimes not) and the lack of available data on number of shares to followers, I mainly focused on collecting data about posts with a high number of comments. From my field observation of the average number of comments that posts received, posts with 100 comments or more were considered substantial. However, I also collected data on posts that had less than 100 comments but were revealing in the narratives they conveyed or had important comments (e.g. promotional posts about Mother Being classes usually received less than 100 comments but people's comments about the classes and pricing were important to collect and analyze). In addition to posts and comments, I also collected data on the IG story highlights that were made before January 2021 (which meant that I wouldn't have

seen them in the daily IG stories since January 2021). Lastly, I collected data on media articles about Mother Being and interviews that were done with Nour.

My data collection took place throughout May 2021 and ended in early June 2021. Through the longer field observation I conducted, I had already identified the content that was data-rich for collection during May and early June. The data collection period of one month enabled me to factor in time for collecting and analyzing posts, comments, and IG highlights. An important aspect of the data collection and analysis period also involved the translation of the comments I selected for analysis from Arabic to English. In total, the data I collected consisted of:

- 65 posts: The posts I collected were published between July 2020 and June 2021. Upon selecting the posts, I wrote brief descriptions of each one of them in a Google sheet document (purpose, caption, no. of likes and comments, hashtags used, language used).
- 6026 comments: For each of the posts I collected, I went through the comments section 4 times. The first time I went through the comments was to get an overview of what the conversations were about and open any comment threads ("show replies"). The second time was to carefully read the comments, having now identified what the conversations were about. The third time was to select specific comments to record in my Google sheet and translate to English if needed. The fourth time was to check that I did not miss any conversation topics or important comments. I also took screenshots of any comments that I deemed important to show in the ethnography for either descriptive or analytical purposes.
- All highlights: I watched all the story highlights and wrote brief notes to describe each one of them. I took a few screenshots of the story highlights that I chose to analyze and demonstrate in the ethnography.
- 3 articles, 2 interviews, 1 podcast episode: I mainly came across these from the Egyptian alternative media platforms that I followed. I also Google searched "Mother Being" and "Nour Emam" to check out those that I hadn't come across before. I collected data from the ones that revealed research-relevant information.

Data Analysis Methods

I performed qualitative analysis of the data collected (field notes, textual and audiovisual posts, comments, etc.) through inductive coding (Creswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2006; Kozinets, 2010). Qualitative analysis is an iterative and simultaneous process in that researchers move back and

forth between data collection and analysis, and collect and analyze data at the same time. Inductive coding refers to the process of making sense of the collected data, going from detailed data to general codes and themes. Charmaz (2006) describes inductive coding as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p. 43). The process of coding involves getting a preliminary sense of the data, choosing specific segments of the data and asking questions about it related to the research focus, beginning to label the data, coding the entire set of data, iteratively moving back and forth between the detailed data and the codes to cut down the number of codes to overarching themes based on their research-relevance (Creswell, 2014, p. 267-269).

Positionality

Guided by Davies' (2002) reflexive practice of 'involvement and detachment' during ethnographic research, I constantly examined my thoughts, feelings and biases in relation to my field observation and iterative process of data collection and analysis. I am an Egyptian, Muslim and cisgender woman from an upper middle-class family. I was born and raised in Kuwait and have never lived in Egypt. I received a British education before starting higher education at a private, American university. Currently, I am conducting this research as an MA student at McGill University. Before and during the research, I examined the ways in which my western education and upbringing in Kuwait -a safer place for women compared to Egypt - affected my interpretive lens. My western education meant that I had access to the widely available English-language SRH education online long before the creation of a platform like Mother Being. My western education, combined with my identity and my upbringing in Kuwait, meant that I constantly examined how my position influenced my interpretation of the impact of Mother Being on women's empowerment and the way that certain SRH conversations on the platform were framed. My role as an academic researcher also made me critically aware of how I approached content and conversations that were inherently informal and casual.

Ethical Concerns

1. Anonymity (Lehner-Mear, 2020; Kozinets, 2010): I decided to use the platform's real name and Nour's name since both were public, popular, and there was no risk associated with my research. However, I decided to anonymize the names of people whose comments I have screenshotted and shown or quoted in the netnography. Despite the fact that all comments were publicly made and publicly available, people do not

usually write them thinking that they would be quoted for them in any formal sense, especially given the sensitivity of the topic (reproductive and sexual health education). Out of respect for their privacy, no names were used and all screenshots of comments or quotations of them were anonymized.

2. Ephemerality (Patterson & Ashman, 2020): The nature of some of the content on Instagram, specifically IG stories, is ephemeral. The ephemerality of IG stories is what Patterson and Ashman (2020) describe as 'data evaporation.' Unless archived, IG stories are only available for 24 hours. After careful consideration, I decided it was ethical to take screenshots of Nour's stories only if they addressed an important aspect of the content (that was research-relevant) and were not personal (examples of personal IG stories include Nour cooking, doing everyday activities, discussing casual updates related to her family, etc.).

Challenges

1. Mental fatigue: Being on Instagram on almost a daily basis for months caused mental fatigue because of the continuous incoming data from Mother Being as a result of the almost non-stop activity on the platform, whether through IG stories, new posts, or new comments. It felt particularly challenging when older Mother Being content was being reshared in IG stories, reviving comments sections that had already ceased being active. This meant that I sometimes had to go back to older posts to observe, collect the new comments and re-code the overall data pertaining to that particular theme if needed. Being connected through my personal account also meant that it was difficult not to get distracted at times, but it was important to experience Instagram the way a regular user would. To address the mental fatigue I experienced, I sometimes took breaks from Instagram for one or two days to recharge and reflect on my field notes away from the field.
2. Data overload: Kozinets (2010) describes how the abundance and accessibility of data in online spaces can make data collection a difficult task, necessitating several levels of filtering data for relevance. Going into my field observation, I found it initially challenging to filter out the data I would use for my netnography. The long field observation was necessary in part to be able to determine which data was relevant based on richness of narrative and impact (number of comments) but it also heightened the

experience of data overload. To address this challenge, I was guided by Kozinets' (2010) following statement:

> the researcher must constantly maintain a tension, tacking back and forth between the experientially close involvement with the members of online community and culture, and the most abstract and distanced worlds of theory, words, generality, and research focus. (p. 97)

To filter data for relevance, I constantly went back and forth between the theoretical underpinnings and research questions of my research, and the emerging themes I was beginning to identify during my field observation. This helped lessen the experience of data overload.

Chapter 4: Netnography of Mother Being

In this chapter, my exploration is grounded in my two research questions:

- RQ1: How does dialogue between and among content creators as popular educators, and followers as learners take place?
- RQ2: How is knowledge produced collectively? In what ways is knowledge negotiated between and among content creators and followers?

In order to examine these, I start the netnography by describing the site and its founder, Nour Emam. I also provide the link to Mother Being's Instagram account here: https://www.instagram.com/thisismotherbeing/?hl=en

(Content trigger warning (TW): marital rape, sexual violence)

P is for Person & Platform

Writing an ethnography about Mother Being is a complicated task. In the midst of tens and hundreds of thousands of followers, it is easy to forget that there is one main person behind the platform whose personality, background, aspirations, and growth with the platform, directly influence the dynamics of dialogue and knowledge production on the platform. To emphasize the intertwined nature of platforms and their content to the people behind them, I offer the following descriptive snippets of the person behind Mother Being, Nour Emam, and the platform itself, Mother Being. The purpose of these snippets is to trace the creation and growth of Mother Being and understand how closely linked yet separate it is from its founder, Nour.

Nour

Up and down, up and down, I scroll. I see Nour in every other post. Even without any scrolling, I see her at the very top of the page. If you click to watch the daily story or one of the archived stories (highlights), you'll see her too. There are many faces to Nour, the Egyptian birth doula, reproductive and sexual health educator, and founder of Mother Being.

Mother Being

At the very top of the page, under the minimalist rose-colored logo resembling motherhood in the display picture, the Instagram (IG) bio provides a description of what Mother Being, the IG educational platform and business, provides: "reproductive & sexual health education for the Arab World." More than a quarter of a million people follow Mother Being, accessing and shaping content about sexual health, periods, pregnancies, birth, and more. On the business side, there is also promotional content on Mother Being through which Nour advertises her paid services: 3

classes that run every month and much less frequently promoted, her doula services. Elaborating further on why she created Mother Being and what the mission of the early phase of Mother Being was, Nour stated the following in an interview with CairoScene (Emam, 2020):

> A doula is a person that supports a mother and father during the pregnancy and birth, as well as after it….it also includes providing information. I felt like it was something we don't really have and it's only doctors who have this info, which isn't really accessible to the public. So I began to think that I needed to create a platform on social media so that this information can be simplified, for online research needs to be simplified too, and for someone to explain it in layman's terms.

Nour

One of the story highlights is a story q&a in which Nour opened the floor for people to ask her any questions, including personal questions, about herself. If you go to that story highlight, you will find out things like Nour's favorite music, zodiac sign, pet peeves, favorite food, and more. But what will probably stick with you is the outline of her life, not the details. To start with, she was raised in Egypt where she received a private, western education at a German school. For university, she studied music and sound art at the German University in Cairo before moving on to do her master's at Goldsmiths University in London. Nour worked as a singer and DJ in Egypt and abroad. If you scroll through the Mother Being feed, you will easily find out that Nour's passion for reproductive health and her own experience of motherhood led her to shift careers from music to Mother Being. She received her doula training and certification from Bebo Mia, a Canadian doula organization, before creating Mother Being for the purpose of promoting her doula services and making knowledge about reproductive health accessible to women. Reproductive health education was the initial purpose of Mother Being.

Early Mother(Being)hood

If you scroll to the very bottom of the page and survey the early content of Mother Being back when it was less popular and relatively small, you might notice two differences between the current content and the earlier content. First, the imagery of the first few months of the platform was shocking and fascinating, to say the least. Nour posted photos that showed pregnant women, women in the moments before giving birth, and women giving birth, quite literally - legs open, vaginas stretched, baby heads protruding. Such imagery was new to me, and I suspect that there are many others who haven't seen childbirth up close like that, probably including women

themselves when they give birth with their legs usually covered by a cloth and the nurses updating them on where the baby is. The photos were so raw that IG had censored some of them, so you'd have to click an extra button to see them. They were mostly borrowed from North American photographers, with a few exceptions from Latin America, and portrayed all sorts of birth settings that were uncommon in Egypt - home births, unmedicated births, water births, and births with the support of midwives and doulas.

Second, everything was in English. The captions were in English and Nour spoke a mix of English and Arabic in her educational videos. Not much indicated that this was an Egyptian-based business except for Nour's name and the location she used for her posts - an affluent area in Cairo. Many of the early posts consisted of long captions in which Nour wrote about what doulas were and the kind of birth support they provided, the medicalization of childbirth, the different types of birth, the different phases of pregnancy, postpartum depression, baby sleep patterns, and more, all in English. While the content was educational and empowering, especially in the context of Egypt, it was mainly accessible to women who understood English and more practically useful to women who had the resources to hire a doula or plan for a 'positive' birth experience.

Nour

Nour rose to prominence in July 2020, in the midst of a digital feminist wave of activism in Egypt.

A little backstory: it all started with Ahmed Bassam Zaki (ABZ), an Egyptian man whose crimes of sexual assault were exposed by an IG account named Assault Police. Behind Assault Police was a young Egyptian woman, anonymously publishing ABZ's victims' testimonials from over 50 women. The case of ABZ contributed to generating this wave of digital feminist activism. After successfully exposing ABZ, Assault Police remained active to continue gathering testimonies of sexual assault in general, not only in relation to ABZ.

It was during that time that I first came to know about Nour and Mother Being. In July 2020, she published a video in which she spoke about why the case of ABZ was personal to every woman in Egypt and what it was like to live with the reality of sexual harassment. Nour's video was emotional and resonated with many women -including myself- as was evident in the comments. It went viral, with almost one million views. Nour, and Mother Being by extension, were dedicated to the fight for women's rights. Driven by the energy of the feminist movement, and more immediately by the questions she frequently received about sexual health, Nour began

to create content for sex education. She joined the ranks of the many activists who were creating educational content about sex, sexuality, sexual violence, patriarchal control, and more. Soon enough, she also received her certification as a relationship and sex educator from acet in the UK.

Mother Being

With the growth of the platform and the gaining of tens of thousands of new followers, the content on Mother Being was changing. First, Nour began providing an Arabic translation alongside the English content, drastically improving the reach and accessibility of the content. Second, she expanded the content to integrate sexual health education. Third, she began to ramp up and diversify the content. It included scientific information and cultural advocacy that grounded SRH health education in the struggle for women's rights. Fourth, she began to experiment with different content formats, not merely relying on written captions and long videos, but also including short videos, TikToks, and infographics.

The Mother Being followers were becoming increasingly diverse, no longer limited to Egyptian women and mothers who spoke English or had the resources to hire doulas and plan for positive births. Based on the comments across the various content on Mother Being, it seems that the followers included people from different age groups and nationalities, both men and women - with women representing the majority of participants in the comments. Generally, however, the surrounding cultural context in which the platform exists is Arab and relatively conservative in relation to sex, regardless of religion.

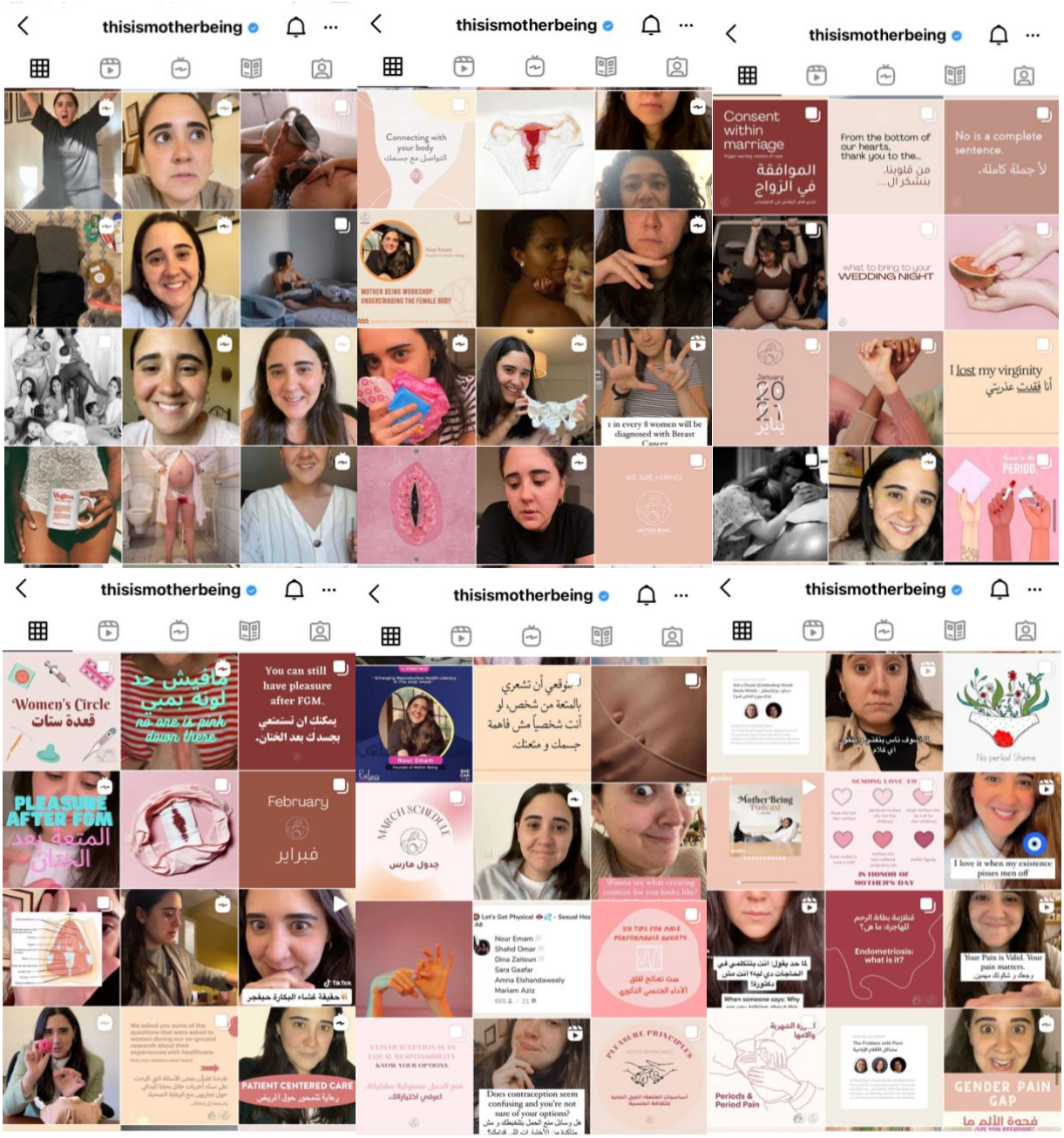
Nour and Mother Being

The purpose of these snippets was to provide a brief introduction to who Nour is and what Mother Being is about. But more importantly, I wanted to make the intentional connection between who Nour is and the platform she has created because it will help contextualize the analysis of how the platform grew and changed over time to become more accessible and impactful. Before turning to Mother Being and the quarter of a million of people that inhabit it, let's take a brief look at the kind of content that Nour and her team create.

Mother Being Content

Figure 3

Mother Being page between July 2020 and March 2021



Long Videos

Nour makes long videos about all sorts of topics that require an in-depth explanation. For example, in one of her early videos, she spoke about the oppressive cultural myth that relates 'virginity' to hymens and bleeding during first time sex. She provided a detailed, scientific explanation and illustrated using her famed clay figures. As part of the explanation, she also spoke

about the social dimension of this myth, how it regularly puts women's lives in danger, and the change that needs to happen. Generally, long videos enable Nour to discuss and simplify complex topics, and critically and emotionally engage people in conversation about them.

