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Political Correctness in Social Media towards Palestinian Content from Arab Muslim Youth Perspective

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Abstract

Belief in political correctness and its use in daily life has occupied the interest of many researchers recently, especially with its spread and penetration in various areas of life. Although the concept of political correctness appears to be benevolent, which is represented in defending the rights of minorities, what lies within is extremism, bias, and the silencing of those who oppose, criticize, or even express their opinion. This study mainly aims to know the repercussions of political correctness in social media towards the Palestinian content, from the point of view of Arab Muslim youth who are active on social media. To achieve the objective of the study, the analytical survey method will be followed, and the questionnaire tool will be used on a random sample of Arab Muslim youth active on social media platforms. The study assumes that there are repercussions of political correctness on the Palestinian content on social media platforms, and it also assumes that there is a restriction of Palestinian content on social media that increases and decreases in line with the periods of escalation between the Palestinians and the Israeli occupation.

Keywords: Political Correctness, Social Media, Palestinian Content, Freedom of Expression, Digital Freedoms.

Introduction

Belief in political correctness and its use in daily life has occupied the interest of many researchers recently, especially with its spread and penetration in various areas of life. Although the concept of political correctness appears to be benevolent, which is represented in defending the rights of minorities, what lies within is extremism, bias, and the silencing of those who oppose, criticize, or even express their opinion. Manifestations of political correctness and its repercussions were not limited to real life, but rather extended to social media, these new media that all humanity has become addicted to. When talking about social platforms, the first thing that comes to mind is the virtual space open to freedom of expression, beliefs and ideas without control. But when political correctness infiltrates these open spaces, a battle of say and not say begins, and here is the crux of the matter. The whole world has witnessed the successive scandals of some social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram regarding the suppression of digital freedoms such as freedom of expression and the right to privacy, which is supposed to be a right for every user of social media platforms according to the policies stipulated by the platform itself.

One of the content that witnessed the most digital repression on social media platforms is the Palestinian content. Several social platforms have sought to silence the Palestinian narrative and restrict Palestinian content through their platforms by employing artificial intelligence techniques to block publications that show Israeli violations against the Palestinian people, suspend live broadcasts, suspend the account of users who document and publish Israeli violations, or even cancel their accounts.

Research Problem

Proceeding from the foregoing, this study comes as an attempt to shed light on the phenomenon of digital repression suffered by all Arab Muslim youth who want to express their opinion and defend the Palestinian cause. Thus, the main research problem is to know the repercussions of political correctness in social media towards the Palestinian content, from the point of view of the active Arab Muslim youth on social networking sites.

Objectives of the Study

1- Knowing the implications of political correctness on social media.
2- Determining whether Arab Muslim youth enjoy their digital rights through   social media platforms.
3- Tracking the way social media deals with Palestinian digital content.
4- Identifying the most social platforms that practice digital suppression of Palestinian content.
5- Finding solutions to reduce digital restrictions on Palestinian content.

Research Methodology

Since the nature of the research requires seeking information closely, and communicating with a segment of active Arab Muslim youth on social media platforms, by seeing their personal opinions directly and touching their ideas, by publishing the scientific questionnaire, then the analytical survey approach is the approach that we adopted in our research. A questionnaire was published that included many questions that were formulated taking into account the objectives of the research on the research community, which is represented in the category of Arab Muslim youth active on social media platforms.

Background on Previous Studies

The aspects of the phenomenon, the subject of this article, are multiple and overlapping. Therefore, a number of previous studies have been reviewed, most of which do not deviate from these three topics: The strength of the influence of social media, the three digital freedoms (the right to privacy, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to equality), and the concept of political correctness.

Zamel's study (2019) is among the studies that discussed the power of influence of social media, its ability to shape opinion, and how it is used to achieve political and economic interests.

Where the researcher focused on employing the Twitter network in the election campaign of former US President Donald Trump in late 2016, with the aim of winning over voters to his side, to defeat his counterpart Hillary Clinton at the time. Barack Obama preceded him in this approach in the 2008 US elections, when he used Facebook as a tool to market his electoral platform. The study also showed that a large number of world leaders and presidents use social media platforms to address their audiences and their people.

The spread of social media and everyone's rush to it made it necessary to talk about digital freedoms which must be guaranteed and preserved for every user of social media platforms, and they are: the right to privacy, the right to freedom of expression, and the right to equality and non-discrimination:

First: The right to privacy: There is a noticeable increase in the number of studies concerned with the transparency of social media platforms and their ability to grant their users the right to privacy. By leaking the personal data of millions of people on the Facebook platform, without their consent or even their knowledge, for the purpose of political propaganda.

The study of Al-Faisal and Hashem (2017) came to present the concept of privacy in the Facebook network in particular, and to highlight the violations that users may be exposed to, which may threaten their personal lives. The study relied on the survey method, and the questionnaire tool was employed on the study sample, which numbered 512 users of the Facebook network. The study concluded that there is a contradiction in the Facebook network policies described on the official page and between its practices, a good example of this is the information ownership policy: Facebook policy states that people have the right to protect their personal information and they have the freedom to determine with whom they share it, and on the other hand, we find that the site itself can access, save and leak user data if necessary. The study also found that most of the respondents' answers indicate that they did not read the Facebook privacy policy when they opened the account, and they had no idea about its most prominent provisions. The study also shows the lack of legal awareness among users.