TikToks

TikToks are short videos that are usually one minute long or less. Nour's TikToks are funny, creative and usually provide brief explanations, empowering messages to women, and important statements about social issues. One of her most popular TikToks was a funny and critical take at skin lightening products for women's private parts. The caption of the video stated "100% guaranteed recipe for skin lightening of sensitive areas" and showed Nour providing step by step recipe instructions and mixing different ingredients, only to end up with an omelette, with the powerful message being that women's private parts are not supposed to look a certain way. More than 600 comments were made, the majority of which were full of laughing emojis and people mentioning their IG friends, presumably to check out the video. TikToks are one way that Nour is able to inform and raise awareness about critical matters through wit and humor.

Infographics

Mother Being also uses infographics to provide statistical information or visual representations about various topics. For example, Shahd (one of the Mother Being team members) posted the below infographic about the rates of C-sections in MENA, with the caption explaining how C-sections were frequently being performed for non-medical reasons and asking people to share their experiences in the comments. The visual representation of the information along with the prompt led to 88 comments in which women from different parts of MENA shared their personal experiences with doctors and the ease with which they suggest C-sections as an option without valid medical reasons. Infographics, therefore, are also another way of providing informative content and facilitating critical dialogue.

Text

Despite Instagram's visual nature, text-based posts are very common. Mother Being includes many text-based posts that provide valuable information about a range of topics. To continue the discussion about C-sections, the team posted a follow-up text-based post which explained what C-sections are, the range of medical reasons that necessitate them, and why their prevalence is problematic. The benefit of text-based posts is that they present information in short, concrete points that are easy to read and enough to provide the key points about a given topic.

Also, much of the time, text-based posts contain images, drawings or charts that help illustrate the information or improve the aesthetics.

Now, let's turn to a fuller picture of Mother Being by bringing in the quarter of a million people and more that follow the platform.

- RQ1: How does dialogue between and among Nour as a content creator and popular educator, and followers as learners, take place on Mother Being?

Dialogue

What are the communication channels between Nour and followers? How do people communicate? What are the spaces for dialogue? How do people engage in dialogue?

Ask Me!

On almost a weekly basis, Nour uses the IG story q&a feature to open the floor to Mother Being followers for questions related to reproductive and sexual health. It is a channel of direct communication with Nour where people can ask her any questions about reproductive and sexual health. Some of the questions end up being quite intimate (to the askers), and some of them are asked in the general sense. It is unlikely that Nour is able to answer all the questions she receives, but she usually ends up answering many. For example, in one of her q&a sessions about the topic of "sex-ed," Nour answered around 80-100 questions. She sometimes opens the floor for questions based on a specific theme, and sometimes her prompt is as general as "ask me."

The way Nour answers questions is never boring. Sometimes she provides detailed answers with labelled diagrams. Sometimes her answers are short and to the point. Sometimes her answers are funny, using facial expressions and all sorts of IG filters. Sometimes she links the asker to some of her content, external resources or other initiatives and services to help answer their question.

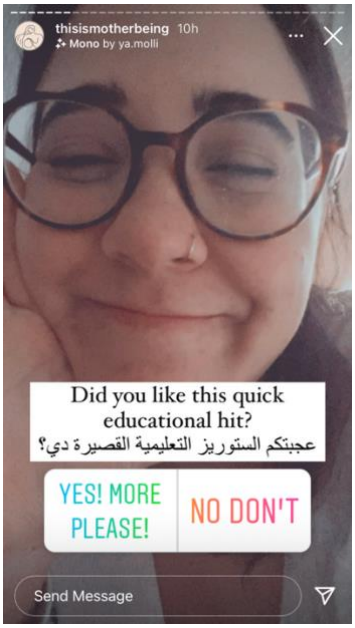
IG enables any account manager, such as Nour, to share the questions anonymously, without revealing the identity of the asker. Nour shares the questions she provides answers to and sometimes even archives the story in the highlights, making access to them permanent. Most of the time, however, due to the frequency of these story q&a sessions, they are not archived and only remain available for 24 hours. By sharing the questions and answers, anyone following Mother Being can benefit from watching the story.

IG story q&a's are a form of engaging followers, which is important for any IG page trying to grow. They also provide Nour with an idea of what people are curious about and what topics

they want to learn about so that she is able to create content that people will find useful. People's questions directly feed into the content that she creates. For example, many of the IG questions revolve around virginity, hymens and self-pleasure, which has led to the creation of various textual posts, TikTok reels, and IG videos about these topics. It is also common to come across posts where Nour starts with saying that she made the post or the video because she received many questions about the topic. She also goes on IG stories to directly ask for people's feedback on the content, such as in Figure 4.

Figure 4

IG story poll about content – February 27, 2021



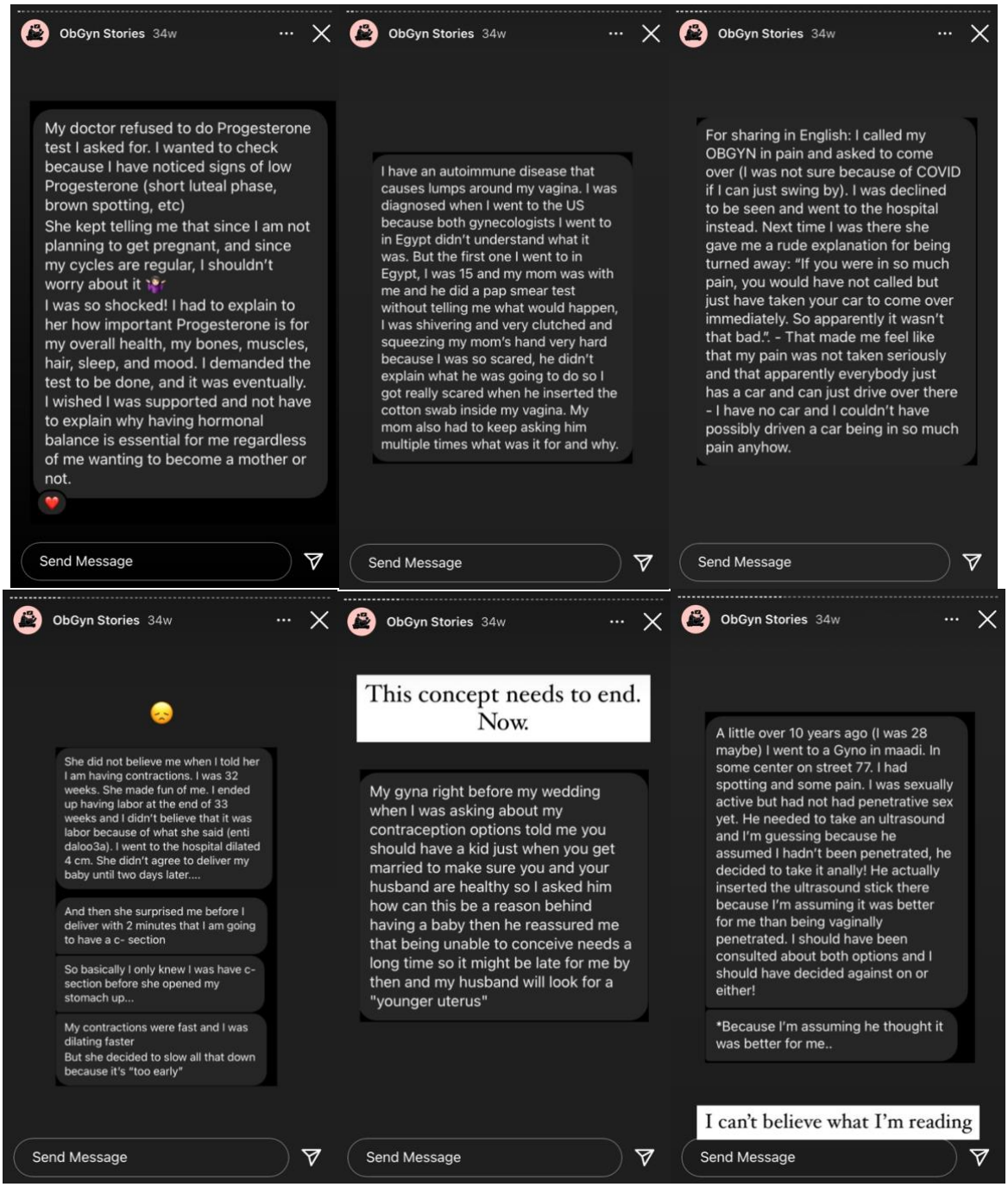
Apart from IG story q&a, Nour also opens the floor for people to ask her questions during IG live videos, which she responds to on the spot. She then publishes these videos on the platform, enabling access to the informative questions and answers for people who did not attend the live session.

Tell Me!

Using the same story q&a feature, Nour asks people to share with her their stories and experiences in relation to reproductive and sexual health. She usually chooses a specific topic such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and obstetric violence, for example, to ask people to share their thoughts and stories. Given the difficulty of some of the topics Nour asks about, this open call enables people who are ready to share their own experiences to do so privately.

Figure 5

Example from IG highlight "ObGyn Stories" of women's responses to a prompt asking them about their experiences with OBGYN doctors



Note. Only responses written in English are demonstrated here.

As with the q&a sessions, people's identities are only known to Nour and their stories are shared only anonymously (with permission) with everyone else on the IG story.

Nour saves the stories she receives in the story highlights, making access to them permanent. Currently, there are archived stories about obstetric violence, OBGYN stories (shown in Figure 5), FGM, and funny myths about sex. There's also a story highlight about male circumcision where Nour asked people to share their opinions about the practice.

The use of the IG story q&a feature to provide informative content to people and enable them to share their experiences is not always the case with educational platforms on IG, but Nour seems to creatively utilize this feature to engage people and amplify their voices.

Approachability

One of the main characteristics of Mother Being that sets it apart from numerous other educational platforms on IG is the central presence of its founder and main content creator, Nour. Whereas the content creators of many educational platforms are either anonymous or less known to their followers, Nour's personality is palpable on Mother Being. She shares her own personal experiences in relation to the SRH topics she teaches about, such as pregnancy and birth, postpartum depression, miscarriage, and obstetric violence. Every other day, she posts IG stories in which she appears on video to provide personal updates about her day, in addition to revealing any new content or sharing SRH educational content from other platforms. Nour's personality also comes out in the content too, such as in the TikToks she often creates. Whether she is slamming down men's comments about women's sexuality, acting out skits, showing women how to practice self-care, shaming cosmetic clinics for marketing harmful products, or providing tips to women, Nour's personality is an important factor in why the content on Mother Being is not simply informative but evokes various emotions.

Earlier in the year, Nour appeared live on IG video for an hour to interact with people and answer their questions. She was cooking lunch in the kitchen and taking care of her two-year-old daughter all the while answering people's questions about her, the platform, sex education for children, mothering, and SRH in general. Watching Nour spontaneously multitask in her private home space, speak to her daughter and give her kitchen items to play with, show us the food she was making, stop to look closely at her screen to read people's questions and comments, joke around, and speak frankly about herself, made her very relatable as a person, woman and mother before educator and content creator. I wondered, however, what it felt like to be on the other side of the screen. Whereas I, along with everyone else in the IG live video, could see, hear and directly ask her questions, she couldn't see or hear anyone. I imagine how difficult her task might have

been, which is something I'll discuss in a later section. For now, it is important to show that such personal appearances seemed to make Nour more approachable and trustworthy.

Being approachable and trustworthy, especially in the context of teaching sex education, is crucial because it enables both men and women to feel comfortable enough to unanonymously ask Nour some of their most intimate questions. Her personality, and the way she manages the platform to ensure a safe space for learning about SRH, indicates to people that they can ask any question without being judged, shamed, or pushed away. I imagine that if Mother Being was a platform without a face or personality, it would be more difficult for people from different ages, nationalities, and backgrounds to engage with content about such sensitive topics through public comments, privately ask questions to an anonymous or less visible content creator or share their experiences with them. Furthermore, personal storytelling such as what Nour does through her videos, posts and IG stories, helps increase the reach of the platform and people's engagement with the content. As the face of the Mother Being 'brand,' Nour also represents the platform. Her visibility is crucial for her personal business, whether for her classes or doula services.

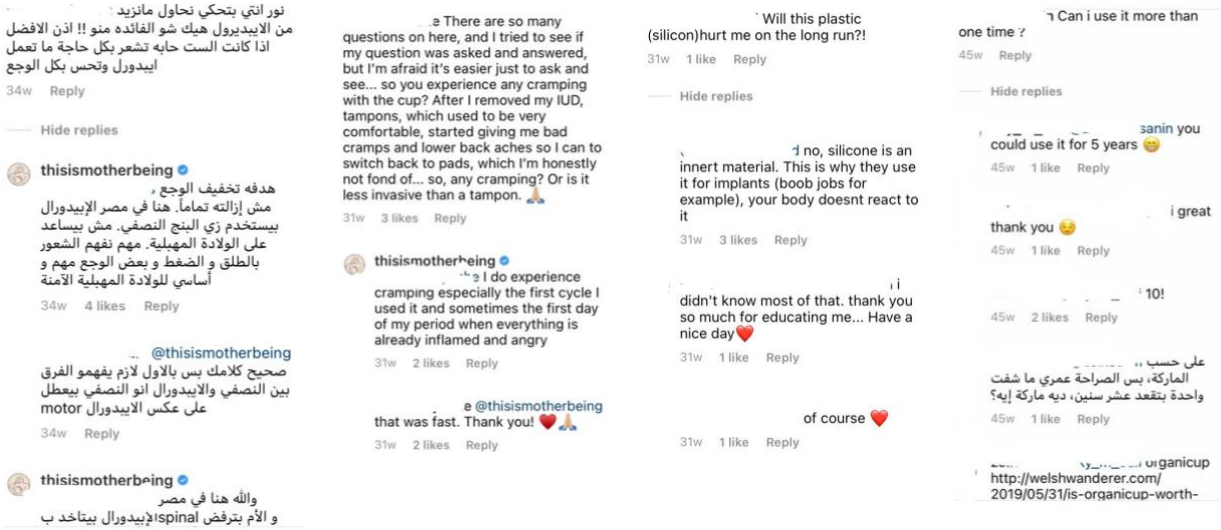
Comments Section

The comments section is where people are able to directly engage with the content, have conversations with each other, and communicate with Nour. It was surprising to see how active the comments section was given that discussing sexual health publicly was a social taboo. The content and conversations on Mother Being were slowly normalizing sex education. Different types of conversations take place in the comments section on Mother Being:

Asking questions. Many people in the comments ask questions, usually in relation to the topic of the post. Generally, people respond to each other's questions, and sometimes Nour too jumps in to answer the questions asked. Less often, people's questions are left unanswered. The comments section is an important place where people can find answers for what they want to learn more about or provide support to others through answers (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Example of comments in which people are asking questions and receiving responses from Nour and other



Note. The comments on the far left are about the use of epidural while the rest of the comments are about the use of menstrual cups.

Conversations. Of course, the comments section is where people have extended conversations about the content, some of which are tense. These conversations happen either when people respond to each other's comments, resulting in long threads of comments under one main comment, or when they write separate comments that still contribute to the overall discussion taking place. It is through these discussions, especially on Mother Being's more controversial posts, that people collectively negotiate knowledge that is acceptable to them, knowledge that conflicts with their norms and beliefs, and knowledge that is significant to their lives. It is also through these conversations that Nour learns about people's opinions, questions, and overall feedback, and is therefore able to shape her content accordingly.

Sharing experiences. People also participate in the comments section to share their experiences, especially in commenting on the videos in which Nour shares her own experiences (see Figure 7). Many of the experiences that are shared are difficult and not easy to talk about. It might be cathartic for some, especially when people engage with each other's experiences through 'likes' and supportive comments.

Figure 7

Example of comments in which women share their experiences of obstetric violence

Sharing the content with family and friends. Many people in the comments mention (@'ing) their IG friends so they can check out the specific post they've commented on. Sometimes, the people mentioned also reply and have conversations about the content. This is the visible aspect of how people share the content with each other online. Less visibly, there are comments in which people talk about how they've shared the content with their family and friends or how they've had conversations with them about it. It is likely that more people, more than just the people that comment saying this, also use the content in ways that online footprints (such as likes, shares and comments) can't reveal. Personally, I've witnessed how the content on Mother Being has been a topic of conversation between family and friends who have access to IG and follow the platform but rarely participate or engage in visible ways online.

Showing support. People also use the comments section to write messages of thanks and support to Nour and to show their appreciation for the Mother Being content, with all sorts of loving emojis (see Figure 8 below).

Figure 8

Example of comments in which people state that they share the content with others, show support, mention (@'ing) others

In this section, I went through the various communication channels, between and among Nour and Mother Being followers, and spaces for dialogue that facilitate learning on Mother Being. I'll now take a look at how knowledge is produced and negotiated on the platform.

Knowledge Production

In this section of the netnography, I address the second research question about digital popular education on Mother Being: how is knowledge produced collectively? In what ways is knowledge negotiated between and among Nour and platform followers?