Second: The Right to Freedom of Expression: The study of Noshi and Al-Rubaie (2017) discusses freedom of expression in social networks and the role of these societies that do not sleep (according to the researcher) in respecting the social, cultural and intellectual diversity of its users. Especially since these virtual communities have created a wide space of freedom, expression, and the sharing of opinions, ideas, and beliefs free from any social restrictions. The survey method was followed to achieve the objective of the study and the questionnaire was used on a sample of 149 users of social media platforms. The study concluded with several results, most notably: Most users prefer social networking sites to express their ideas and beliefs more than in reality, because it satisfies two basic needs: the need for freedom of expression, and the need to share ideas and beliefs with others and interact with them. In addition, a large percentage of the two researchers found that the lack of a ceiling for freedom in social media contributed to the creation of several problems, the most important of which are: spreading extremist ideas, hate speech, and incitement to violence, as well as creating stereotypes for some minorities in different societies.

As for the study of Salama (2021), it agrees with the study of Noushi and Al-Rubaie (2017) in one aspect and differs with it in other aspects. She agrees with her on the issue of the absence of legislation regulating the way social media platforms are used, which results in the difficulty of criminalizing those who abuse their right to freedom of expression through social media platforms, spreading hatred, extremism and fanaticism. However, it differs with it in terms of the absolute freedom provided by the communication platforms, as he demonstrated in his study that certain algorithms are used, and artificial intelligence techniques are used to block, block or remove extremist content or that incite violence or content that contradicts the platform's directions. Blocking of content is a technological solution used by search engines and social media platforms. Where "the latest February 2020

statistics indicate that an estimated 14.58 million photos can be uploaded per hour via Facebook."

Third: The Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination: Salama's study (2021) touched on artificial intelligence technologies and the right to equality and non-discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, or opinion. According to the researcher's findings, artificial intelligence systems are not free from bias and discrimination, pointing to some studies that have proven that artificial intelligence technologies are biased in terms of gender, as they display advertisements for high-paying jobs to men, while women are shown advertisements for low-paid jobs.

On the other hand, Ingram (2021) explains in his article how various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram suppressed and blocked Palestinian digital content through their platforms during the last period of escalation in May 2021 between the Palestinian people and the occupation forces. In his article, he monitored several examples and reports proving that Palestinians were subjected to various forms of digital harassment during their attempt to share photos and publications documenting Israeli violations that they are subjected to, including: sudden disappearance of content, or restriction under the pretext of violating the rules of using the platform, cutting off live broadcasts, and even suspending accounts entire users, as well as restricting hashtags that refer to Palestinian protests and attempt to communicate the Palestinian narrative.

Ingram also indicated in his article that the companies to which these platforms are affiliated have admitted their actions. Instagram, for example, referred this blocking and digital suppression to a technical defect and claimed that it had nothing to do with the content of the publication, which did not convince many users. Facebook (currently dead) also apologized for the harassment, blocking and deletion of accounts that many Palestinians were subjected to.

The article referred to the importance of the role played by human rights institutions in highlighting the digital repression that Palestinians are subjected to through various social media platforms, and demanding their basic rights, which include the right to freedom of expression. In addition to requiring these platforms to exercise greater transparency and clarity regarding content management.

While the Palestinians suffer from digital stagnation on social media platforms, on the other hand, the Israelis enjoy global technical powers in the field of artificial intelligence and its techniques used in various social media platforms. Al-Nashif's study (2019) came to confirm the way Israel employs proactive policing systems on several social platforms With the aim of silencing the Palestinian narrative and restricting the right of Palestinians to express themselves on social media platforms. The researcher explained that these systems identify users by matching characteristics such as age, gender, and geographical location, in addition to specifying keywords such as "resistance" and "martyr". Hence, the accounts and publications of these users are monitored by the Israeli authorities, their movements and activities are tracked, their content is sometimes restricted, their accounts are deleted, and if necessary they are arrested personally.

The researcher also referred to what is known as the "Facebook Bill", which the Israeli Knesset approved its initial reading in 2017, and this law gives the authority to administrative courts in Israel to block Internet content that it may deem "incitement" or a threat to the security and safety of Israel. It is worth noting that if this law is approved, it will apply to the most important social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. This necessarily leads us to know the strong influence of Israel on private companies and the

extent of its control over soft powers to spread its racist agenda and impose its hegemony on the global level. Mustafa's study (2021) also came to confirm Israel's remarkable progress over many Arab-Islamic societies in the field of employing social media platforms to serve its political and economic interests and orientations.

Salama's study (2021) focused on the artificial intelligence techniques used in social media to manage content, most notably: filter bubbles, automatic blocking and removal of illegal or harmful content, and filtering of "illegal" harmful content. In his study, Salama presented a number of jurisprudence in the matter of content management through social media platforms, pointing out that all European judicial courts affirmed the right of individuals to access websites, stressing that blocking these sites or preventing users from accessing them is inconsistent with the freedom of expression that It is stipulated in all national constitutions and international agreements.

The issue of managing content across social media platforms means identifying and filtering what is being published, and preventing and banning what should be banned, according to the point of view of those in charge of the platform. Therefore, what is right is what is in line with the principles and policies of social media platforms, but what is inconsistent with these policies is prohibited. Perhaps this approach is a form of political correctness, which Osama (2019) referred to in his article, as the term refers to "linguistic discipline and censorship with the aim of avoiding the slightest offense to minorities, the marginalized, and the socially and historically oppressed, perpetuating the perceptions of overlapping political and human rights currents about the ideal society. To eliminate verbal discrimination and negative stereotypes." Osama also presented a historical background to the concept of political correctness, starting with its inception and development over time, to the point that the idea of political correctness spread throughout Western countries and sparked controversy, and people differed about it between supporters and opponents. The researcher pointed out the importance and danger of social media, as it formed a fertile environment for the spread of the concept, whether to correct the culture or to mobilize public opinion.

And after reviewing the previous studies related to the subject of the research, which came in three main axes: the axis of the importance of social networking sites, the axis of digital freedoms, and the axis of political correctness. We find that there have been studies that dealt with each of the topics separately, but there was no single study that presented the concept of political correctness and its manifestations in social media, which caused the violation of digital freedoms.