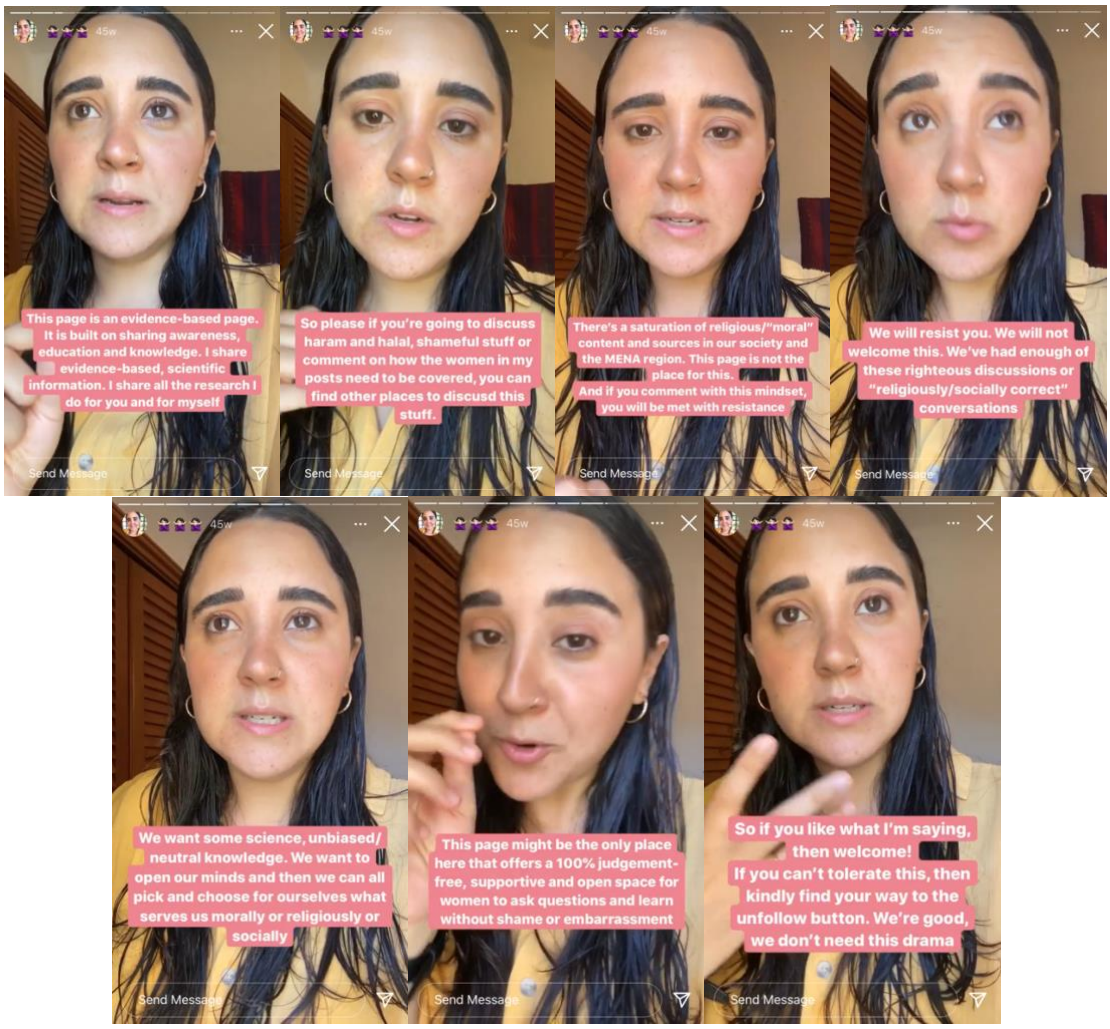
Ground Rules

Discussing sex or teaching sex education, especially on a public platform and led by a woman, was a social taboo, and this fact was beginning to catch up with Nour. The use of provocative photos and critical cultural messaging about reproductive and sexual health was drawing comments from people about the content's social and religious appropriateness. In one such instance, back in July 2020, there were a few comments made about the appropriateness of a photo that Nour had just posted. It was a raw photo of a woman that had just given birth, standing in the bathroom wearing transparent undergarments with a bloodstained pad. While many of the people that commented echoed Nour's sentiments about how the photo showed a woman who was "confident, victorious, magical, strong, invincible," the people that criticized it found it inappropriate because it exposed the woman's private parts and showed her bleeding. In response to these comments, and the general pattern of comments related to social and religious

appropriateness, Nour posted a story in which she set the tone for conversations on the platform, shown below in Figure 9:

Figure 9

IG story about discussions on the platform – July, 2020



Note. Nour spoke in Arabic and wrote captions in English.

Her tone was defiant. She was urging people to learn about sex and sexuality from a "scientific" perspective and "evidence-based, scientific information," without discussing the social or religious appropriateness of it. She wanted them to learn from the content and take from it what suits them based on their beliefs instead of attempting to control it or oppose it on social and religious grounds. It seemed she was discouraging people from using their beliefs to control the subject matter and openness of the content in order to protect the "100% judgement-free, supportive and open space [that she was creating] for women to ask questions and learn without

shame." Nour told people that they would be "met with resistance" if they continued to engage in conversations about the social and religious appropriateness of the subject matter on the platform.

This rule for the platform felt exclusionary at first. I empathized with it because of the taboo and respectability politics associated with sex education, but on the other hand, it seemed to limit people's full participation. It seemed especially limiting because the content was not only scientific but also involved cultural perspectives on sex. From an educational point of view, I wondered how these boundaries on dialogue would shape knowledge production on the platform.

"Haram Police" and Language

In one of the seemingly controversial posts on Mother Being (shown in Figure 10), with more than 600 comments, Nour wrote about how the language used for women's bodies needed to change, specifically in relation to virginity. She criticized how "sex for the first time" was linguistically conflated with "loss," as in the "loss of virginity," arguing that this sort of language signified that a woman's worth was determined by her sexual activity or hymen. To change the language, Nour suggested the sentence "I shared my body with someone for the first time" instead of "I lost my virginity." The post led to mixed reactions from people. The expression, "I lost my virginity," was understood by many of the women that commented as an expression that is mainly used by people who have premarital sex. They perceived the post as an attempt to use positive body language for something that directly conflicted with their social and religious norms for sex.

Figure 10

Post about body language and virginity – January 5, 2021

People in the comments section engaged in tense conversations about what the post meant. Some of the people that supported the message of the post were clarifying to others that Nour was

just referring to sex in the general sense, saying things like "why is adultery even related to 'losing virginity'?" "I can't believe people's ignorance, she didn't mention adultery," and "I encourage people who disagree [with the post] to read it again with married women in mind." Others who were more critical of the post criticized Nour for what they perceived as her attempt to normalize inappropriate sexual activity through the use of positive body language, asking her to "describe more [her] point of view," "clarify," "write in a better, clearer way," "find common ground in [her] language," and "change [her] language...to be more specific.".

To respond to the tensions that the post created, Nour posted an IG story in which she seemed frustrated, telling people that the post required them "to exert some effort in trying to understand new concepts,"and asked them to "really sit and reflect" about why they were angry. She talked about how negative language that conflated first time sex with 'loss' contributed to instilling fear from sexuality within women, arguing that "fear should not be the reason someone chooses to abstain from premarital sex. This should come instead from (religion) or her personal decision to wait." She explained how her role was to advocate for positive body language for all women, whether they decided to have premarital sex or wait until marriage. Towards the end of the story, she reiterated her call for changing the language and referred to how there was "a global discussion currently about language that is used surrounding women's bodies and sex." It wasn't clear what this 'global discussion' was or whose language was the subject of this discussion.

About a week later, Nour published a post about the things that women needed to bring to their "wedding night" - how Egyptians commonly refer to first time sex. It was odd seeing her use the term "wedding night," given her response to the controversy that the post about virginity caused. However, it seemed that she understood how unacceptable it would be to many people to use "first time." She therefore decided to use the most common cultural reference, "wedding night." On the post, people were participating in conversations about what to bring to their 'wedding night,' asking Nour further questions and responding to each other's questions. Other than the conversations that were taking place, I was drawn to these specific comments:

D1: "wedding, so the haram police can chill for a bit" (176 likes)

Mother Being replies: "exactly. Glad someone got it ;)" (77 likes)

D2: "Did you purposely use the term "wedding night"? Or did you use it because it's the common term to use?" (2 likes)

> *Mother Being replies: "Because it is the common term to use and because it's the term that people will accept the most" (20 likes)*

Both of these interactions demonstrate how Nour decided to use the language most familiar to her audiences and establish a common ground for learning about sex on the platform. However, the use of "haram police" seemed misplaced because it grouped together people who rejected the use of language that didn't resonate with them, with people who 'policed' or rejected the subject matter of the content itself on social and religious grounds. In any case, from that point on, Nour and her team started to visibly adopt a more local language about sex, using sentences such as "wedding season is here" and "are you engaged or about to get married?" to promote the "Pleasure Principles" sex ed class. Sexual pleasure with partners is mainly framed within marriage across the content on the platform, just as in local Egyptian and Arab culture. At the same time, the platform was inclusive of all women, regardless of who they were. All the sex ed classes were open to women aged 18+, and Nour announced plans to teach periods classes to teenagers soon.

Aside from the cultural situatedness of the language, the dynamics of bilingualism seemed to play a role in knowledge production. For example, in a post about self-pleasure, the caption in English states:

> *"Self-explanatory. We need to connect with our bodies and get to know them before we can expect someone else to know us. Pleasure and orgasms are learned. We cannot demand sexual pleasure from a partner, when we do not know our own pleasure first."*

Here is a translation of what the caption states in Arabic:

> *"The subject doesn't need much explanation. We can't expect pleasure and a happy marital relationship if we are not connected to our bodies and ignorant of our own personal pleasure. You [women] have to get to know your body. You have to know your own pleasure."*

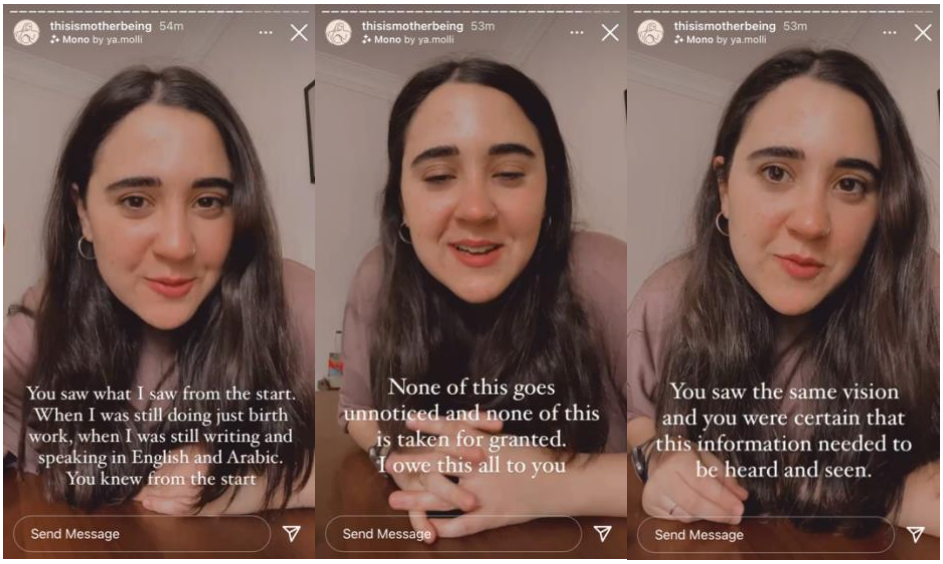
The words "orgasm" and "sexual pleasure" were only used in English, while the word "marital" was only used in Arabic. Similarly, in another post about the "Pleasure Principles" sex ed class, the English text in the slide states that "the correlation between the hymen and virginity was created as a way to control women's bodies and sexualities." In Arabic, however, there's no mention of "sexualities," only "women's bodies."

The use of words like "partner" in English seemed to make more sense than "husband" or "wife." Referring to 'partners' was common and flowed well in the English language, but such

neutral terms in Arabic were not commonly used. The difference in translation seemed to make sense in that regard. However, it wasn't clear why words like "orgasm" and "sexualities" were not mentioned in the Arabic text. While this discrepancy was seemingly due to error since the content on Mother Being discusses sexual pleasure openly, the continued use of English raises a question about accessible language. It seemed to give a foreign sense to some of the content, despite it being grounded in Arab women's realities and experiences. The different cultural sensibilities that the use of English for sex education could unintentionally convey indicate why bilingualism could potentially give a sense of foreignness or exclusivity rather than accessibility. At the same time, since the earliest phase of Mother Being, the language has drastically changed to become relatively more accessible, and this was something that Nour previously mentioned as part of Mother Being's growth journey (see Figure 11). Popularizing sex education in Arabic on a public platform required much more than just her labor of switching languages, which is reflected in the following sections.

Figure 11

IG story to celebrate a Mother Being milestone in which Nour refers to the shift from English to Arabic content as progress – March 20, 2021



Note. Nour spoke in Arabic and wrote captions in English. However, the written caption mistakenly states "...English and Arabic" whereas Nour (verbally) states "when I was still writing and speaking in English."

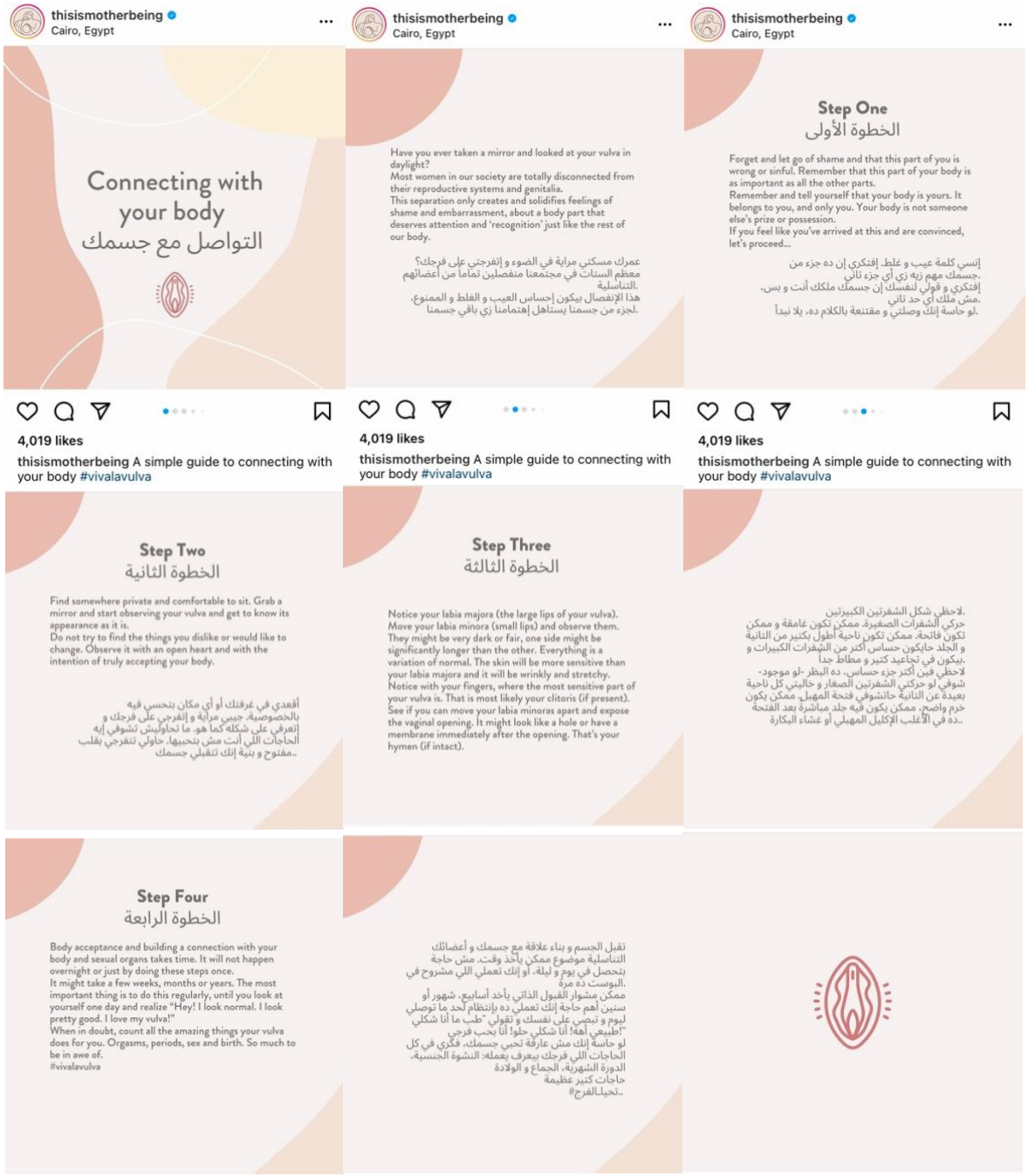
Policing Sex Education

One topic that seems to persistently lead to tense discussions in the comments section is self-pleasure. In one of the earlier posts on Mother Being, Nour provided four detailed steps for women to connect with and learn to accept their bodies – specifically their vulvas – by using a mirror to observe and identify their private parts (see Figure 12). Women in the comments had

different opinions about the post. Many women construed it as a form of promoting self-pleasure, while others understood it as an informative guide for learning about their bodies, not self-pleasure.

Figure 12

Post about women connecting with their bodies – November 10, 2020



In all cases, there were comments that expressed discontent over the implied meaning of the post which they perceived to be self-pleasure because they viewed it as inappropriate sex education,

while others welcomed the insinuation and found it empowering. The following is a sample of the comments on the post:

A1: "I will always curse you for this because I have daughters and I fear for them from someone like you who isn't a doctor or anything, you're just a nurse who's pretending to know things and all your info is wrong. God will hold you accountable"

A2 replies: "My dear, this relates to the sex ed field not medicine… it's just a new idea that we're not used to but I was also reflecting and think it's very important so that women can know if they have any medical problems for e.g."

B1: "Btw I'm a doctor and know that what you're doing could lead them [girls] to the wrong path, not self-love. Disgusting, unfortunately"

B2 replies: "I reread the post and just think that she means for us to touch ourselves to identify the different parts of the vulva which are not naturally visible..."

C1: "People will come out of this with the best masturbation experience [laugh emojis] you guys must be kidding"

C2 replies: "So what's the problem?

C1 replies: "None, I'm just saying that learning about our bodies is different from masturbation"

C3 replies: "How old are you dear? Word of advice, please leave this disgusting page"

C1 replies: "I find the content on the page to be useful and not disgusting; even if I disagree with some of the content on it, it doesn't mean I'm against all of it"

D1: "She talked about knowing what's inside our organ [vulva] so you can learn it and understand it; this will help girls when they get married. Beware she didn't mention masturbation, masturbation causes back pain and memory loss…"

E1: "A very important post… unfortunately women are tricked into thinking that their vulvas have to look nice and pretty which is very harmful… thank you Nour"

There were people asking Nour to delete the post, holding her responsible for what women choose to do with the information, undermining her credentials for being "just a nurse" rather than a doctor, and encouraging others to unfollow the platform for the inappropriate sexual stuff it promoted.

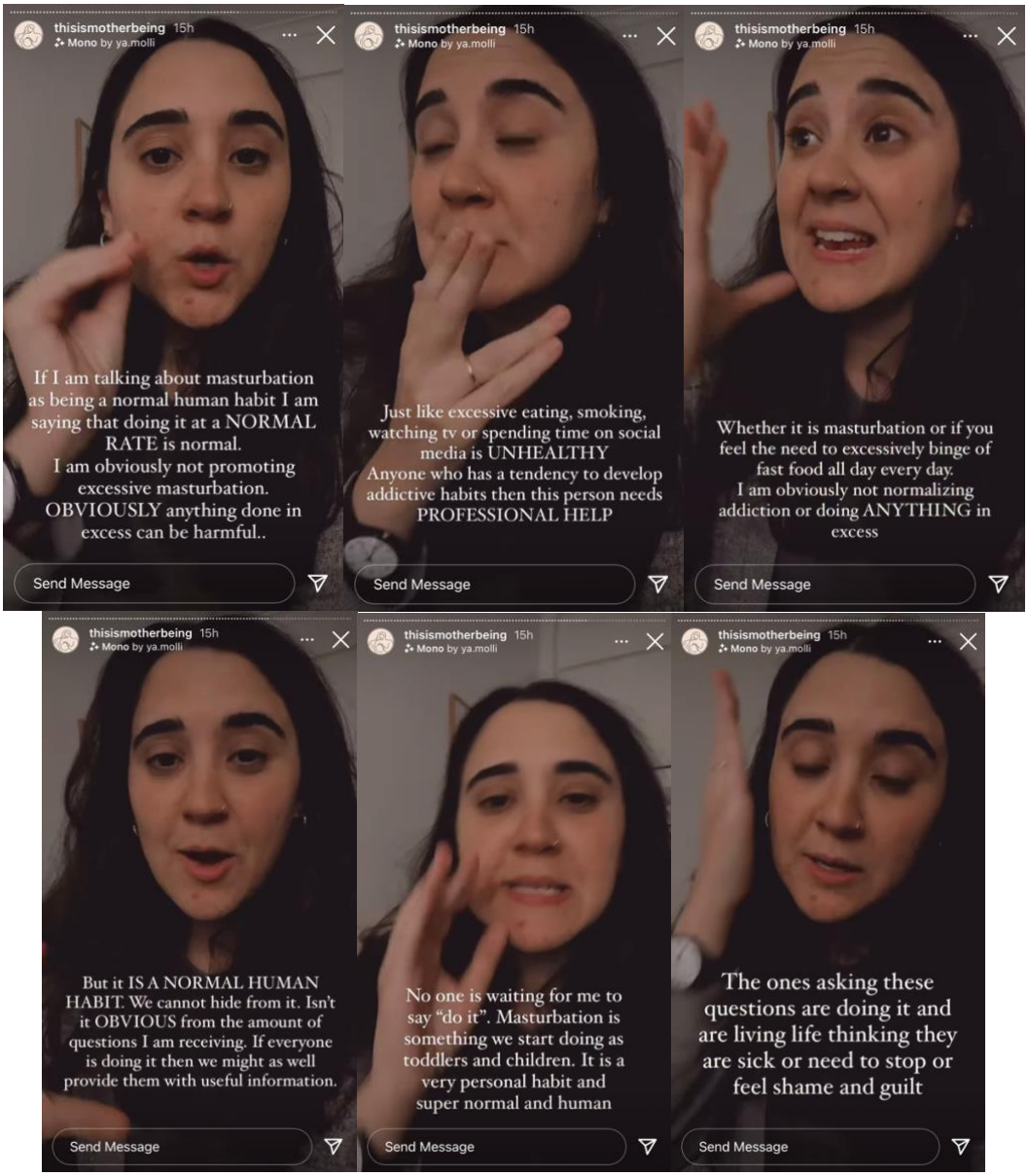
To address these tensions that the post created, Nour published a video response named "education does not equal indecency." In it, she questioned why women were constantly told by society that their sexuality is shameful, that learning about their sexuality could lead them to becoming sexually active in ways that are against societal norms. She stated how this lack of sexual education and shame placed on women's sexuality was why she decided to grow Mother Being into an integrated platform for reproductive and sexual health. She talked about how education does not lead to "indecency" (referring to socially unacceptable forms of sexual activity) but rather enables women to lead happy lives and fulfilling marriages. She reiterated that Mother Being simply provided scientific information and how people used it was up to them.

In the video, Nour seemed to be assuaging the tensions caused by the post by drawing on notions such as "indecency" and "fulfilling marriages" to emphasize the relatability of the content she was creating, as opposed to how it was perceived as inappropriate. At the same time, the content on Mother Being was not simply "scientific," and the post was a case in point in how it drew on concepts such as "shame" and "sin" to discuss body positivity. It wasn't surprising that people weighed in on the matter from a cultural perspective that also drew on "shame" and "sin." However, it seemed from the comments that there were people who didn't just engage in conversation about their differing views on body positivity and (the perceived insinuation of) self-pleasure, but also wanted the content to be removed and personally insulted Nour for promoting certain narratives about sexuality.

On the other hand, Nour frequently spoke about her persistence to create informative content about self-pleasure and also seemingly encourage it as an empowering form of sexual pleasure. She attributed her persistence to the fact that she received many questions about self-pleasure in her IG story q&a sessions and private DMs. Having personally watched Nour's IG stories on almost a daily basis for months, I could see how often the topic of self-pleasure came up. People asked all sorts of questions about it, such as the benefits and risks of self-pleasure, if it affected their virginity, if they could engage in it while on their periods, and so many other intimate questions. When at some point Nour was criticized for how her promotion of self-pleasure could lead people to develop an addiction, this was her response in an IG story as shown in Figure 13:

Figure 13

IG story about why Nour creates educational content about masturbation - January 26, 2021



Note. Nour spoke in Arabic and wrote captions in English.

She discussed how the purpose of her content was to inform and support people who engaged in self-pleasure thinking that they were "sick or need to stop or feel shame and guilt." Through the educational content about self-pleasure, she was trying to normalize it and show how it was "a very personal habit and super normal and human." It seemed that teaching about self-pleasure, despite the resistance it received, was necessary because it was what many people asked for and needed to learn about.

However, like with any form of knowledge production, the tense discussions around self-pleasure continued. A while after her "education does not equal indecency" video, Nour posted another video named "Public Service Announcement" where she seemed equally frustrated and angry. She made the video after she had deleted some of her content due to the negative reactions it received. The content consisted of TikTok reels about women's self-pleasure. In "Public Service Announcement," she talked with seeming frustration about how she felt the need to delete the content out of fear from people's reactions in which, according to her, they accused her of promoting immoral sexual practices. For perhaps the first time, she explicitly stated that science will sometimes "conflict with people's religious beliefs," but that people can still take what they find useful from the content and leave what doesn't align with their beliefs. She also expressed how the topics she covered were not always in line with her own beliefs but that it was necessary to teach these things because it is useful. She described people's outrage as an "inability to accept information that does not align with their religious beliefs."

It seemed that Nour continuously referred to the scientific aspects of the content to resist any sort of opposition to it on the basis of social and religious appropriateness. The following interaction, which took place in the comments on the video between Nour and one of the (male) followers, illustrates the kind of opposition the content frequently receives:

> *E1: "…since you are providing information on a public platform, you must respect all of the religions of the society you are addressing this information to…engaging in public communication requires you to respect all religions since this content for everyone, not just a class or lecture… all religions forbid masturbation, anal sex, homosexuality, and any sexual relations outside of marriage…don't pretend that these things are only forbidden in Islam. All religions forbid these things"*
>
> > *Mother Being replies: "No it's very important to talk about these things…many people engage in anal sex and get diseases (in Egypt, by the way) and so they have the right to understand and learn how to practice safe sex and know the risks so they can protect themselves from STDs…just because it's haram doesn't mean people don't do it… every person has the right to find the information they need to protect themselves… this is not the place for [discussing] haram and halal"*
> >
> > *E1 replies: "With all due respect to people who have anal sex, homosexual relations and sex outside of marriage because they are free to do so, but why should*

> *I and the majority learn about these things just because they need this information… this is disrespectful and dismissive of the feelings, values, and principles of the majority of people that live in the same society as you do"*

This interaction demonstrates how the public nature of Mother Being -the fact that sex education was being taught publicly in an open and accessible manner- was partially why many people opposed the content. It defied the respectability that shaped societal norms of sex education because it included content about sexual practices that were not acceptable to the 'majorty,' such as guidance for self-pleasure and practicing safe anal sex.

Women on the platform, as the main participants in the comments section, also engage in a form of communal moderation when faced with similar comments about how the content is seemingly inappropriate. In one of Nour's TikTok reels in which she debunks the relation between hymens and virginity and explains that there is no physical "proof" of women's virginity, one of the comments made by a man led to a thread of 45 replies in which 6-7 women (as visible from their IG handles) participated:

> *F1: "Guys, how are you comparing men to women when it comes to virginity.. God created us this way, women have honor [proof of virginity] and men don't! It's not good that this is on TikTok where there are kids, what if a girl sees this and goes to have sex since she might not have a hymen anyway [and won't worry about losing her "honor"]"*
>
> > *F2 replies: "the hyman has a physiological function that has nothing to do with honor and there is no such thing as women having honor and men not, how are you even saying this when God himself put equal consequences for both men and women who commit adultery.. You are unable to accept that women are equal to men and that your ideas are wrong and ignorant and unrelated to religion" (16 likes)*

Another similar comment, which was made by another man, led to a thread of 21 replies:

> *H1: "God will hold you accountable.. You're posting this on TikTok and you know that most of them are kids under the age of 15, 10 and 9.. Have some respect and modesty"*

In the first thread of replies, women participated in arguing against the seemingly sexist notion that only women had "honor" and explained how both men and women were equal in that neither had physical proof of their virginity. Similar to the first reply in the thread shown above, the women in the rest of the replies also weigh in on the religious aspect of virginity and sexuality in response to the male commenter's religious perspective. The second comment made by another

man repeats a similar logic about how seemingly inappropriate it was for such reels to be on TikTok. The thread of replies to the second comment involve women arguing against the notion that sex education should be private or that children should not be allowed to learn about their bodies. The sexism underlying the resistance to sex education in public spaces such as TikTok seems to be explicit in the first comment where the main concern about the reel being on TikTok was its potential for leading girls to have sex rather than, for example, the general inappropriateness of sex education for both boys and girls. The main point of these conversations, however, is to show an example of women's regular participation in moderating the policing of education, especially by men.

Therefore, the rule against discussions about social and religious appropriateness that Nour and many women implement seems to protect the platform from any imposing respectability politics that are rooted in patriarchal notions. It also seems to create a safe space for religious conversations about SRH without them turning into conversations about the appropriateness of the subject matter or conversations that reproduce the very culture of shame that these women are fighting against. This is especially important when difficult topics lead to comments in which religion is discussed, such as what took place in the hundreds of comments on Nour's TikTok reel about marital rape. Safeguarding the space against social and religious appropriateness, as well as social and religious understandings that support misogyny or gender oppression, is therefore essential.

Furthermore, Nour and many women in the comments continuously reject requests from others for religious content about sex. For example, the following is another interaction that took place between Nour and one of the (female) followers in the comments section of the "Public Service Announcement" video:

> *L1: "Maybe you could mention that x is scientifically beneficial but not in line with said religion… I used to listen to the information you provided without checking if it was in line with my Islamic beliefs and now I wonder…"*
>
> > *Mother Being replies: "...But we are not responsible for researching religions, all of people's religions too… each person has their own beliefs and it's your duty to search… we can't provide all the information in the world… you can now use the scientific knowledge you've gained to independently research what is in line with your beliefs and what isn't…"*

Such suggestions in the comments are responded to by both Nour and women that want to maintain the platform the way it is, without the inclusion of religious teachings about sex which could potentially affect the 'judgement and shame free space' of Mother Being. Nour also regularly receives IG story questions about whether specific sexual practices are morally or religiously permissible, to which she responds stating that she is not in a position to provide an answer, that she is not a religious expert and that it is not her responsibility to research religious teachings. She also receives questions about why she creates educational content that is seemingly "haram," such as in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14

IG story q&a about "haram" educational content - May 21, 2021

Note. Nour responds, "no one is saying that it is "okay," I am not in a position to judge whether or not it is okay or whether it is haram or halal … each person is responsible for researching their religion … the many questions I receive about anal sex show that people do it anyway … what matters is that those who choose to do it, do it safely … I am not a sheikh or religious scholar …"

"Bringing in my sense of humor": Joyful Learning and Emotional Engagement

Critical learning on Mother Being never seems to be boring. Whether through humor or sarcasm, learning is usually fun. Before Nour started making funny TikToks and videos about SRH, she mainly used humor for learning in the IG q&a. In two such instances, she asked people to share myths about their bodies that they had heard from people or were taught growing up, an example of which is shown below in Figure 15:

Figure 15

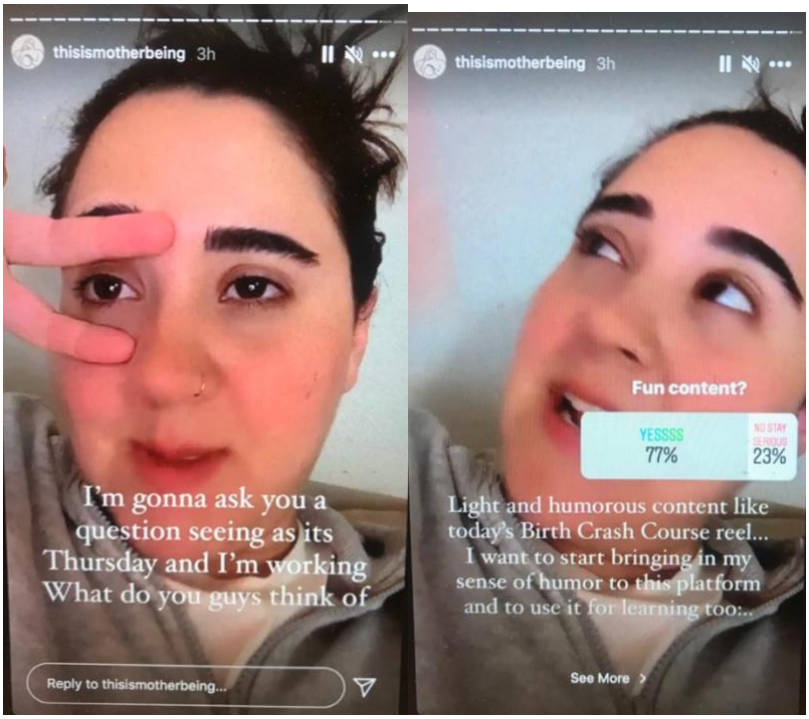
IG highlights about body myths (sample selected from responses written in English)

Out of all the highlights on the page, these two highlights about body myths are the funniest, with people sharing all sorts of myths and Nour responding with various remarks, facial expressions, and IG stickers and emojis. The point of the q&a was for people to learn about body myths that go around in society in a fun way. Aside from these specific q&a's, Nour generally interacts spontaneously in her IG stories to answer people's questions about SRH.

More recently, Nour decided to further incorporate her sense of humor on the platform and use it for learning purposes by creating "light and humorous content." As she announced this idea in one of her IG stories (see Figure 16), she also polled people about their content preferences, with the majority choosing fun content instead of simply "staying serious." Not long after, she started creating reels about common SRH topics such as self-pleasure, women's self-care, period pain, the role of health educators, and more. In 15-30 seconds of creative expression, Nour's reels usually lead to hundreds of comments that consist of laugh and heart emojis, mentions (@'ing), witty remarks, jokes, love and support for her, and sometimes questions and long conversations, depending on the subject of the reel. Aside from reels, other forms of content on the platform such as long videos and podcast episodes are also emotionally engaging, evoking not just joy but also other emotions such as anger and sadness.

Figure 16

IG story about creating light and humorous content – March 11, 2021



Note. Nour spoke in Arabic and wrote captions in English

One of the earliest reels that Nour created was about period pain (Figure 17). With music, facial expressions and body movements that humorously conveyed different emotions such as anger, sarcasm and defiance, she affirmed women's period pain and criticized the different ways that doctors invalidate it. In the comments section, women were reacting to the video with heart and laugh emojis, sharing their experiences with doctors, and thanking Nour for talking about the issue.

Figure 17

TikTok reel (posted on Mother Being IG) about period pain – March 17, 2021

The sample of comments below shows what some women wrote, with seeming frustration and sarcasm:

N1: "All of this has been said to me a lot :("

N2 replies: "me too and the doctor told me it will get better after marriage, as if there was no other solution [puke face]… What if I don't want to get married!"

J1: "Let me tell you, the pain ruined my future and I didn't do well in my physics high school exam because my mom took my pain lightly :)))"

J2 replies: "Me too I couldn't study for my chemistry exam and my GPA went down"

K1: "My doctor said it [period pain] means I have a wide uterus and I will get pregnant happily :'("

G1: "Yesterday I went to the doctor, I told her that my period pain is unbearable, she said that it's a good sign for fertility and it's fine I should get used to it :D"

It seemed that through the reel, in just 30 seconds of air punches, dancing and little text, Nour was able to engage women in conversation about a health issue they directly faced in their lives.