It is worth noting that the importance of social media and the strength of its influence, whether in a positive or negative way, on the lives of individuals and peoples, is considered one of the topics that have been researched. As for the issue of digital freedoms, it is a rather recent issue that began to attract the attention of researchers recently, especially after the Cambridge Analytica scandal. After which Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg was brought to legal accountability before the US Senate over the leaking of the data of millions of Facebook platform users. As for the concept of political correctness, despite its importance, seriousness and modernity, there is a clear lack of studies that dealt with this concept in the Arab Library.

Therefore, the study in question attempts to bridge the research gap in terms of subject matter, by linking the concept of political correctness to social media. There is also a research gap in terms of research limits, which is the Palestinian content, as not a single study has been published that has dealt with the impact of political correctness in social media on Palestinian

digital content. Therefore, we hope that this study will be the starting point for more studies in this regard.
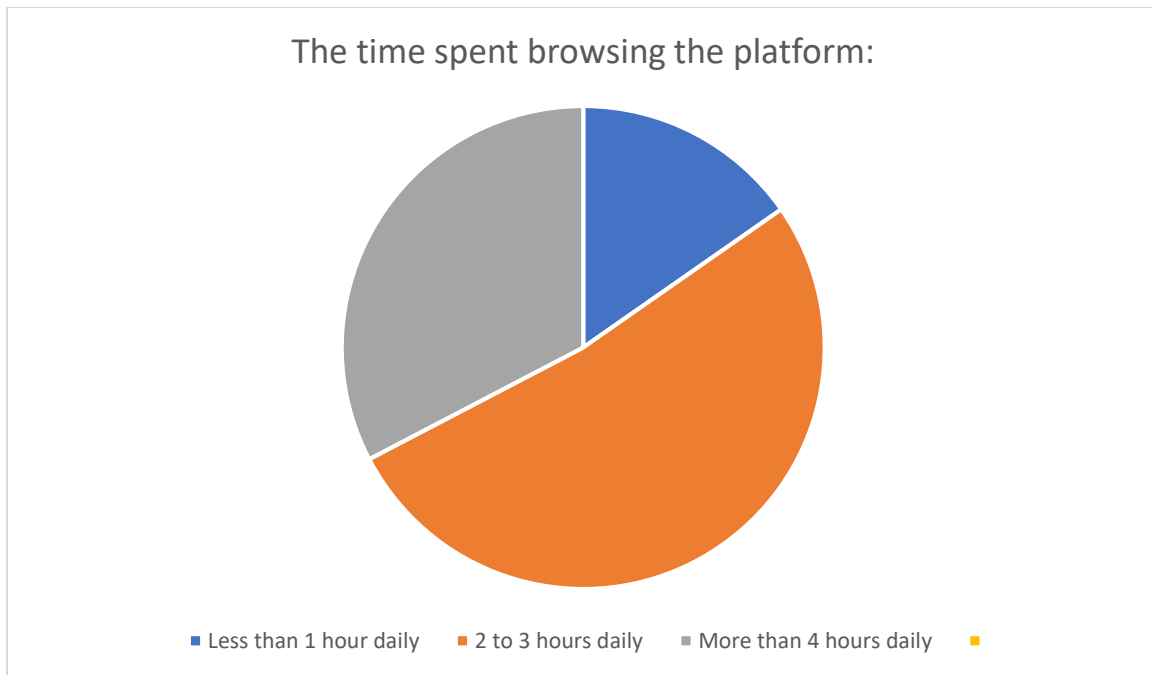
Results of the Questionnaire Analysis

Since the questionnaire questions were formulated based on the objectives and hypotheses of the research, 101 Arab Muslim youth active on social media platforms responded to them, 50% of them are university graduates, 34% are holders of master's and doctoral degrees, and 17% have educational attainment that did not exceed high school. This has an impact on the extent of awareness and understanding of the research sample of the phenomenon under study. Here we review the results of the data analysis:

With regard to the most preferred platform among Arab youth, the results showed that the Instagram platform is the most preferred with 47%, followed by the Twitter platform with 30%, while Facebook was the least preferred platform by the study sample.
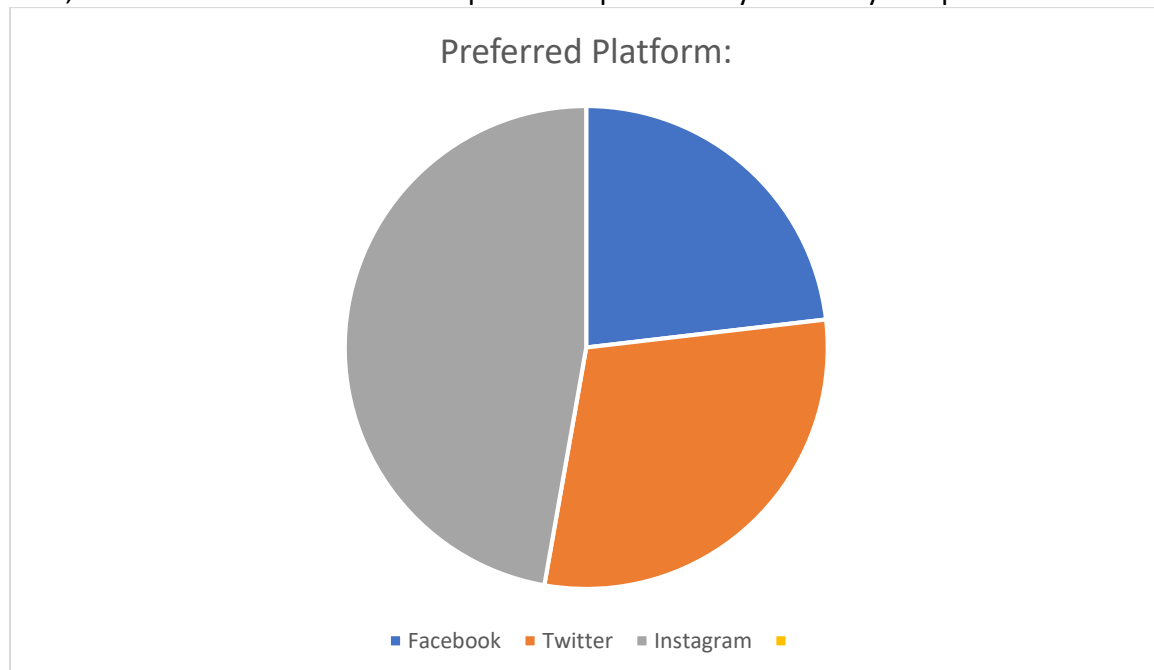
The results of the questionnaire also showed that the average rate that the study sample young people spend on their favorite platform is from 2 to 3 hours per day, and their percentage was 51%. As for young people who spend more than 4 hours a day, their percentage was also high, reaching 32%, while a small group that spends less than an hour a day did not exceed 18%.

The time spent browsing the platform:

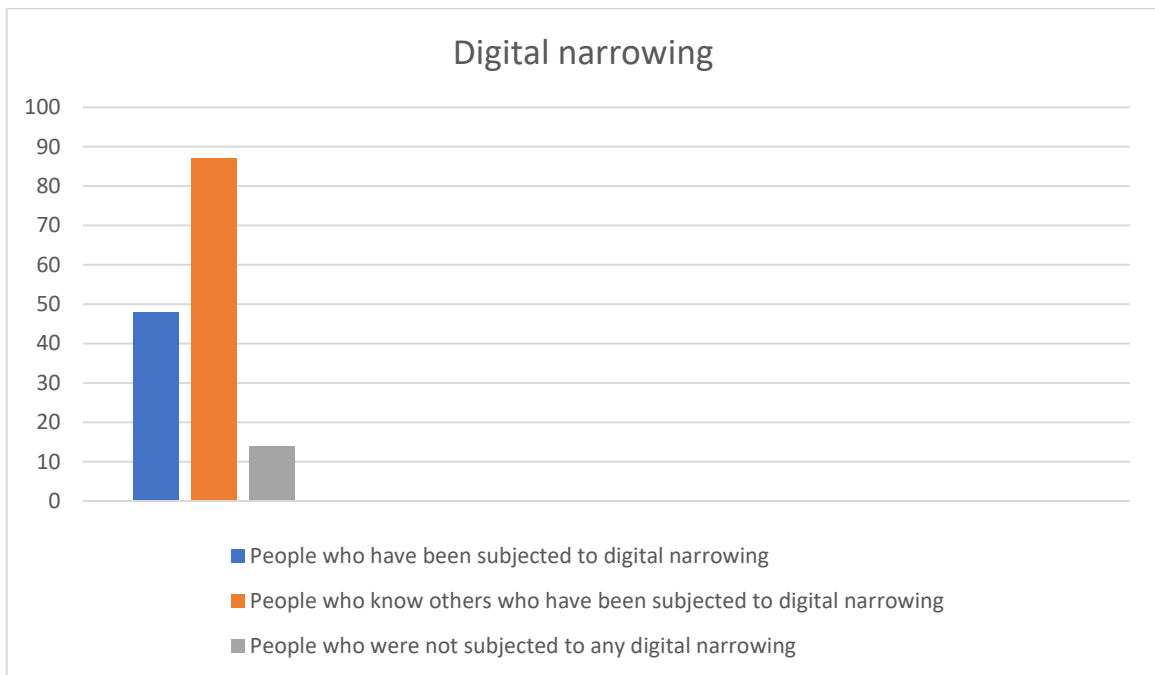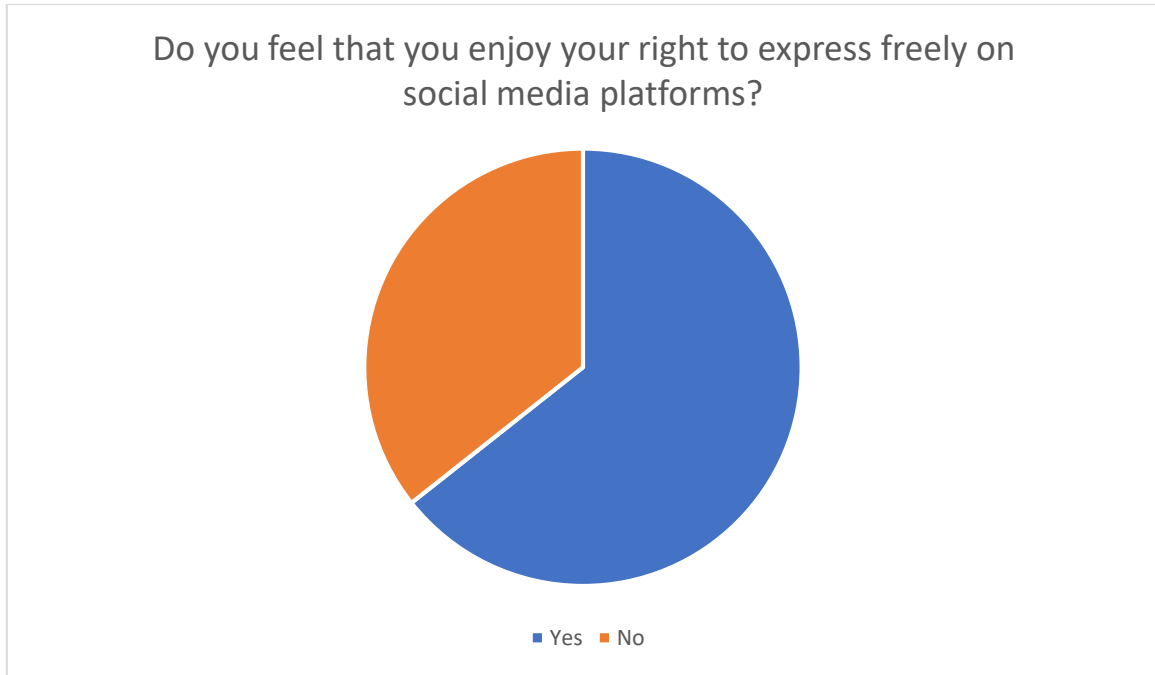■ Less than 1 hour daily   ■ 2 to 3 hours daily   ■ More than 4 hours daily   ■