In another fun reel, Nour advocated against the use of genital cleansing and skin whitening products for women, with the caption stating, "say no to vanilla/flower/candy/tutti frutti smelling [vaginas]." She consistently advocated against the use of such products for critical reasons, with the caption of a previous related video stating, "it's ridiculous to expect that people from the MENA region would have pink and hairless genitals. Stop bullying women and monetizing on their lack of self esteem because of the toxic environment you enforce on them." It was for the purpose of reiterating a similar message and empowering women to love their bodies that she made the reel to criticize the notion of "tutti frutti smelling [vaginas]." The comments on the reel were filled with mentions, laughing emojis and jokes. They also involved women asking questions about the topic, learning from each other, and providing their feedback on the content, as shown in the sample of comments below:

H1: "How about products like femfresh, are their products fine to use since they're natural?" (4 likes)

H2 replies: "nothing made in the lab or during mass production is natural :') they have preservatives, alcohols and fragrances just under different names" (8 likes)

H3 replies: "yeah they're not necessary at all, all you need is warm water"

H4 replies: "Perfume / Dye / Fragrance / Preservatives / there's nothing natural about those products."

R1: "how do we lighten our sensitive area?"

R2 replies: "this is normal my dear we all have darker private parts and nothing will lighten them so you shouldn't worry about it"

L1: "I love you because you have a sense of humor and you explain things easily and don't make us hate to hear you on the contrary I always wait for anything you post because you make us love ourselves more" (10 likes)

C1: "education+comedy= [100 100 100 emojis] hahahahhahaaj" (11 likes)

The feedback shown in the last three comments reflects the importance of fun or humor in critical learning, especially in the context of social media where there is a plethora of entertaining content, necessitating educational platforms to work on making their learning just as emotionally engaging. One strategy that Nour seems to follow is creating reels for Mother Being that are based on popular TikTok trends (which she is possibly aware of since she is publicly active on TikTok), thereby directly remixing available entertaining content to create fun educational content.

In fact, in one of the funniest reels that Nour created, she responded to a TikTok in which a man, using an odd robotic voice, told women to "stay away from masturbation." Imitating the same voice, she humorously criticized his sexism for only addressing women and for providing wrong scientific information about the risks of masturbation. In the comments, women mainly participated by writing laugh emojis, mentions, jokes, and sarcastic remarks, making fun of the sexist policing of women's self-pleasure and seemingly reflecting their engagement with Nour's critical message. Apart from women's humor, there was only one extensive conversation in the comments section which raises questions about the role of fun learning in defying patriarchal norms around SRH education:

K1: "hahaha girls making fun of a guy telling them not to masturbate hahah"

K2 replies: "…The whole point of the vid is if we're saying it's unhealthy or haram…it should apply to both genders but he was talking to only women ☺"

K1 replies: "and some women address men in many videos? Why cant he make a video speaking to women?... This is actually bullying lol…where did he say that men can [masturbate]? Men do it also and it's wrong... if exceed for men to [sic] but his message is for women why cant they take it?..."

[More replies between K1 and K2]

Mother Being replies: "its called humor Omar. Take a joke."

K1 replies: "there's a difference between humor and making fun, you didn't say anything funny or tell a joke … + removing my comment…shows ur true colors"

Mother Being replies: "why do you feel so strongly about a misogynist? Doctors and stupid people abuse this all the time by sending incorrect messages to their audience. Fixating on bullshit that masturbation causes for WOMEN but minimizing it for men or not even addressing it for men is BULLSHIT and we will not tolerate it. Yes, we deleted your comment because we stand by our women. We will not accept bullying OUR people. Those who stand by women and fight to end this bullshit. Honestly, if your feelings are hurt and you feel sad for the guy or my tone annoys you, scroll past it or unfollow. Don't play the racist card here."

The comment was made by a man and it seemed to express his perception of women's laughter in this instance as audacious. In the replies, one of the women attempts to explain to him why the man in the TikTok is seemingly sexist. He responds by stating that Nour's TikTok was a form of bullying and criticizes her for deleting one of his comments on the reel which was, according to him, a reply to one of the top comments (written by a woman) on the reel:

F1: "he'd [the man in the TikTok] probably just finished masturbating [when he made this TikTok]" (182 likes)

K1 replies: "you too before commenting" [deleted]

Nour's eventual reply to his comment indicates why she deleted his reply and reflects her firm support for women and their safety on the platform, and her rejection of any form of tone policing. As a whole, this interaction in which the male commenter was seemingly insulted by women's jokes and Nour's TikTok, reflects how the use of humor for critical learning about SRH could represent a form of defiance to social respectability according to which laughter in sex education, especially when it involves women in public spaces, makes it doubly inappropriate. The added accessibility of fun content is also related to why it could be a form of defiance. This is touched upon in the comments discussed in the previous section where Nour's TikToks about virginity and hymens were viewed as inappropriate due to their accessibility to younger audiences on TikTok.

Aside from critical learning through fun and humor, there is also a place for other emotions such as anger and sadness on the platform. In one of the IG live videos, Nour spoke about obstetric

violence. She explained the various forms of obstetric violence, from the mildest being doctors' dismissal of women's questions and concerns about their health to the worst being physical violence in the form of performing procedures such as vaginal checks, membrane sweeps and even 'husband stitches' without consent. She spoke with anger about her own experience of obstetric violence, describing the painful details of how doctors performed vaginal checks and a member sweep on her without informing her. She explained how common and systematic obstetric violence was and how other women have gone through much worse. She stated that her anger at her experience of obstetric violence led her to launch Mother Being to teach women about their reproductive health and rights. Throughout the video, Nour's tone changes from sad to angry to hopeful, concluding the IG live by talking about how change was possible even if it takes time. In the comments, women were reflecting on the difficulty of the topic and sharing their pregnancy and birth experiences and how they felt about it:

F1: "my body hurt just from the thought [of obstetric violence]"

J1: "they gave me a membrane sweep with my permnission, IVs without explanation, episiotomy without my permission…"

B1: "I remembered my first birth experience and how I felt…almost everything you said happened to me from the moment they anesthetized me for no reason until they performed an episiotomy without permission…"

O1: "there was a doctor that used to hit women on their thighs during labor with the excuse that they were being childish"

Mother Being replies: "it's true unfortunately"

V1: "I broke down and I was scared and crying as I was going into labor and I begged them to let my husband come with me [to attend the labor] but they didn't allow it…"

L1: "I'm about to get married, I knew that these things happen in most hospitals but I gained a deep understanding from you…"

N1: "…phenomenal and scary to listen to. I haven't given birth but I was truly anxious listening to your story and reading the comments. Thank you for this"

Through the video and the ability to see and hear her, Nour was able to teach about obstetric violence from her own experience as a mother and doula in the medical field, conveying the mental and emotional aspects of it. As shown in the comments above and in the rest of the 214 comments on the video, women felt the pain and injustice of obstetric violence and the importance of learning

about it. The video also seemed to open the space for women to share their own thoughts and experiences, describing the various forms of violence they faced and how it made them feel. This example, along with the examples of learning through humor, show the different ways that emotionally engaged learning seems to take place on Mother Being.

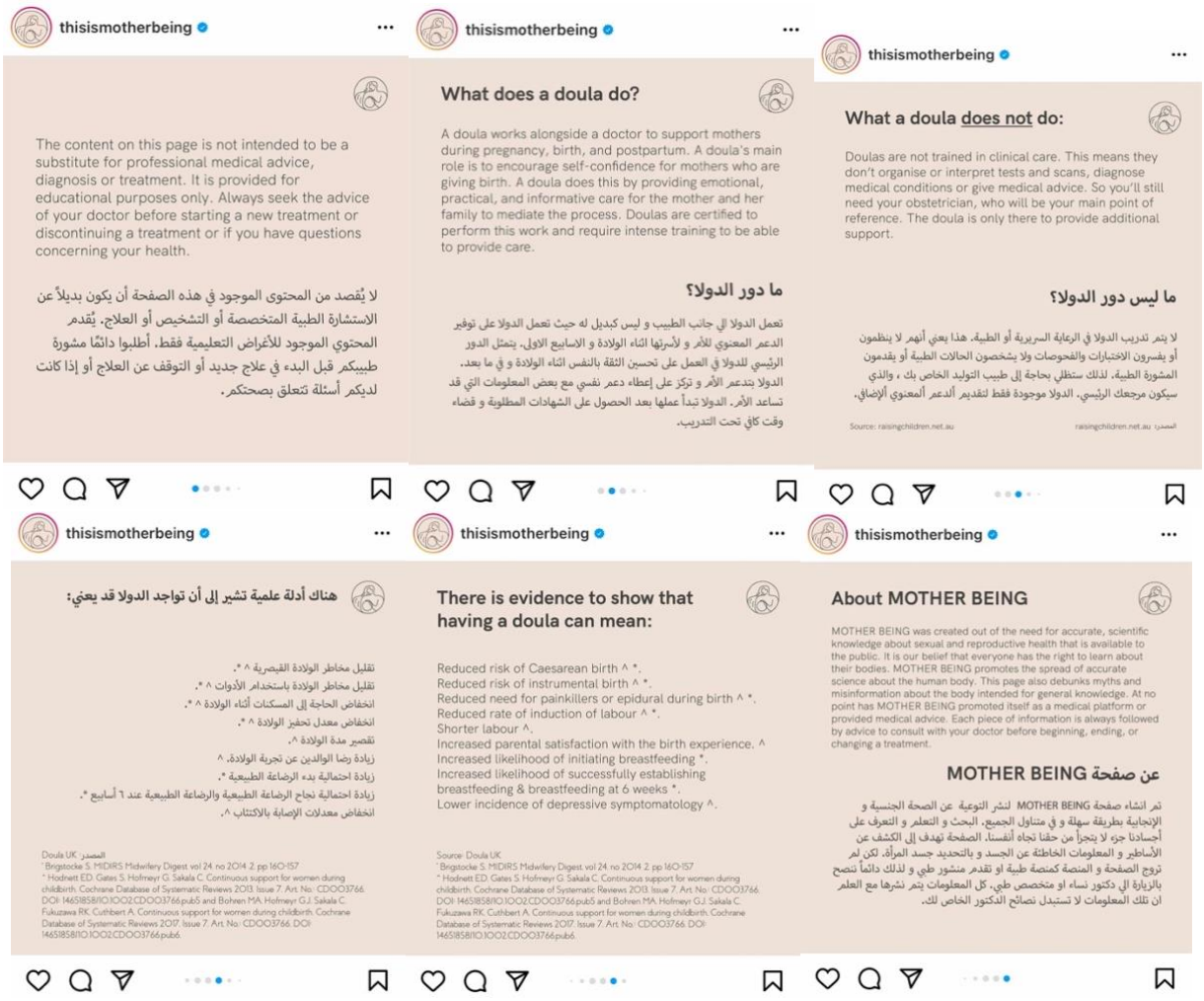
Medical Gossip

There was one particular incident that prompted many conversations on Mother Being about the boundaries between general and specialized health knowledge and who is qualified to research, discuss and simplify scientific, health and medical information. It took place early on in Mother Being's journey, after one of Nour's IG q&a in which she shared a question she received along with her answer. The person asking was presumably a woman and her question was about her pregnancy. According to Nour, some of the doctors that watched the story circulated it on social media and criticized her for allegedly giving out wrong medical information. In response, Nour published a post that explained the difference between the work of doulas and doctors and how they complement each other (see Figure 18 below). She stated that Mother Being was "created out of the need for accurate, scientific knowledge...that is available to the public" and never "promoted itself as a medical platform or provided medical advice."

Regardless of the truth of whether Nour gave out wrong medical information, the incident created productive tensions around knowledge production, leading to conversations about the role of popular health educators vis-a-vis medical professionals and the public, their responsibility as social media content creators, and the importance of making health information accessible for women's bodily autonomy and empowerment. On the accessibility of scientific information, people questioned whether medical information was something exclusive to doctors. There were comments about how content on Mother Being represented "basic knowledge that every human being should know regardless of being certified" and "the kind of education and info [that] is very simple and easy and accessible to a normal human being." There were women expressing how Mother Being content broke down the barriers between women and medical information about their bodies, enabling them to learn about their health and the medical options they had as women, "especially in a patriarchal, misogynistic and conservative part of the world like Egypt," as one of the comments put it.

Figure 18

Post about doctors and doulas – December 9, 2020



People who were critical of Nour commented about how she had provided wrong medical information and were holding her responsible for the medical scenarios that would've supposedly ensued if her information was applied by the woman who asked her the question. Two of the comments made by doctors show the various perspectives reflected in the criticism of Nour's role as a doula in the context of the incident:

> *K1: "Nour, I love you so much and I appreciate everything you've been doing. But if you really are "not a doctor" .....either collaborate with a group of doctors and let them do the medical part talk or stay this amazing badass doula who's raising awareness about women's health and motherhood"*
>
> *K2: "Telling people "doctors aren't qualified to handle breech babies" isn't giving advice. It's misleading people, not to mention shitting on an entire section of doctors that have*

studied for a decade (that's btw a decade more than doulas)...You cannot spread misinformation...and then play the "I am not a doctor part"...You have 100k+ followers that listen to what you say. You have a responsibility, take it and spare us whatever damage control this is. Do better."

K3: "I don't understand. Ya3ni if I'm a woman who gave birth by C section the first time and then I read her [Nour's] posts about VBAC and I told my doctor that I want to deliver like that, my poor helpless doctor will tell me ok as long as Nour said so. All that her info will do is to make it a discussion i can have with my doctor and ill tell him what I would prefer. At the end, I'm not going to sit at home and deliver by myself until I rupture my uterus...At the end when a woman is in labor it's the doctor who is 100% in charge…"

In the first comment, there seems to be acknowledgement that the role of doulas is different from doctors in a positive light, relating it to women's empowerment. The person also suggests the need for Nour to collaborate with doctors to provide medical information. The second comment seems to show an implicit lack of agreement over what constitutes medical information that a non-medical professional can give and an undermining of the qualifications of doulas that enable them to be critical of the medical field. "Shitting on an entire section of doctors" seems to negatively refer to Nour's general critique of how doctors sometimes violate women's bodily autonomy and deprive women of decision-making over their health. The third comment seems to refute the idea that Nour was responsible for any medical scenarios if she had hypothetically given wrong medical advice because labor was the doctor's responsibility, and it argues that the advice provided would enable women to have more informed discussions with their doctors.

When it seemed that the post did not abate the tensions, Nour made a long video in which she made several points to address the criticism she was receiving. She reiterated that medical information was not exclusive to doctors, and that providing medical information was not the same as providing medical diagnoses or advice. She talked about the importance of childbirth educators making medical information accessible to women and working together with doctors to empower women to make informed decisions about their health. She also emphasized that the role of doctors cannot be replaced and that she does not give out medical advice or diagnoses. Nour also criticized how the doctors' criticism, from her point of view, underestimates the intelligence of women and their right to health information by assuming that they consume information uncritically without consulting their doctors.

The conversations on the video further reflected people's opinions about health information and the role of health educators. They involved a mix of critical thoughts and ideas about knowledge production and women's health. The following three comments seem to capture these conversations:

> *C1: "Don't turn this into a sexist issue! It's not about disrespecting or undermining the intelligence of women which you did btw. People aren't against the content of your page but giving out false information based on "google research or some workshop" that's unacceptable… Yes women shouldn't take your advice blindly but then what's the point of your page if whatever you say must be double checked by a professional now you're losing your credibility so I suggest you stick to what you know & it's never a shame to say I don't know!"*
>
> *C2: "I think you're doing an awesome job, I don't think you're discouraging people to trust their doctors on the contrary doctors should take into consideration what you say because you're voicing our concerns, just as you take scientific info from them...Aside from the mutual attacks by supporters and opponents, I thought it was great to have this debate raised anyway…"*
>
> *C3: "As long as we don't understand the options available to us, then the advice we receive from doctors will seem like it's our only option...there are many good doctors that explain all the options and their different aspects but there are doctors who state their opinion as if it were the only option…"*
>
> *C4: "What happened on social media was because of wrong *medical* information… not related to women's intelligence or women in general...this is a public account and anyone can use the information here without consulting a doctor… thank you for creating this platform & continue doing whatever you're doing but please stay away from any medical information…"*

These comments, among others, reflect two tensions. First, there was the same tension over the difference between medical information that requires the expertise of a doctor and medical information that requires the expertise of a popular health educator (in this case, a doula too). There seems to be an undermining of a doula or popular educator's qualifications which can be inferred from the comparisons between "google research" or "workshops," and a doctor's years of intense study which a prior comment referred to as "a decade more than doulas." Similar allusions are also

reflected in comments across the content that question whether Nour is qualified to discuss health information, despite her responses in which she states what her qualifications are. Comparisons that seem to privilege doctors over popular health educators indicate that the role of popular health educators may be understood in broader society as a toned-down version of doctors, without much attention to the political role of health educators in women's empowerment and bodily autonomy.

In relation to the first tension over the role of popular educators, the second tension seems to be about Nour's authority as an online health educator. Due to the perception that only doctors were qualified to handle medical information, her credibility was being questioned and she was being told to "stay away from any medical information" on the basis that wrong advice could put people's lives in danger. Despite Nour's constant reiteration that she does not provide medical consultations or medical advice, it seemed that she was being unreasonably held responsible for how her educational content could be used by others. At the same time, her emphasis on how she collaborates with a team of doctors to double check the accuracy of her content seems to be used by her critics as an indication of her lack of credibility since "whatever [she says] must be double checked by a professional." In response to this seeming dismissal of the role of health educators, many other comments mention how Nour's work of making health information accessible enables women to understand their options and have informed discussions with doctors. They also touch on her political role of "voicing [women's concerns] to doctors."

Implicitly, there may also be social class dynamics at play related to the underlying fact that the majority of women in Egypt would not be able to afford doulas, which also indicates that Nour's work in the medical field mainly takes place in private hospitals. This could potentially contribute to tension between her and doctors who work in public hospitals. However, the reality of social inequality and how it plays out in the health sector in Egypt is not something that can be directly addressed through Mother Being. Indirectly however, Nour seems to continuously work on growing Mother Being into a relevant and relatable platform for women from different social backgrounds by providing free and accessible SRH education, especially in relation to topics such as FGM and hymens which impact the majority of women in Egypt. It is seemingly for the purpose of continuing to make SRH education accessible through Mother Being that Nour has referred to her training as a doula and has led the conversation about doctors and doulas. Referring to her training as a doula seems to legitimize her role as a popular health educator and strengthen her authority over health information vis-a-vis doctors.