With regard to obtaining reliable information, and following the latest world news, the largest percentage was for the Twitter platform with a percentage of 53%, then it was followed by the Facebook platform with a percentage of 25%, then the Instagram platform with a slight difference of 23%.

The most credible and follow-up platform for world news:


■ Facebook   ■ Twitter   ■ Instagram
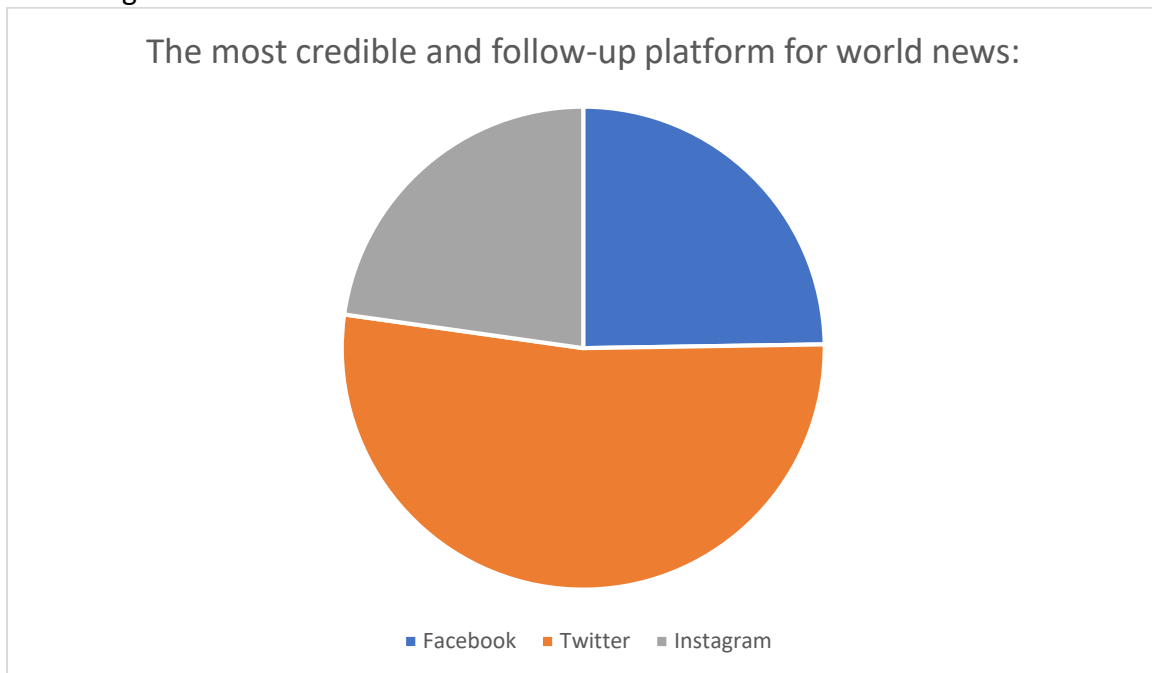
The results showed that 65% feel that they are exercising their right to freedom of expression through social media platforms. Even though, a large percentage of them, up to 48%, were subjected to digital narrowing, whether by blocking a post or suspending an account. Furthermore, a larger percentage, reaching 87%, was not themselves subjected to digital narrowing, but rather met or heard about people who have subjected to digital narrowing.

Do you feel that you enjoy your right to express freely on social media platforms?

■ Yes   ■ No

Digital narrowing

■ People who have been subjected to digital narrowing
■ People who know others who have been subjected to digital narrowing
■ People who were not subjected to any digital narrowing

With regard to the reasons that lead to blocking a post or suspending a user's account, political reasons came first with a percentage of 58%, followed by moral and religious reasons with a percentage of 31%, and finally intellectual reasons with a percentage of 11%.