In order to negotiate her authority and challenge the gender and social dynamics she faces, Nour continues to create content on the platform about the importance of accessible health education and information for women. For instance, she created a TikTok reel in which she dances to music and uses funny facial expressions to criticize the social perception that only doctors can talk about health (Figure 19). Again, the same tensions arise in the comments:

L1: "Btw the kind of education and info she provides is very simple and easy and accessible to a normal human being, if someone needs a doctor for some kind of issue or concern simply visit a doctor and get the suitable assessment instead of being lazy…"

L2: "I think people are confused between basic knowledge that every human being should know regardless of being certified (which is what you do) and actual medical advice that requires years of study to prescribe anything…"

L3: "So true I feel like the medical system gate keeps so much knowledge & uses complicated jargon to confuse us lol"

L4: "Because a 3 hour course is always a better idea compared to 10 years in Med school"

L5: "Just leave the medical field if you are not even a doctor…"

L6: "Wrong wrong… a doctor studies for years everything that has to do with the body and its details, so not everything on the internet is right!!!!"

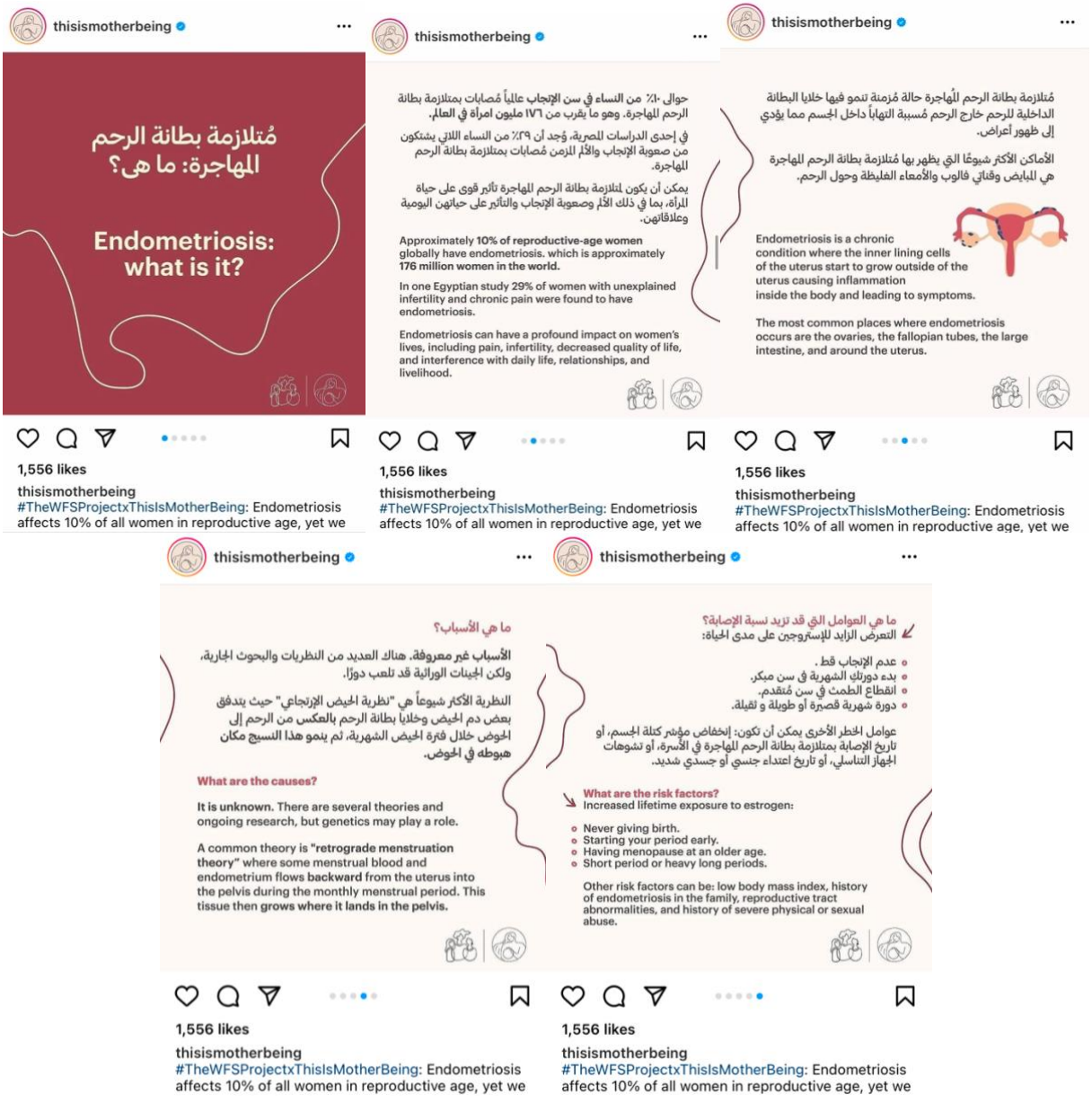
Figure 19

TikTok reel (posted on Mother Being IG) about healh education, titled "When someone says I can't talk about health education because I'm not a dcotor" – *March 20, 2021*

Nour also collaborates with doctors and women's health initiatives, leading to more educational content. For example, after the incident with the doctors on social media, she hosted a doctor on IG live video to discuss the pregnancy-related condition that she was asked about in the IG q&a, and she has since hosted others in IG videos. Furthermore, she collaborates with the Women Friendly Services (WFS) Project in publishing educational content about patient-centered care, gender pain gap, women's rights during pregnancy and birth, dysmenorrhea, endometriosis, and more. Figure 20 shows the post about endometriosis which is an example of this collaboration.

Figure 20

Post about endometriosis by Mother Being and WFS, #TheWFSProjectXThisIsMotherBeing – March 20, 2021



Posts that result from collaborations use corresponding hashtags, such as the one used to mark the work between Mother Being and the WFS Project, "#TheWFSProjectXThisIsMotherBeing." Clicking on the hashtag shows that such posts are published by both Mother Being and the WFS Project on their respective platforms. Yet, the details of the collaboration, such as whether or how the content was created collaboratively, are unclear. Nour's collaborations are seemingly also one way of how she attempts to strengthen her authority on women's health.

"I'm Tired," Tiresome Authority and Invisible Labor

In a video named "I'm Tired," Nour spoke emotionally about how physically and mentally draining it was for her to manage the platform and create content everyday, and how receiving negative feedback made it more difficult. Below is the (incomplete) translated transcript of the video:

> *"I'm tired and feel that I'm running low on fuel, the hope I have is getting weaker, I wanted to come out and say this that many people forget that behind this platform, the content, stories, videos, there's a human being, a mother, wife, daughter, who puts herself or exposes herself to risk, criticism, attacks, because I have hope, I believe that this information should be available to everyone … I wanted to make this video to tell you that I'm a human being, and I'm going through a difficult time, and it's very easy for you to judge someone from behind the screen, someone who puts herself at risk and under the stress of always feeling that I'll wake up one day to find everything gone, just like what happened with my tiktok account before it got restored, very easy for you to be sitting behind your screens and criticize and say I don't like this or that and swear at me, I don't want to hear it, I want to remind you that I read these things, I see them, and that they hurt me because I put in my utmost efforts to create this content, everyday from 9am until I sleep, I work hard on creating this content, to prepare it, to write, to edit, with Fayrouz and Shahd, the 3 of us work on this everyday because we have hope and we believe that this information should be accessible to everyone. When we see that the response is hateful, critical, mean… just leave… just unfollow or block the page, because you're not helping anyone when you do this. In return, there are around 170K people that want to benefit from this. These things put me down. These things make me want to give up, to say screw it, nobody needs to learn. Even though I know how important this content is and how I need to continue what I started. But what I'm trying to say is don't forget that I'm a human being*

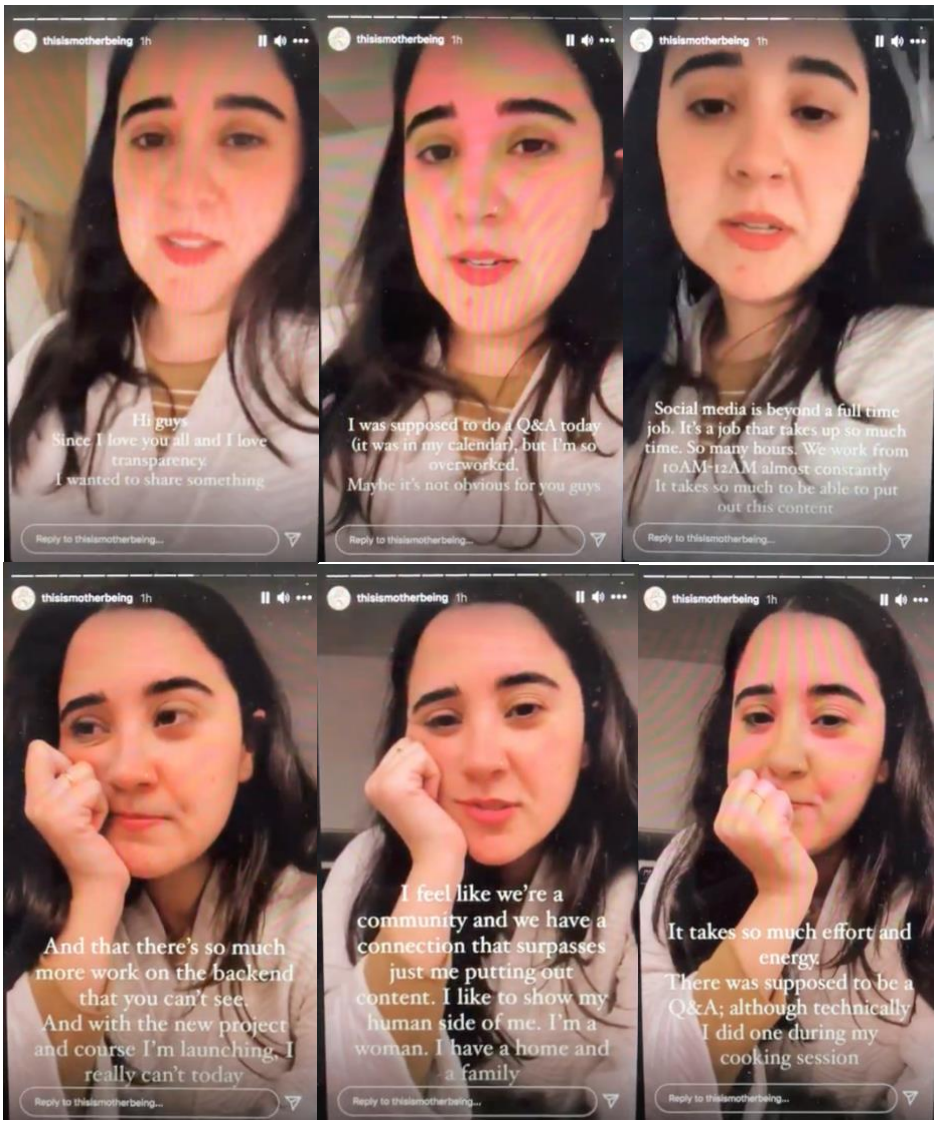
and that I'm trying to do something very very very difficult in the society we live in and that it requires extraordinary physical and mental strength to do it. So please be kind to me because I'm a human being, a very tired human being."

With 1640 comments, the video has more comments than any other post on Mother Being. With the exception of 1 comment, every one of the 1640 comments expressed love and support for Nour. People's comments described how influential Nour's content was to them, how it helped them learn about their bodies and sexualities, and how they shared it with people around them. Many of the comments stated how difficult it was to do this work publicly as a woman in the Arab world. People also urged Nour to continue doing the work she does, stating how it was helping many women who had no space or access to learn about their bodies and sexualities.

The video seemed to show that negative feedback, criticism or personal insults made Nour feel that the effort she and her team invested in content creation was unacknowledged. She described how content creation involved ideating, writing and editing content, and how it constituted hours-long work on a daily basis. The labor of content creation was something Nour spoke about previously in her IG live videos and IG stories (see Figure 21). Apart from what she described, my netnographic observation seems to show that there was also the work of managing the platform, which I could visibly see from Nour's weekly IG story q&a, (almost) daily IG stories, and replies in the comments section. Despite the visibility of the content on Mother Being and the social dynamics that make the work of Mother Being difficult, the underlying labor undertaken by Nour and her team did not seem to be visible to or acknowledged by those who left negative or hurtful comments on the content.

Figure 21

IG story about social media work – February 3, 2021



In a politically repressive country such as Egypt and particularly at a time when female social media influencers were being sent to prison on charges such as "undermining family values," the risk that Nour spoke of in the video seems to refer to the real danger of being a public content creator in Egypt, especially in the area of SRH education. This was not the first time that she spoke of risk. In the "Public Service Announcement" video, the following interaction took place in the comments:

> *L1: "you are just like the people you are critiquing because instead of having a dialogue with these people, you deleted the videos and you're here lecturing them and telling them they're religiously extreme and ignorant and that only you understand…"*

Mother Being replies: "Okay bye bye. I'd like to hear you say this when you're in my shoes and your safety is at risk every day… I deleted the videos for my safety and my family's safety… people like them can hurt me"

L2: "If you are convinced with what you're doing, then you shouldn't have deleted the video, you shouldn't let ignorant people's opinions influence you"

Mother Being replies: "It's because we live in a scary society and my safety and my family's safety is my priority and if a video about scientific knowledge will put me at risk, screw it then no one needs to learn"

The first comment seemed to criticize how Nour deleted her content about women's self-pleasure then spoke about it in the video with frustration and attributed people's negative reactions to their inability to separate between their personal beliefs and scientific information about sex. The comment from the second person seemed to rhetorically question Nour's decision to delete the content. Nour's replies to both seem to show that her visibility on the platform through the content she creates is something she considers to be a risk for her and family's safety. This helps show why in the "I'm Tired" video, Nour alludes to the labor of content creation as also consisting of risk for her and her family.

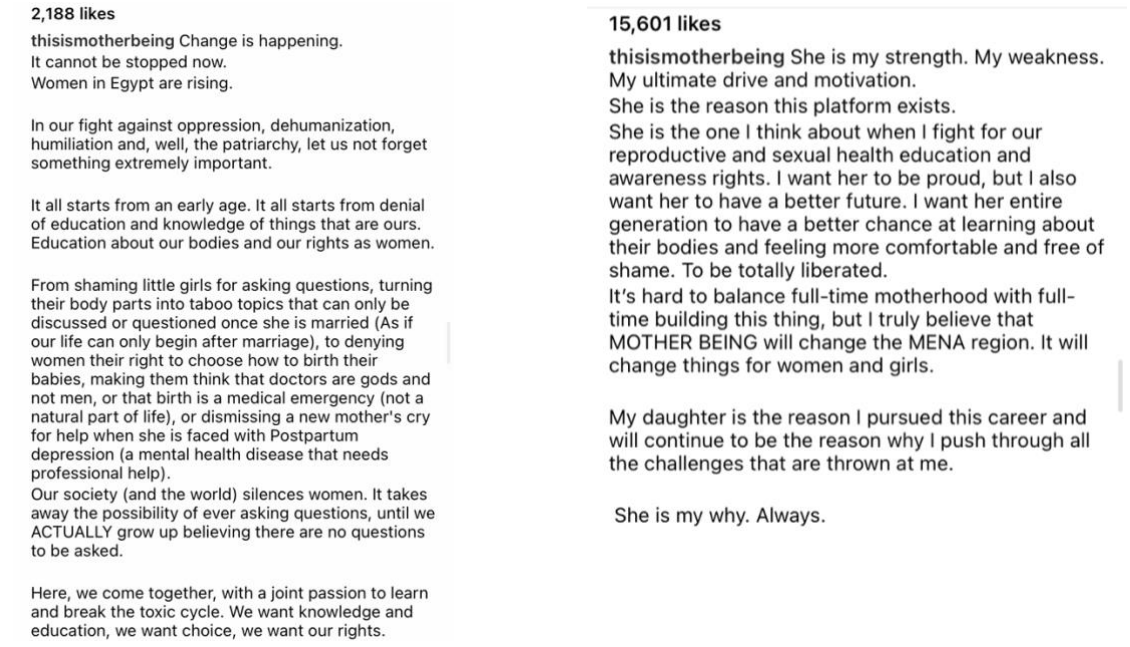
On another level, Nour's distress which was seemingly visible in the "I'm Tired" video could relate to her personal involvement with Mother Being. In the 20-minute IG live video to celebrate reaching 100K followers, Nour was visibly emotional and spoke about how the platform grew due to people's love and support and how it impacted women, reading out the messages she received from women who described how they benefitted. Importantly, she spoke about the hope she had for a better future for women in Egypt and in the Arab world (see figure 19). It was a hope she referred to in "I'm Tired" and a hope that seems intrinsically tied to her daughter, as further demonstrated in Figure 22. This reflection of Nour's personal involvement with Mother Being, coupled with the risk that her work requires, seems to reveal another invisible layer of labor that she undertakes.

Furthermore, in the "I'm Tired" video, Nour's words seem to unintentionally reveal something about the dynamics of authority on the platform. Her statement, "these things [hateful responses] make me want to give up, to say screw it, nobody needs to learn," reveals the consideration of the possibility of discontinuing the work of Mother Being. As the account manager of this public Instagram account, Nour has the authority to delete the account if she

chooses. The authority to delete the account means the authority to collapse the collectivity of followers and delete the content from Instagram. Hypothetically, if Nour ever decides to discontinue the work without deleting the account, the platform could serve as an archive of educational content and conversations.

Figure 22

Captions of posts that demonstrate Nour's personal involvement and hope for Arab women's empowerment



2,188 likes

thisismotherbeing Change is happening.
It cannot be stopped now.
Women in Egypt are rising.

In our fight against oppression, dehumanization, humiliation and, well, the patriarchy, let us not forget something extremely important.

It all starts from an early age. It all starts from denial of education and knowledge of things that are ours. Education about our bodies and our rights as women.

From shaming little girls for asking questions, turning their body parts into taboo topics that can only be discussed or questioned once she is married (As if our life can only begin after marriage), to denying women their right to choose how to birth their babies, making them think that doctors are gods and not men, or that birth is a medical emergency (not a natural part of life), or dismissing a new mother's cry for help when she is faced with Postpartum depression (a mental health disease that needs professional help).
Our society (and the world) silences women. It takes away the possibility of ever asking questions, until we ACTUALLY grow up believing there are no questions to be asked.

Here, we come together, with a joint passion to learn and break the toxic cycle. We want knowledge and education, we want choice, we want our rights.

15,601 likes

thisismotherbeing She is my strength. My weakness. My ultimate drive and motivation.
She is the reason this platform exists.
She is the one I think about when I fight for our reproductive and sexual health education and awareness rights. I want her to be proud, but I also want her to have a better future. I want her entire generation to have a better chance at learning about their bodies and feeling more comfortable and free of shame. To be totally liberated.
It's hard to balance full-time motherhood with full-time building this thing, but I truly believe that MOTHER BEING will change the MENA region. It will change things for women and girls.

My daughter is the reason I pursued this career and will continue to be the reason why I push through all the challenges that are thrown at me.

She is my why. Always.

Note. The caption on the left is from a post posted on July 5, 2020, and the caption on the right is from a post posted on November 28, 2020. An Arabic translation was originally included in the rest of the respective posts.

The authority of content creators to collapse the platform seems to reveal the potential ephemerality of online spaces such as Mother Being, but it does not seem to affect the dynamics of dialogue on the platform. As shown in previous sections, people are able to express their opinions, participate in conversations, ask questions, and these forms of engagement are often critical. Nour seems to use her authority to moderate the dialogue in the comments section and, in extreme cases, block people or delete comments that express 'hate speech.' From my personal use of Instagram and netnographic observation which involved surveying the similar educational platforms that Mother Being follows, this form of moderation is common among content creators and practiced in ways that maintain the safety of online spaces. On the other hand, people on Instagram have the power to flag or report content that they deem to be against 'community guidelines' such as sexually inappropriate content. Given that social media sites rely on users for

content moderation, it seems that when Nour's TikTok account was deleted, it may have been due to it being reported for consisting of reels about SRH education.

The deletion of Nour's TikTok account was something she created Mother Being IG stories about in which she urged TikTok to restore the account. In the "I'm Tired" video, she described the stress of *"always feeling that [she'll] wake up one day to find everything gone.*" What she seems to be alluding to is the authority of Instagram over the account and content of Mother Being, which could be used to delete the account or delete, censor, or shadowban its content. An example of this is how in early May 2021, during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, Nour stated how the posts about Palestinian liberation on Mother Being led to a plummeting in viewership and reach. Instagram presumably shadowbanned Mother Being content. A common tactic that various content creators -including Nour- used during May 2021 was to spell keywords such as "Palestine" differently in an attempt to make it harder for the algorithm to identify and shadowban content. In one of Nour's posts during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, she wrote the following caption shown in Figure 23:

Figure 23

Caption of a post - May 19, 2021

thisismotherbeing How are you feeling these days? I'll go first: I'm feeling helpless, restless, trapped, heavy. My body aches, my heart aches. I can't work although I want to and when I decide to, all platforms are working against us, which suffocates a company like mine and strains us financially too. My daughter is feeling better hamdullah. I haven't slept for 4 nights. I might have a stomach ulcer. All of this is incomparable to what is happening to our neighboring country. But a girl's gotta vent and maybe this'll give the algo a little bump. ❤️ Leave a comment below and tell me how you feel 👇❤️

The authority of social media sites over accounts therefore poses questions about content censorship, ownership and free expression in online spaces. It also poses questions about how such authority could economically impact digital popular educators such as Nour.

E is for Educator and Entrepreneur

Up until October 2020, Nour alone was managing an ever-growing public platform and business, creating all sorts of educational content, collaborating with doctors and other health organizations, teaching classes, and providing birth support to external clients. On October 13, 2020, she announced that "the time has come to start expanding the MOTHER BEING family" in the caption to the post in which she listed the job requirements of the team she was looking to hire.

Notably, both the post and the caption were written in English, and the requirements included fluency in both English and Arabic and the ability to translate English posts to Arabic and vice versa. It made sense that Nour required this, given the fact that the content was provided in both English and Arabic, but for what was becoming one of the biggest online platforms for *Arabic* sex education, it was exclusive. For any Arab woman who didn't speak English, this was just one of the small yet important aspects of the platform that may have given it a slight sense of exclusivity based on class and sociocultural background. Still, this was back in October 2020, when Mother Being was yet to undergo many changes.

With the hiring of a team, Nour was now visibly investing money in Mother Being. What income was she getting in return (that is publicly knowable)? When she first launched the platform, she offered two main paid services: doula services and reproductive health classes. Since doulas can only support a limited number of women at any given time, her doula services were usually fully booked months in advance. These days, she rarely promotes her doula services on the platform, if at all. What she is most popular for and what she frequently promotes are her classes. Early on in Mother Being, Nour offered two classes:

1. Periods: Mastering Your Cycle (launched in February 2020)
2. Birth Crash Course (launched in April 2020)

With the integration of reproductive and sexual health education, she launched her third class:

3. Pleasure Principles: Sex Ed Reimagined (launched in February 2021)

All of her classes take place online via Zoom and require an online booking in advance. On average, they are each offered once every month. Figure 24 provides descriptions of each of the three classess offered. Alongside classes, Nour also has a monthly online women's circle to discuss all sorts of topics about SRH. The first circle took place in November 2020 and it has since continued to take place every month. The women's circles too are for money and required an online booking in advance.

Figure 24

Separate posts (English version) about the three different classes offered by Nour

In the IG stories, every now and then, Nour receives questions about why the classes are not for free. In response, she constantly mentions how these classes are her main source of income, or how she is able to "eat bread" (a common Egyptian expression for 'making a living') along with her team (Figure 25).

Figure 25

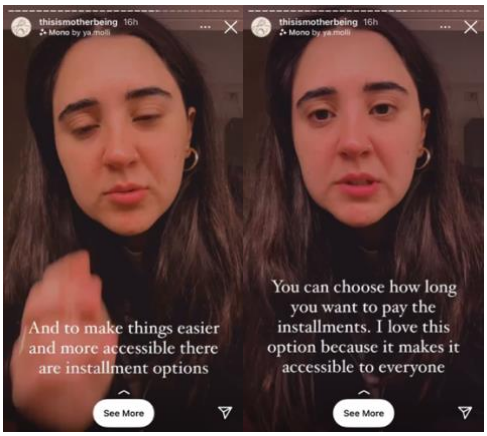
IG story question about why classes are not free - April 7, 2021

Note. The question states "Why don't you post the content of the classes on the platform for everyone since there are people who can't pay??!" Nour responds, "Because we offer a lot of free content and we need to make money and eat bread. Were all the qualifications and education that we received for free?"

Earlier on Mother Being, in the IG live q&a video in which Nour was cooking and taking care of her daughter while answering people's questions, she was again asked about why classes were not free. She spontaneously responded by explaining how she wished they were free and available to everyone but that they were her main source of income, for herself and her team. She explained that if, in the future, a company decides to sponsor her, she would then be able to provide these classes for free. She also stated that her intention in pricing the classes was to make them as accessible as possible. Later on, three weeks after the IG live video, Nour introduced the option of paying class fees in instalments. In one of her IG stories, she talked about how she had been working on making the platform more accessible and that this installment option for classes made it possible for more women to register and benefit (Figure 26).

Figure 26

IG story about instalment option for classes – February 19, 2021



Notwithstanding the instalment option for classes, Nour continues to receive comments from people on the platform about the affordability of the classes and questions about why they are paid for. The following are some of the comments that were made across several of the promotional posts about classes:

F1: "I wish you could upload the class here on Instagram. It's too expesnive, who can afford this?!"

K2: "I think it would be better if you stopped having these "paid" classes and just shared everything on here in a more open way"

C1: "Not everyone is capable of attending these classes unfortunately"

C2 replies: "You're right. They should be recorded and posted on here after those who could attend have attended already"

C3 replies: "This is their source of income :)"

C1 replies: "Sure, but maybe she can upload a part of the class for free and only make part of it paid. This is a solution that would work for everyone"

Z1: "Hello Nour, I really like the content you provide and I highly support you to keep going. But I just checked the linktree page and I found this class to be a bit expensive. I am sure you know how to value your effort but this cost for a two-hour class does not make it accessible for everyone who wants to learn about their bodies. All love <3"

Z2 replies: "Yesss I have the same Argument is way tooo expensive !!!"

Mother Being replies: "we have installment options for accessibility :)"

Such comments about why Nour's classes are not free deserve an overview of the nature of her labor. To start with, all of the content provided on Mother Being is free. Free content includes posts (TikToks, long videos, textual posts), IG highlights, and story q&a. Anyone with an IG account can access the content, bookmark it and share it with others for free. The time, energy, and risk Nour invests in creating the content, engaging with people, and answering their questions through the various communication channels, is unpaid labor - there is no money to make directly from doing this work. Indirectly, she visibly participates in paid partnerships with initiatives and companies related to women's health through Mother Being, publishing content every now and then with the tag "paid partnership with…" Aside from these tags, the details of how these partnerships are secured or what work they involve are unknown. Nour also recently launched a Mother Being podcast which is produced and distributed by Get Podeo (podcast platform in MENA) and freely accessible on various podcast apps/websites. While the details of these partnerships are unknown, what is clear is that there is plenty of free educational content on Mother Being that is not directly paid for. It is therefore likely that Nour is able to continue to provide free content and manage the platform in a sustainable manner mainly due to her paid services such as classes.

Chapter 5: Moving Closer to Understanding Digital Popular Education on Instagram

In this chapter, I further explore what was learned in relation to the two research questions:

- RQ1: How does dialogue between and among content creators as popular educators, and followers as learners take place?
- RQ2: How is knowledge produced collectively? In what ways is knowledge negotiated between and among content creators and followers?

I situate the key themes in relation to the literature on popular education, social media, and SRH education in Egypt.

Discussion

First, the netnography showed how Mother Being's creative multimodal content (long videos, TikToks, infographics and textual posts) about topics such as virginity, self-pleasure, obstetric violence and FGM, leads to critical dialogue in the comments section. People engage in critical dialogue by participating in discussions, sharing their experiences, and asking and responding to each other's questions about SRH. Through the utilization of engaging IG features such as story q&a and IG live video, people are able to ask Nour questions about various SRH topics, share their personal experiences and provide feedback on the content. When people's questions (and Nour's answers) and women's personal experiences are shared, anyone on the platform is able to learn from them and possibly have permanent access to them if they get archived as IG highlights. Furthermore, the netnography shows that Nour and her team tend to tailor the content they create to people's learning needs and lived realities that are reflected in the questions and stories they share with Nour through the IG q&a.

These findings relate to the literature in several ways. At the basic level, they show how critical dialogue as "talk that changes us or our context" and "profound, wise, insightful conversation" (Wink, 2011, p. 65) can be initiated and facilitated by popular educators in online spaces. The creative use of features such as IG q&a and live video and the availability of tools for public dialogue such as commenting, show how educators and learners can co-investigate 'generative themes' (Freire, 2018) in digital environments. For instance, the frequent questions that Nour receives from women about virginity and hymens which reflect the oppressive myths that are circulated about women's sexuality feed into the creation of various forms of content about it, which in turn leads to critical conversations in the comments section. In this instance, women's virginity and hymens is one of the generative themes of SRH in Egypt and the Arab world. The

creation of content based on generative themes that are constituted by people's questions, concerns, and personal experiences represents a form of learning from the ground up (Horton et al., 1990). The space for women to ask questions and share experiences safely through IG q&a shows the potential for empowering critical dialogue to be less of a 'repressive myth' (Ellsworth, 1989) or to involve less silence (Walters & Manicom, 1996) by marginalized people on Instagram.

Second, the netnography showed how before Mother Being grew to become one of the most popular platforms for Arabic SRH education, it started out as a small, relatively exclusive platform. At the basic level, the change was initiated when Nour started to create content in Arabic and diversify the content to integrate sex education, which is what people were asking her for. At a deeper level, the change also occurred through the increasing attunement of Nour's language about SRH to the common cultural language that people used on and off the platform, as shown by the example of her use of 'wedding night' to refer to first time sex. These two changes in language have led Mother Being to become significantly more accessible.

These findings relate to the literature on educators' subjectivities and their impact on the dynamics of dialogue and knowledge production. While Freire's (2018) notion of "class suicide" may be too absolutist as expressed by Weiler (1991), the netnography shows how the public and instantaneous nature of dialogue on social media, mainly in the comments section, enables people to critically challenge educators' power and subjectivities. Furthermore, the work of creating content for tens of thousands of people in collapsed contexts (boyd, 2010) and the ability to learn about their opinions, questions and feedback from the comments section, provides the opportunity for educators to grow their critical consciousness in a relatively short period of time and in demonstrable ways. For example, the transformative changes that Mother Being has gone through took place in less than one year and are demonstrable through the change in the language and topics of the content, reflecting Nour's growth as a popular educator.

Third, the netnography shows how Nour uses humor through creative expression to teach about SRH. The TikTok reels about period pain, self-care and self-pleasure provide examples of how educational content can be fun and critically engaging, leading to women's participation in the comments section through emojis, sarcasm, humor, and questions and conversations. The netnography also shows the role of other emotions such as anger and sadness in critical learning on Mother Being. Nour's IG video about obstetric violence in which she explains how scared and angry her experience of obstetric violence made her feel is one example of critical learning that is

emotionally grounded. Women's sharing of their own experiences of obstetric violence, both in the comments on the IG video and in the IG story as prompted by Nour, further reflects the role of experience and emotion in critical learning about women's SRH on Mother Being.

The findings relate to the literature on feminist epistemology and the role of emotion in feminist popular education. First, the use of humor for SRH education relates to hooks' (1994) idea of critical learning that engages people's minds and bodies in joyful ways. The low barriers to creative expression (Jenkins, 2007) and consequent utilization of social media affordances such as reels enables digital educators to creatively combine music, dancing, facial expression, and text to engage people in critical learning through fun and humor. Second, holding space for the emotional aspect of forms of oppression such as obstetric violence on Mother Being relates to the literature on how popular education has to engage people in examining the way they feel about the oppressions they face (Miller & Toro, 2017; Weiler, 1991). In safe public spaces where dialogue is moderated, such as on Mother Being, the use of audiovisual features such as IG videos can mediate emotionally engaged learning and lead to conversations in which people share their experiences and emotions as sources of knowledge about oppression.

Fourth, the netnography shows through two main examples the complex power dynamics involved in dialogue and knowledge production on Instagram in the context of SRH. The first example is of how Nour uses her authority to discourage discussions about social and religious appropriateness and resist hegemonic discourses through creative content about controversial topics such as self-pleasure. Similar resistance is also exercised by people in the comments section through critical dialogue and communal moderation. The second example is of how Nour's educational content about women's reproductive health actively challenges the dominant power dynamics that position doctors as the main authority over health knowledge. She asserts her position not only by continuing to create content about SRH and the role of health educators, but also by collaborating with doctors and other women's health initiatives. All of this leads to critical conversations in the comments section in which people explore the power dynamics of health knowledge production.

These findings contribute to the literature in several ways. In relation to the literature on educators' use of their authority for freedom (Choules, 2017; Plantenga, 2012; Glowacki-Dudka et al., 2017; Horton et al., 1990), the findings show how digital popular educators can exercise their authority to collectively negotiate with participants ground rules for dialogue that advance

freedom and inclusion. The netnography further builds on the idea of educators' authority for freedom by showing how in the digital context of Instagram, participants too can exercise their authority to negotiate and resist hegemonic discourses in dialogue. Related to the literature on popular health education and the dominant power of doctors vis-a-vis health educators (Horsman, 2012), the netnography shows how popular health education on Instagram can be an active form of resistance to such power dynamics through content creation and collaboration. The netnography also shows how popular health education on Instagram can lead to public critical conversations about health knowledge production.

Fifth, the netnography shows how authority of social media sites can be problematic for digital popular education. The examples of TikTok's deletion of Nour's reels about self-pleasure and Instragram's shadowbanning of her content about Palestine reflects the problem of social media sites' ownership and censorship of content. These findings relate to Middlebrook's (2020) notion of how Instagram's algorithmic censorship can disproportionately affect marginalized communities. They also extend Jenkins' (2013) critique of how social media sites stifle free ownership of content by posing the challenge of doing popular education on social media such as Instagram in spite of the constant threat of deletion or censorship of content.

Sixth, the netnography shows how Nour's work as a popular health educator on Instagram involves time, risk and mental and emotional labor that may not be easily visible on the platform. It also shows how she is able to continue creating free content through paid services such as classes and women's monthly circles about SRH topics. The negative comments about her and the content, the frequent doubts about her qualifications, and the questions she sometimes receives about why her classes are not free seem to show how her labor is undermined. These findings contribute to the literature on popular education as care work (Burt et al., 2020) by showing how digital popular education -especially in politically repressive contexts where content creation is risky- is a form of emotional labor that is undervalued. Nour's digital entrepreneurship offers one potential way for digital popular educators on Instagram to continue to undertake unpaid care work sustainably.

Seventh, the netnography adds to the literature on SRH education in Egypt. It shows how digital popular education is one potential way of addressing the barriers that SRH education initiatives face in Egypt, such as social resistance, limited accessibility, and lack of sustainability (Roushdy, 2013). This is reflected in Mother Being's promising growth into a platform that provides accessible and culturally grounded SRH education, facilitates critical dialogue about SRH

and women's empowerment, and creates the safe space for negotiating and resisting hegemonic discourses. While Instagram and social media more generally are not accessible for everyone, digital popular SRH education is one important avenue that can contribute to normalizing SRH education and making it more accessible than it currently is in Egypt.