Reasons for blocking a post or suspending an account

■ Religious moral reasons　■ Intellectual reasons　■ Political reasons
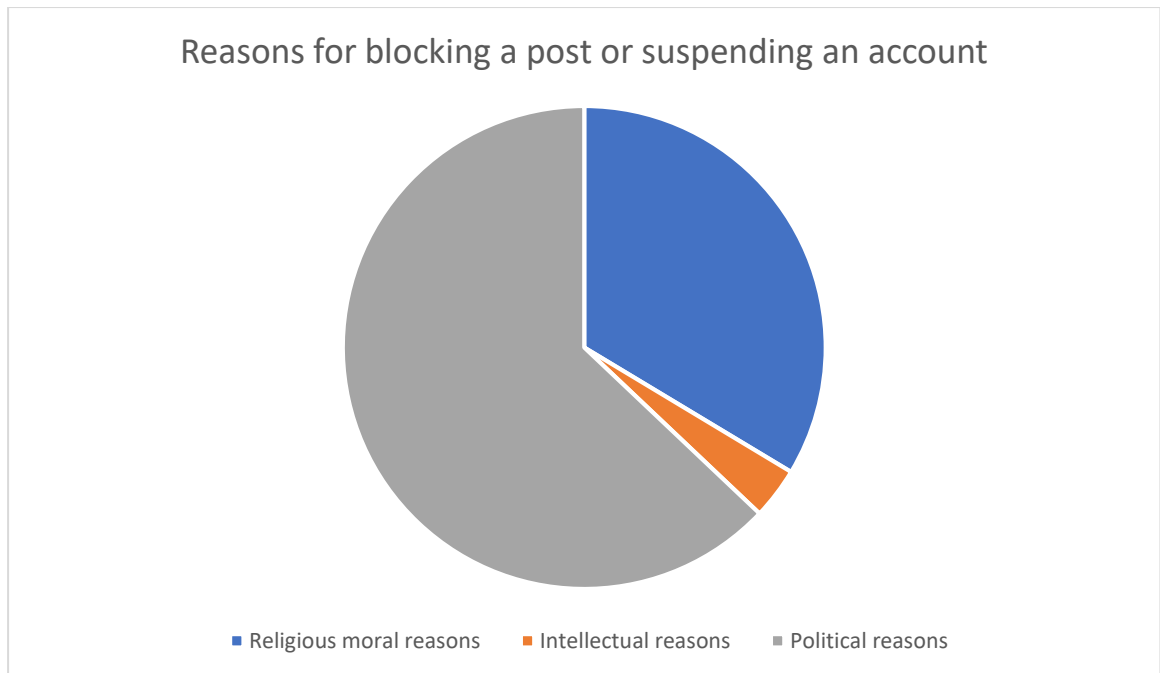
The data showed that 87% of the youth in the study sample believe that the Palestinians do not have the right to publish Israeli violations against their people. While only 14% of those who believe that Palestinians have the freedom to publish Israeli violations.

Do the Palestinians have the right to publish the Israeli violations against their people?


■ Yes　■ No
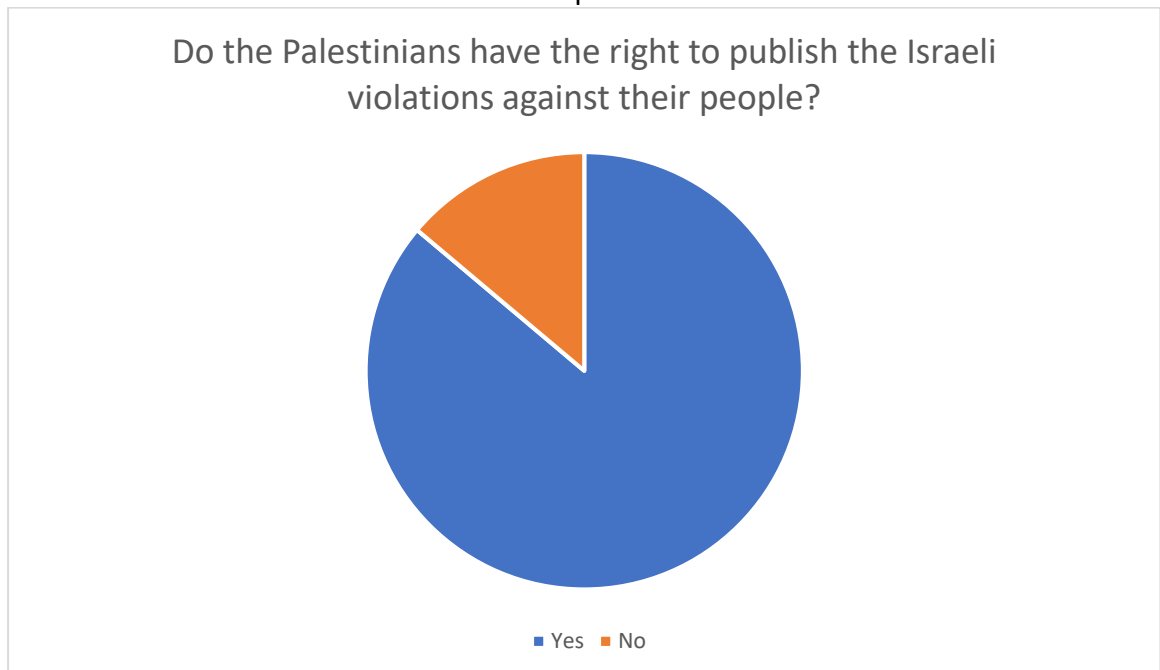
The question related to the methods used by social media platforms to silence the Palestinian voice, blocking the post was the most common method, according to the opinion of the youth in the study sample, with a percentage of 52%. Followed by the method of suspending the account with a percentage of 27% and the least applied method was deleting the account with a percentage of 20%.

The methods used by social media to silence the Palestinian voice
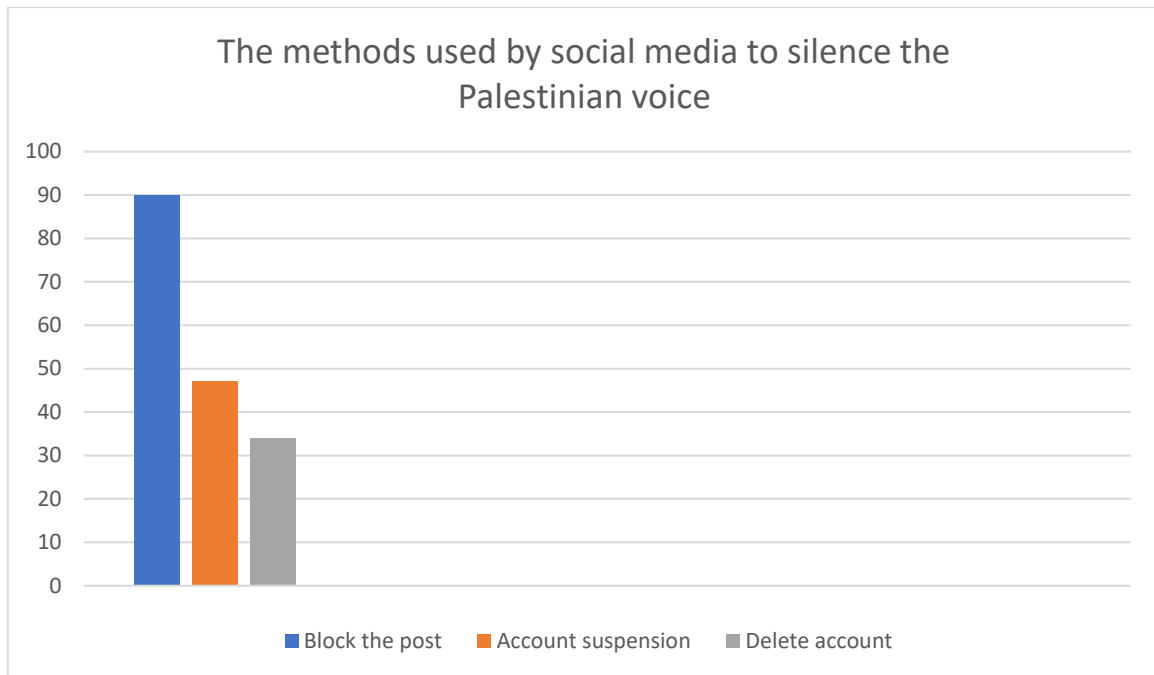
As for the platform that most opposes Palestinian content, the percentages were very close between the Facebook platform and the Instagram platform, as the first got 46% and the second 45%. As for the Twitter platform, the platform fights the least for Palestinian content, as it got only 9%.

The platform that fights the most Palestinian content
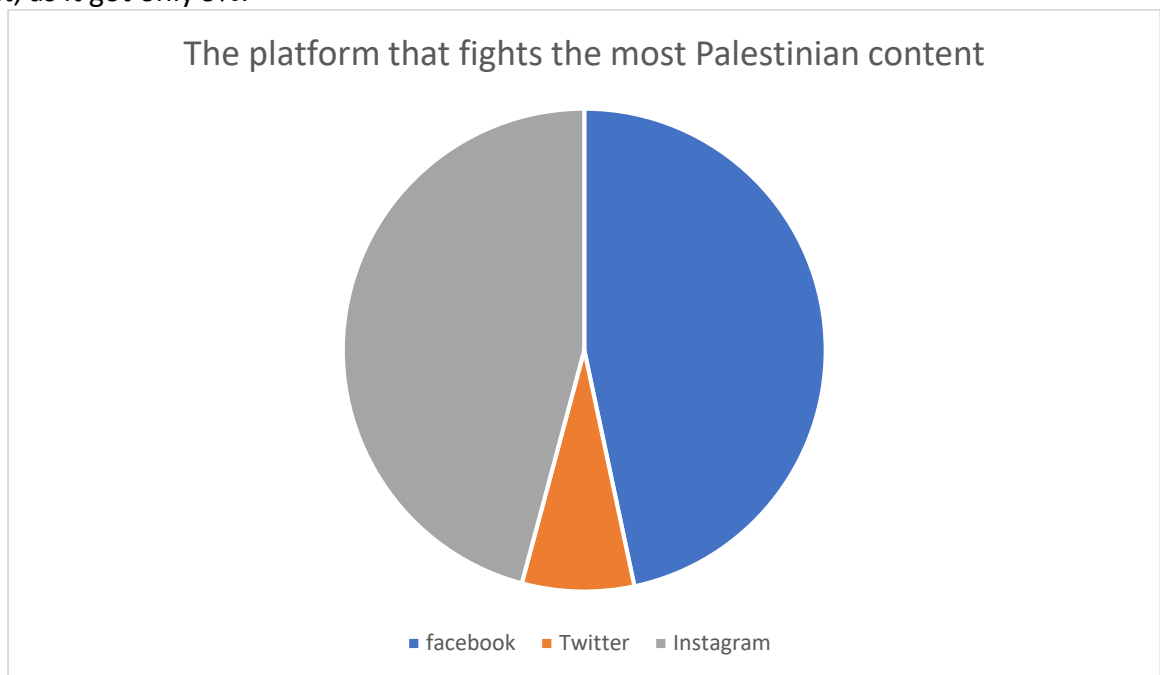
Regarding the solutions that can be resorted to confront digital constraint, the highest percentage was for legal and human rights solutions by 42%, followed by the solution represented by reducing the evaluation of the platform by 33%. As for boycotting global social platforms and replacing them with local platforms, it was the weakest solution, as it got 26%.
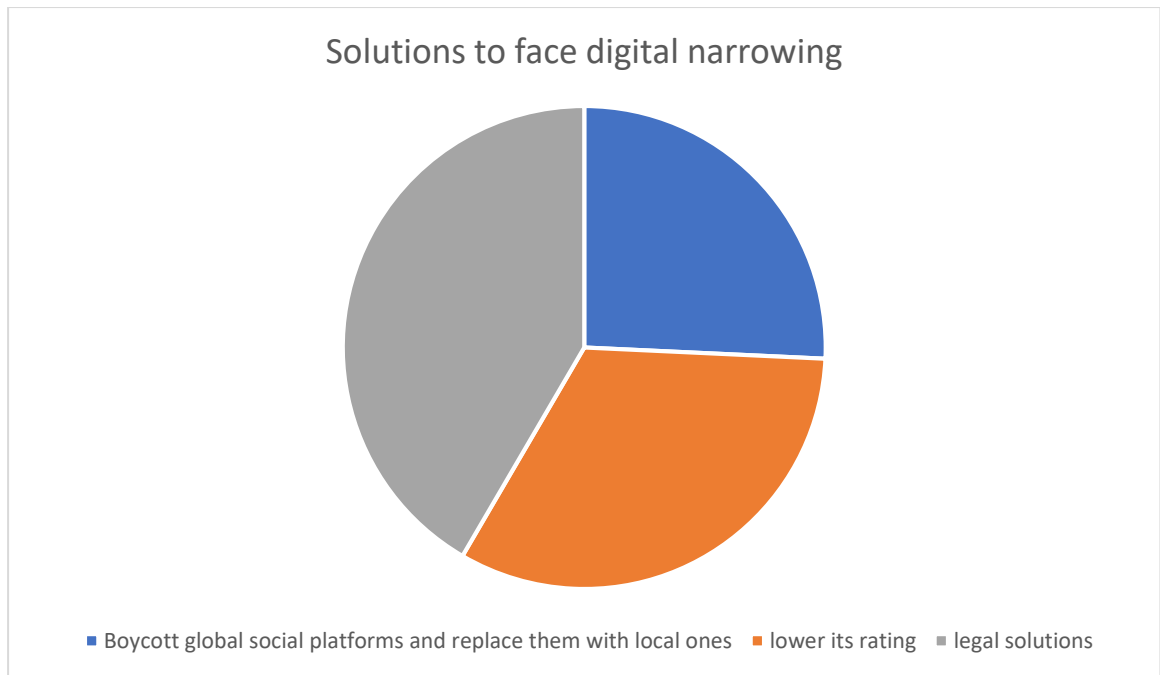
Discussion

It appears from the results of the data analysis that the largest percentage of young people in the study sample are university students and postgraduate students, and therefore they have awareness and understanding of the phenomenon under study. They also have a cultural and historical background on the Palestinian issue, and on the importance of social media and the great role it plays in the lives of peoples and individuals. . Hence, we find that their answers to the questionnaire questions have a cognitive value that adds to the importance of this research.

The results of the data analysis showed that the Instagram platform is the preferred platform for Arab Muslim youth compared to other platforms, and they spend an average of two to three hours a day on it. However, Twitter is considered the most credible and reliable platform for Arab Muslim youth. It seems that the Instagram platform is an interactive entertainment platform because of the advantages it provides of publishing and interacting with photos, short videos, live broadcasts, and therefore attracts the attention of young people. While the Twitter platform amounts to being an official platform rather than an entertainment one, especially with most world presidents, leaders, and decision-makers relying on the Twitter platform as a semi-official means of communicating with their people and audiences.

One of the paradoxes revealed by the results of the analysis is that 65% feel that they are exercising their right to freedom of expression through social media platforms, and on the other hand, a large percentage of them, amounting to 48%, have been subjected to digital harassment, whether by blocking a post or suspending an account. Moreover, a larger percentage, which reached 87%, has not been exposed itself but they know people who have been subjected to digital narrowing. This leads us to the reasons that drive social media platforms to digitally restrict their users, as political reasons came to the fore, and this, if anything, indicates that social media is employed by governments and decision-makers by allowing certain publications and blocking others. In proportion to the political correctness of

these governments and decision-makers. With this result, we have achieved the first and second objectives of this study.

As for the Palestinian digital content, the study showed that there is clear digital repression towards the Palestinian narrative, and the dissemination of Israeli violations against the Palestinian people. Where the voice of the Palestinians is silenced by employing certain algorithms and artificial intelligence techniques to block publications that include statements in support of the Palestinian cause, and to suspend the account of users who are active in publishing Israeli violations, and if necessary, their accounts are canceled. The results of the analysis proved that the two platforms that fight against Palestinian digital content the most are the Facebook platform and the Instagram platform. With this result, we have achieved the third and fourth objectives of this study.

As for the fifth objective of the study, which is related to finding effective solutions to confront the digital narrowness towards the Palestinian content, it was achieved by analyzing the results of the last question of the questionnaire, which showed that it is necessary to resort to legal and judicial solutions to claim the digital rights of the Palestinians. The feature of lowering the evaluation of the platform is also a very effective way to influence those in charge of the platform and pressure them to review their standards and policies. As for the boycott of global social platforms and replacing them with local platforms, it was the weakest solution, as it got 26%. Perhaps the reason behind this is the lack of local Arab platforms that rise to the level of global platforms in terms of quality and technical competence and in terms of popularity and preference by users.

Conclusion
In conclusion, it can be said that the results of the data analysis are consistent with the hypotheses of the study, as the results prove that there are repercussions for political correctness on social media platforms. Furthermore, the results prove that there is a restriction of Palestinian digital content through social media platforms, and the two platforms that most suppress Palestinian content are Facebook and Instagram. The study also proved that the most effective way to confront digital harassment is legal confrontation first, and secondly restrictions on social platforms by lowering their rating, and this has a great impact on them because these platforms exist and continue due to their strong influence, high rating and preference for users.

This study has theoretical and practical importance, its theoretical importance is represented in the fact that it provides a literary research contribution in the field of digital rights in general, and in the field of Palestinian digital rights in particular. As for its practical importance, it is represented in the fact that it provided statistics and data that benefit human rights bodies in order to enact laws that guarantee digital rights for all in fairness and equality. This is on the one hand, and on the other hand, the data of this research is considered an argument that can be relied upon to demand those in charge of social media platforms to reconsider and amend the policies of the platforms in accordance with what is stipulated in international human rights conventions.

Finally, it is considered the first study that sheds light on the implications of political correctness on social media platforms, and its impact on the management of Palestinian digital content. The study also recommends conducting more research related to the manifestations of political correctness in social media, as well as in the field of Palestinian digital rights.

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