Research Implications

This research has various implications for different stakeholders. For activists and popular educators, it provides an in-depth case of how social media tools can be creatively utilized to develop multimodal educational experiences about important social and political issues that reach hundreds and thousands of people. Activists and popular educators can use this research to critically reflect on their own social media practices and collectively explore the possibilites and potential impact of doing social media work similar to the example shown by Nour Emam, the founder of Mother Being. This research could also be used to launch public cross-disciplinary conversations among activists, educators, media and cultural workers, digital social entrepreneurs, IT developers, and everyday social media users and learners. These conversations can explore how social media tools can be critically leveraged for popular education, asking questions about popular education, social media affordances, platform algorithms, content ownership, (online and offline) security of digital popular educators and learners/participants, and digital entrepreneurship for popular education and radical social change. Such conversations can pave the way for a more critical, collaborative, joyful and independent digital popular education that teaches and mobilizes people around social issues, especially in politically repressive contexts where on the ground activism is life threatening.

Research Limitations and Future Research

The first limitation of this research is that it does not interview participants about their perceptions and experiences of digital popular education. In spite of this limitation, the netnography explored such perceptions in the comments section to gain an understanding of the impact of digital popular education. It also provides an important background about digital popular education for future research. Future research can build on this netnography by conducting interviews with followers of public educational platforms on social media to explore perceptions of their participation and the role of content creators as well as explore their experiences of the impact of digital popular education. Similarly, future research can build on this netnography by conducting interviews with, or physical field observations of, content creators during their behind

the screen work to gain an understanding of how they create content. It could explore their perceptions of the process of educational content creation and platform management.

The second limitation of this research is that it conducts netnographic research about digital popular education in only one topic area: SRH. However, the focus on one topic area enabled an in-depth exploration of the nuances of digital popular education on social media, providing several ways for how future research can approach research about Instagram education. When it comes to digital popular education, future research can build on this netnography to explore how different topic areas such as anti-racist education, indigenous education, food justice education, etc. are taught on Instagram. Future research can also approach digital popular education from a comparative perspective by exploring how similar educational initiatives on Instagram teach a specific subject and how collaborations take place between content creators working in similar or complementary subject areas.

Conclusion

This netnography explored how popular education through critical dialogue and collective knowledge production about SRH takes place on Mother Being. It showed how multimodal content and tools for public communication on Instagram can facilitate critical conversations and knowledge negotiation about various SRH topics. The netnography reveals how popular education on Instagram involves the simultaneous complexity and hopeful possibility of creating safe online spaces for learning, facilitating critical dialogue, creating educational content that is emotionally engaging and rooted in people's lived realities, and negotiating tensions in knowledge production. The authority of Instagram and, more generally, social media sites over content ownership and censorship poses an important challenge to doing digital popular education. The netnography also briefly shows how digital entrepreneurship can represent one way for digital educators to create free educational content in a sustainable manner.

This research mainly has implications for the literature on popular education, offering an in-depth account of how it can be critically extended to the digital context of Instagram. It also represents one way for how SRH education in Egypt can be made more accessible through digital popular education on Instagram. Future research can build on this netnography by exploring digital popular education about different learning topics, interviewing participants to understand their perceptions of learning on Instagram, and observing digital educators behind the screens to gain an in-depth understanding of their process of content creation.

References

Addae, Y. (April 15, 2021). Nour Emam on what they don't teach us about our bodies in school. Retrieved from https://amaka.studio/explore/articles/nour-emam-mother-being

Alsayes, Y. (August 23, 2020). Nour Emam, the Egyptian Doula behind mother being. Retrieved from https://whatwomenwant-mag.com/nour-emam-the-egyptian-doula-behind-mother-being/

Bader, N. (August 25, 2020). Why we need comprehensive sexuality education in Egypt. Retrieved from https://aps.aucegypt.edu/en/articles/513/why-we-need-comprehensive-sexuality-education-in-egypt

Beckett, L. (2020). Tantear Practices in Popular Education: Reaching for Each Other in the Dark. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies, 41*(1), 120-140.

Begum, R. (June 28, 2021). Egypt persecutes tiktok women while men get impunity for sexual violence. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/28/egypt-persecutes-tiktok-women-while-men-get-impunity-sexual-violence

boyd, d. (2010). Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self : Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 47-66). doi:https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315193472

Burt, J., James, A. K., Walters, S., & Von Kotze, A. (2020). Think piece: Working for living - popular education as/at work for social-ecological justice. *Southern African Journal of Environmental Education, 36*, 9-20. doi:https://doi.org/10.4314/sajee.v36i1.2

Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope : social movements in the Internet age*. Cambridge, UK ;: Polity.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory : a practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London ;: Sage Publications.

Choudry, A. (2015). *Learning activism : the intellectual life of contemporary social movements*. [Guelph, Ontario]: University of Toronto Press.

Choules, K. (2007). Social Change Education: Context Matters. *Adult Education Quarterly: A Journal of Research and Theory, 57*(2), 159-176.

Costello, L., McDermott, M.-L., & Wallace, R. (2017). Netnography: Range of Practices, Misperceptions, and Missed Opportunities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1), 1609406917700647. doi:10.1177/1609406917700647

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Educational research : planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (Fourth edition., Pearson new international ed. ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson.

Davies, C. A. (2002). *Reflexive ethnography a guide to researching selves and others*. London; New York: Routledge.

Douglas, N. K. M., Scholz, M., Myers, M. A., Rae, S. M., Elmansouri, A., Hall, S., & Border, S. (2019). Reviewing the Role of Instagram in Education: Can a Photo Sharing Application Deliver Benefits to Medical and Dental Anatomy Education? *Medical Science Educator, 29*(4), 1117-1128. doi:10.1007/s40670-019-00767-5

Duffy, B. E., Pinch, A., Sannon, S., & Sawey, M. (2021). The Nested Precarities of Creative Labor on Social Media. *Social Media + Society, 7*(2), 20563051211021368. doi:10.1177/20563051211021368

El-Hameed, D. A. (December 18, 2015). Sexuality education: Egypt's missed opportunity. Retrieved from https://timep.org/commentary/analysis/sexuality-education-egypts-missed-opportunity/

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 297-325. doi:10.17763/haer.59.3.058342114k266250

Emam, N., December 27, 2020) *#CairoScene impact list 2020: Nour emam/Interviewer: CairoScene*. CairoScene, YouTube, YouTube.

Emam, N., March 7, 2021) *Doula by day, thisismotherbeing by night/Interviewer: N. Morsi*. The Egyptian Streets Podcast, Apple Podcasts, Apple Podcasts.

Emam, N., March 8, 2021) *ta3'yeer al7ayah aljinsiyya..7ekayit nour emam/Interviewer: Elsaha*. Elsaha, YouTube, YouTube.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes* (Second edition. ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Foley, G. (1998). Clearing the theoretical ground : elements in a theory of popular education. *International Review of Education, 44*(2), 139-153.

Foley, G., National Institute of Adult, E., & Deutscher Volkshochschulverband. Institut für Internationale, Z. (1999). *Learning in social action : a contribution to understanding informal education*. Bonn: IIZ-DVV

Foucault, M., & Gordon, C. (1980). *Power/knowledge : selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (1st American ed. ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Freedom on the net 2020 : Egypt. (2020). Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/country/egypt/freedom-net/2020

Freire, P., Ramos, M. B., Macedo, D. P., & Shor, I. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (50th anniversary edition. ed.). New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Gallucci, N. (June 11, 2021). Instagram is flooded with ARTSY ACTIVISM Guides. Here's the story behind them. Retrieved from https://mashable.com/article/user-made-educational-instagram-guides

Garcia, A. C., Standlee, A. I., Bechkoff, J., & Cui, Y. (2009). Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 38*(1), 52-84. doi:10.1177/0891241607310839

Gebeily, M. (May 10, 2021). Instagram, Twitter Blame glitches for DELETING Palestinian posts. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/israel-palestinians-socialmedia-idUSL8N2MU624

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures : selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Gillespie, T. (2010). The politics of 'platforms'. *New Media & Society, 12*(3), 347-364. doi:10.1177/1461444809342738

Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals : toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. Granby, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey.

Giroux, H. A. (1993). Paulo Freire and the politics of postcolonialism. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire : a critical encounter* (pp. 175-186). Retrieved from https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/52099699

Glowacki-Dudka, M., Mullett, C., Griswold, W., Baize-Ward, A., Vetor-Suits, C., Londt, S. C., & Williams-Hawkins, M. (2017). Walking the Talk: Expectations and Intentions of a Popular Education Workshop. *Journal of Experiential Education, 40*(4), 377-393. doi:10.1177/1053825917712733

Hall, B. L. (2012). 'A Giant Human Hashtag'. In B. L. Hall, D. E. Clover, J. Crowther, & E. Scandrett (Eds.), *Learnning and Educationfor a Bettter World: The Role of Social Movements* (pp. 127-139). Rotterdam: SensePublishers.

Henry, J. (2007). Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century (Part One). *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy, 2*(01), 23-33.

Hine, C. (2016). From Virtual Ethnography to the Embedded, Embodied, Everyday Internet. In L. Hjorth, H. A. Horst, A. D. Galloway, & G. Bell (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography* (pp. 21-28): Routledge.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress : education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Horsman, J. (2012). WWW.Net. In L. Manicom & S. Walters (Eds.), *Feminist Popular Education in Transnational Debates: Building Pedagogies of Possibility* (pp. 147-162). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Horton, M., Bell, B., Gaventa, J., & Peters, J. M. (1990). *We make the road by walking : conversations on education and social change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hunt, L., & Kaercher, D. (2012). Feminist Health Education on the Internet. In L. Manicom & S. Walters (Eds.), *Feminist Popular Education in Transnational Debates: Building Pedagogies of Possibility* (pp. 163-176). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

Irving, C. J., & English, L. M. (2011). Community in Cyberspace: Gender, Social Movement Learning, and the Internet. *Adult Education Quarterly, 61*(3), 262-278. doi:10.1177/0741713610380448

Kamel Boulos, M., Giustini, D., & Wheeler, S. (2016). Instagram and WhatsApp in Health and Healthcare: An Overview. *Future Internet, 8*, 37. doi:10.3390/fi8030037

Kane, L. (2001). *Popular education and social change in Latin America*. London: Latin American Bureau.

Kane, L. (2012). Forty Years of Popular Education in Latin America. In B. L. Hall, D. E. Clover, J. Crowther, & E. Scandrett (Eds.), *Learnning and Educationfor a Bettter World: The Role of Social Movements* (pp. 69-83). Rotterdam: SensePublishers.

Khalil, R. (July 12, 2020). Why everyone needs to Follow Nour Emam aka @ThisIsMotherBeing. Retrieved from https://teenntimes.com/2020/07/12/why-everyone-needs-to-follow-nour-emam-aka-thisismotherbeing/

Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). *Critical pedagogy primer* (2nd ed. ed.). New York: P. Lang.

Kirkwood, G., & Kirkwood, C. (2011). *Living adult education : Freire in Scotland* [1 online resource (xx, 192 pages) : illustrations](2nd ed. ed.). Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-552-9

Kozinets, R. V. (2010). *Netnography : doing ethnographic research online*. Los Angeles, Calif. ;: SAGE.

Kozinets, R. V. (2019). *Netnography: The essential guide to qualitative social media research* (3rd ed.): SAGE Publications.

Kozinets, R. V., Dolbec, P., & A, E. (2014). Netnographic analysis: understanding culture through social media data. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis* (pp. 262-276). doi:https://www-doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4135/9781446282243.n18

Kozinets, R. V., & Gambetti, R. (2020). *Netnography unlimited : understanding technoculture using qualitative social media research* [1 online resource (xv, 325 pages) : illustrations (some color)]. Retrieved from https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9781003001430

Lehner-Mear, R. (2020). Negotiating the ethics of Netnography: developing an ethical approach to an online study of mother perspectives. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 23*(2), 123-137. doi:10.1080/13645579.2019.1634879

Manicom, L., & Walters, S. (2012). *Feminist popular education in transnational debates : building pedagogies of possibility* [1 online resource (xii, 259 pages)]. Retrieved from http://site.ebrary.com/id/10538937

May, T., & Perry, B. (2014). The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), (pp. 109-122). doi:10.4135/9781446282243

McLaren, P. (2009). Critical pedagogy: A look at the major concepts. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano, & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The critical pedagogy reader* (2nd ed., pp. 61-83).

McLaren, P., & Jandrić, P. (2020). *Postdigital dialogues on critical pedagogy, liberation theology and information technology* [1 online resource (309 pages)]. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350099982?locatt=label:secondary_bloomsburyCollections

Medel-Anonuevo, C. (1996). From activism to feminism to gender and development work in the philippines. In S. Walters & L. Manicom (Eds.), *Gender in popular education: methods for empowerment* (pp. 118-133). Bellville, South Africa: CACE Publications.

Middlebrook, C. (2020). The Grey Area: Instagram, Shadowbanning, and the Erasure of Marginalized Communities. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3539721

Miller, V., & Toro, M. S. (2017). Resonance and the Butterfly Effect: Feminist Epistemology and Popular Education. *JASS*, 1-17. Retrieved from https://justassociates.org/sites/justassociates.org/files/fem_pop_ed_bk_resonance-_butterfly_effect_vm_ms.pdf

Myers West, S. (2018). Censored, suspended, shadowbanned: User interpretations of content moderation on social media platforms. *New Media & Society, 20*(11), 4366-4383. doi:10.1177/1461444818773059

Nguyen, T. (August 12, 2020). How social justice slideshows took over Instagram. Retrieved from https://www.vox.com/the-goods/21359098/social-justice-slideshows-instagram-activism

O'Donnell, J. L. (2020). Anger and disillusionment in Argentinian feminism, 2011–2015: an ethnography of feminist activism in Buenos Aires' popular education movements. *Gender and Education*, 1-16. doi:10.1080/09540253.2020.1866171

Oscar Jara, H. (2010). Popular education and social change in Latin America. *Community Development Journal, 45*(3), 287-296. doi:10.1093/cdj/bsq022

Patterson, A., & Ashman, R. (2020). Getting up-close and personal with influencers. In R. V. Kozinets & R. Gambetti (Eds.), *Netnography unlimited : understanding technoculture using qualitative social media research* (pp. 241-248). doi:https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9781003001430

Pink, S., Horst, H. A., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T., & Tacchi, J. (2016). *Digital ethnography: Principles and practice*: SAGE.

Plantenga, D. (2012). Shaping the magic: Reflections on some core principles of feminist popular education. In L. Manicom & S. Walters (Eds.), *Feminist popular education in transnational debates: building pedagogies of possibility* (pp. 25-40). Retrieved from https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/778698444

Postill, J., & Pink, S. (2012). Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web. *Media International Australia, 145*(1), 123-134. doi:10.1177/1329878X1214500114

Reeves, S., Kuper, A., & Hodges, B. D. (2008). Qualitative Research: Qualitative Research Methodologies: Ethnography. *BMJ: British Medical Journal, 337*(7668), 512-514. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/stable/20510696

Rose, F. (January 22, 2013). Henry Jenkins on 'Spreadable MEDIA' (part 2): How Web 2.0 went wrong, and why 'viral' sucks. Retrieved from https://www.deepmediaonline.com/deepmedia/2013/01/henry-jenkins-on-spreadable-media-part-2.html

Roushdy, N. (2013). *Sexuality education in Egypt: A needs assessment for a comprehensive program for youth*. Retrieved from Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights: https://www.academia.edu/6507309/Sexuality_Education_in_Egypt_A_Needs_Assessment_for_a_Comprehensive_Program_for_Youth

Shafer, S., Johnson, M. B., Thomas, R. B., Johnson, P. T., & Fishman, E. K. (2018). Instagram as a Vehicle for Education: What Radiology Educators Need to Know. *Academic Radiology, 25*(6), 819-822. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acra.2018.03.017

Shor, I. (1993). Education is politics: Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. In P. McLaren & P. Leonard (Eds.), *Paulo Freire: a critical encounter* (pp. 24-35). Retrieved from https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/v2/oclc/52099699

Tenderich, A., Tenderich, B., Barton, T., & Richards, S. E. (2019). What Are PWDs (People With Diabetes) Doing Online? A Netnographic Analysis. *Journal of diabetes science and technology, 13*(2), 187-197. doi:10.1177/1932296818813192

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas : the power and fragility of networked protest*. New Haven ;: Yale University Press.

Von Kotze, A., & Walters, S. (2017). *Forging solidarity : popular education at work* [1 online resource]. doi:10.1007/978-94-6300-923-2

Wahba, M., & Roudi-Fahimi, F. (2012). *The need for reproductive health education in schools in Egypt*. Retrieved from Population Reference Bureau: https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/reproductivehealth-education-egypt.pdf

Walters, S. (1996). Training gender-sensitive adult educators in south africa. In S. Walters & L. Manicom (Eds.), *Gender in popular education: methods for empowerment* (pp. 23-39).

Walters, S., & Manicom, L. (1996). *Gender in popular education : methods for empowerment*. Bellville, South Africa: CACE Publications ;.

Wang, D., & Liu, S. Doing Ethnography on Social Media: A Methodological Reflection on the Study of Online Groups in China. *Qualitative Inquiry, 0*(0), 10778004211014610. doi:10.1177/10778004211014610

Weiler, K. (1991). Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference. *Harvard Educational Review, 61*(4), 449-474.

Wiggins, N. (2011). Critical pedagogy and popular education: towards a unity of theory and practice. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 43*(1), 34-49. doi:10.1080/02660830.2011.11661602

Williams, R., & Williams, E. (2003). *Television : technology and cultural form* [1 online resource (xvii, 172 pages)]. Retrieved from http://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=182593

Wink, J. (2011). *Critical pedagogy : notes from the real world*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson.