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Sexual Objectification and Gender Display in Arabic Music Videos

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Abstract

A content analysis of the most popular Arabic music videos on YouTube (1991–2019) revealed females are sexually objectified compared to males. In the current study of 150 videos, female artists acted in stereotypical manners, displaying both subordinate and sexual behavior. They posed and danced sexually, used facial expressions to seduce, and exposed their skin. Gender differences were also evident in the individual measures for sexuality, where females were dressed provocatively in more than half of the videos compared to none for males. Besides gender, some differences appeared among the countries in the Arab region: Lebanese artists were six times more likely to display sexuality than Egyptian artists, and four times more than all other nationalities combined. Further analysis, however, indicated gender is the only predictor in the model that included nationality and gender. The sexual tones that characterize women in Arabic music videos reinforce the existing notions of women as sexual objects to be gazed at for male pleasure.

Keywords Sexual objectification · Music videos · Women representation · Arabic · YouTube

Introduction

The music video industry is a lucrative business that has transformed media companies into leading global powers, with impact that extends beyond their local audiences. In the contemporary music scene, the transition to the on-demand and searchable nature of online platforms has further amplified the diversity and heterogeneity of music videos, allowing for various types of professional and fan-version productions of music videos (Edmond, 2014). As a social networking site, YouTube has been at the forefront

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of this transition (Holt, 2011), cementing itself as one of the most popular music platforms for professional music videos and amateur productions alike (Liikkanen & Salovaara, 2015; Park et al., 2018).

One theme that frequently appears in music videos is the sexualization of women. As one form of entertainment, music videos display sexual imagery quite often (Reichert & Lambiase, 2012; Vandenbosh & Eggermont, 2012). Notwithstanding the importance of analyzing all types of mediated communication, music videos are exceptionally significant due to their widespread consumption as a media entertainment genre, particularly among adolescents who watch them as a sort of identity formation (Ben Clay, 2003; Moussa, 2019). The value of analyzing music videos lies in social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which points to the ability of visual content to capture viewers' attention and thus convey more information than other forms of communication. The underlying significance of objectification in media is its impact on audiences. Research has revealed media use, in general, has an effect on the self-objectification of individuals of different genders, ages, and ethnicities (Karsay, Knoll et al., 2018). Due to the potential learning that occurs, either through cultivation or social identification, the result is a set of behaviors and attitudes that feed our beliefs about others and guide our interactions in social settings (Avery et al., 2016). Music videos, among other types of entertainment media, prime men and women with sexual cues that lead them to use these cues when formulating their first impression of an unfamiliar target and to rate others (Dillman & Carpentier, 2014). The perception of music videos as entertaining and realistic could further normalize and increase the acceptance of sexual behavior (Rodgers & Hust, 2018).

That sexual content and sexism is prevalent in Western culture is no surprise (Andsager, 2012). But do they appear in other cultures as well? With a few exceptions, all research on music videos has focused on the United States whose culture accepts sexual references in the media. To find out whether the same patterns occur in the Arabic music scene, we conducted a content analysis of the most popular Arabic music videos on YouTube. This study aims to expand our knowledge of sexual objectification in music videos beyond the US market to a massive, yet often neglected region. With a population of 526 million, among whom 86 million are teens and young adults (United Nations, 2019), the Arab region is a ripe venue for studying the content of Arabic music videos to aid our understanding of the representations Arab youth view in the form of entrainment. This assessment is additionally noteworthy when conducted in light of the increasing youth viewership of music videos as a result of mobile phone technology (Battah, 2008). The Arab countries have witnessed changes in culture and traditions, mostly due to globalization that has affected various facets of daily life. Some of these changes are evident in Arabic music videos that are considered "shameful for the ordinary Arabs for they break the traditional gender roles chiefly for women" (Ismail, 2005, p. 29). It thus remains to be seen to what extent these changes are prevalent in Arabic music videos.

Literature Review

Sexual Objectification in Music Videos

The use of sex to attract audiences has accompanied mediated communication for decades. The pervasiveness of sexual content in media programming and advertising is tightly related to a culture of consumerism (Reichert & Lambiase, 2012). Scholars contend music videos have a commercial function, and thus, must attract attention and convey their message, often times through sexual stereotypes that fulfill these requirements (Andsager, 2012). Objectification theory views the female body through a sociocultural lens, pointing primarily to the treatment of a person as simply a body (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). As one form of gender oppression, sexual objectification is defined as "the experience of being treated as a body… valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174).

One area that has fully absorbed the availability of sex to sell is the music video industry. Music video producers "exploit [the] visual power [of videos] to emphasize sexuality and [to exploit] the sexual personae of musical artists" (Andsager, 2012, p. 31). Media critic Sut Jhally contends that music television promotes a patriarchal ideology based on a uniform, unrealistic presentation of women as objects of sexual male fantasy. Female artists as well have used sex to show they can be successful, displaying overt sexuality and sexual imagery in their videoclips (Andsager & Roe, 2003). Wallis' (2011) analysis of gender display in music videos indicated that gender representation reinforced stereotypical notions of women as objects. Women in these videos used tactics of hair flinging, averting eyes, delicate self-touch to show a subordinate behavior, as well as sultry looks, suggestive dancing, and sexual self-touch to indicate sexuality (Wallis, 2011). Some, however, argue this is a result of pressure from the industry. African American women, for instance, struggle to take control and express themselves in a field produced by African American men and owned by white men (Shelton, 1997).

The representation of females in music videos has evolved over time, yet some areas remain unchanged. A plethora of studies reveal variances in depictions of sexuality, where certain areas have been steady, but others have changed, albeit for the worse. What seems to be certain is that objectification is increasing in music videos, both in frequency and intensity (Andsager & Roe, 2003). A longitudinal visual content analysis of 462 popular music videos produced between 1995 to 2016 indicated ambiguous sexual expression, such as sexual gestures, poses, and facial expressions, increased (Karsay et al., 2019). In these videos, female music artists were more likely than their male counterparts to be sexually objectified, while male artists were the ones who objectified the other (Karsay et al., 2019). Sexism as well increased between 1985 and 1987 when artists were males, but not when artists were females (Vincent, 1989). Similar patterns appeared in a study of women in country music videos revealing these videos focused on the female body, with scantily clad women being used as instruments

for the pleasure of others (McClane-Bunn, 2010). Nudity and revealing clothing were also found to have increased over a three-year span, with more lingerie being worn later compared to seductive outerwear earlier (Vincent, 1989). In general, women wearing seductive attire, such as bathing suits, underwear, and provocative dresses are prevalent in music videos (King et al., 2006; Smith, 2005; Vincent et al., 1987). In these videos, camera movements follow females' bodies inviting the viewer to also follow these movements, and thus, engage in the objectifying gaze (Karsay, Matthes, et al., 2018).

The prevalence of objectification in music videos is an important area of research due to the effects it has on viewers. Sexual objectification extends beyond the body itself to intersect with other forms of oppression, such as racism, additionally influencing women's psychological problems and mental health (Szymanski et al., 2011), and leading to self-objectification (Aubrey & Gerding, 2015). A meta-analysis of 50 studies that included cross-sectional survey studies, panel survey studies, and experimental studies revealed media use increases self-objectification, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, and sample type (Karsay, Knoll, et al., 2018). Research has revealed self-objectification to be related to adolescents' own focus on appearance and the level to which they judge other girls' appearance (Gordon, 2008), to body esteem, mental health and confidence levels among female adolescents (Grabe & Hyde, 2009), and to appearance anxiety, eating disorders, and body shaming among diverse samples of women (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Effects of exposure to highly sexualized content is not only evident in attitudes toward the content itself but also in the interpretation of these messages and subsequent behavior. Music videos have been shown to not only increase a stereotypical view of sexual relationships (Ward et al., 2005) but also be associated with risky sexual behaviors (Wright & Rubin, 2016). Exposure is also related to more adversarial sexual beliefs, more acceptance of sexual harassment, and higher levels of interpersonal violence among men (Aubrey et al., 2011). Music videos are additionally linked to traditional gender roles, promoting an ideal, romanticized male–female relationship, which reinforces unhealthy gender roles (Robillard, 2012). Consumers of K-pop music videos, for instance, were less likely to believe in gender equality compared to fans who consumed these less (Lin & Rudolf, 2017).

Here, it is important to note that objectification is not restricted to sexuality and gender but could encompass various other areas of daily life. Humans fragment others when they place value in one part of a person instead of the whole, thus reducing him or her to a mere object. For purposes of this study, however, the term objectification is used only in relation to gender.

Sexuality and Gender across Music Genres

Research on depictions of sexuality and gender messages differentiates among the different music genres. Rap and hip-hop music, for instance, has been heavily criticized for its lyrics and images (Gan et al., 1997). Some scholars have indicated rap music naturalizes gender-related characteristics, giving females materialistic and sexual roles (Zhang et al., 2009) more than their male counterparts

(Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). Beside exposure, preference for certain music genres, particularly hip-hop, R&B, and electronic music, were connected to adolescents' sexual stereotypes that that women should look sexy and men cool and tough (ter Bogt et al., 2010). Regardless of how women are presented, sexuality is an ever-present theme in rap and hip-hop, where black women are used as objects of sex and their relationship with men is misogynistic (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2012). Sexism was found to dominate country and rock music videos, as well, reflecting a traditional male narrative that objectifies women and gives them subordinate roles (Andsager & Roe, 1999; Vincent et al., 1987).

Music Videos in the Arab Region

The experience of the Arab world with popular music dates back to 1920s Cairo and the emergence of private radio stations (El-Shawan, 1980). Following the popularity of audiocassettes in the 1990s, productions companies felt the need to produce trendy music videos to promote their artists (Abdel Aziz, 2010). In search of new markets, large record companies sought to expand into other countries (Ulaby, 2010), making use of the availability of Arab artists, especially Lebanese female artists, whom they sponsored to market their products (Cestor, 2010). The strong influence Arab music television channels exerts on Arab societies, particularly among the youth, is seen as part of a corporate strategy to shape consumer behavior, indicating the economic incentives behind the industry (Abdel Aziz, 2010). It is perhaps due to these strategies that, starting the 1990s, the Arab music video became one of the most popular, pervasive, and mass-marketed modes of "shababi" music productions (Grippo, 2010). Arab scholars contend the contemporary visual representation of Arab songs comprises many undesirable elements, such as nudity and lewd dancing (Al Wassimi, 2010), which reduce women and men to their respective, sexually charged bodies (Elmessiri, 2010). From a music perspective, Arabic music videos have been heavily criticized as products whose goal is to sell, which takes precedence over the quality of the music, the lyrics, and the artist's voice (Al-Barghouti, 2010).

To date, no scientific research exists on sexual objectification and gender representation of Arabic music videos. As seen in the review of literature in the West, extant research reveals female artists have displayed sexuality in their videoclips (Andsager & Roe, 2003; Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Karsay et al., 2019), using various tactics that enhance sexual imagery (Wallis, 2011). Reinforcing gender roles, female artists have also acted in subordinate manners (Andsager & Roe, 2003; Wallis, 2011). Similarly in the Arab world, scholars have signaled the pervasiveness of sexual connotations in music videos (Elmessiri, 2010; Al Wassimi, 2010) but have not examined these empirically. We thus begin our assessment by focusing on the type of sexual display and its relationship with gender:

RQ1a: What are the most prevalent elements of sexual display in Arabic music videos?
RQ1b: Do the sexual display elements differ by gender?

Based on previous literature, and the hegemony of patriarchy in Arab societies, we hypothesize overall differences between males and females in displaying sexuality and subordination. In addition, we investigate whether there are differences between the countries comprising the region, based on the existence of various types of societies, ranging from ultra-conservative, such as the Gulf region, to liberal, such as Lebanon:

H1: Female artists will engage in sexual display more than male artists.
H2: Female artists will engage in subordinate display more than male artists.
RQ2: Do differences in sexual display exist as a function of (a) the regions and (b) the countries?

Clothing and attire have been also been significant indicators of sexual objectification. Research has shown nudity and revealing clothing are common imagery female characters portray in music videos (King et al., 2006; McClane-Bunn, 2010; Smith, 2005; Vincent, 1989; Vincent et al., 1987). In the Arab region, exposing the body could depend on the particular culture of a country. Whereas it is more common to see women expose midriffs and cleavage in Lebanon, and in some areas in Syria, the conservative societies in the other countries make it rare if not impossible to do so. The music video industry, however, is entertainment that transcends both geographical borders and religious codes. It is plausible, then, for female artists to expose their bodies even if they come from conservative countries. Regarding males, we wonder whether they as well would expose their bodies as an attempt to show off their muscles, and hence, their masculinity. We, therefore, examine the exposure of body parts in its relation to gender and country.

RQ3a: Does exposure of body parts differ by artists' gender?
RQ3b: Does exposure of body parts differ by artists' country?

Sexual objectification is not restricted to the movement of the individual but also extends to gazing. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) contend the sexual gaze—being checked out and leered at with lustful longing—is one form of sexual objectification. Aubrey and Frisby (2011) found male artists were more likely to check out others than were female artists; however, gender was not related to being the target of the sexual gaze. In the Arab world, the male gaze is a common phenomenon in daily life, sometimes justified as a natural consequence of females' attire. We thus expect it to occur in music videos as well. We investigate these concepts in the context of the present study.

H3: Female artists will be targets of gaze more than male artists.
RQ4: Is being the perpetrator of gaze related to gender?
RQ5: Is being the target of gaze related to the exposure of body parts?

Finally, we add another layer to our analysis of sexual objectification by viewing the overall video. As previously reviewed, extant studies point to the prevalence of sexualization throughout videos, regardless of whether the theme and the

lyrics call for these representations (McClane-Bunn, 2010). Aubrey and Frisby (2011) found male artists to be more likely to have female dancers in their videos compared to female artists. Here, we assess the relationship between gender and the presence of sexual dancers as secondary characters in the video.

> RQ6: Does the presence of sexualized dance of dancers differs by artist's gender?

Methodology

This study is a content analysis of Arabic music videos on YouTube. In media research, YouTube is frequently used as one of the main platforms for music video research (e.g. Baek, 2015; Cranwell et al., 2015; Epps & Dixon, 2017; Park et al., 2017), including objectification research (Aubrey et al., 2011).

Sampling Procedure

Due to the absence of any reliable chart that could have provided us with a sampling frame, we devised a three-stage sampling procedure to retrieve the data. In the first stage, we created a constructed week to introduce some variations in the sample. Riffe and colleagues have documented the representativeness of constructed weeks that are created by stratifying days of the week for most types of media (Lacy et al., 2001; Riffe et al., 2014). Due to the infinite constructed samples that can be drawn for online content, there is not one good number of weeks that would claim true representativeness. As such, we created one constructed week, and bolstered the sample with two other types of sampling techniques. To build the constructed week, we started on a random day in October 2019, which was a Wednesday. We then sampled the Thursday of the week after, then Friday, and so forth, until we had 7 days chosen from 7 weeks. On each sampling day, we searched YouTube for Arabic music videos using six different keywords in Arabic language, and one keyword phrase for English: "Arabic music videos". The Arabic keywords were: (فيديو مع عربي أغاني \ عربي أغاني \عربي أغاني كليبات فيديو \ كليبات فيديو عربي أغاني \كليب عربي كليبات فيديو). We used multiple phrases for Arabic since entries on YouTube varied based on grammar and language. The list that was generated for each of these keywords was further filtered by type-videos and sort by-view count on YouTube. The top 100 videos on the list were captured. This was repeated for each of the seven keywords. The resulting seven lists were merged, and repetitions deleted to generate one list for that particular day. The same procedure was repeated for each of the seven days. The resulting seven lists corresponding to each day were merged and repetitions deleted to generate one list for the entire week. The final YouTube list included 232 songs.

In the second stage, a new list was generated corresponding to the most viewed songs on the five available record labels in the region (Mazzika, Melody, Rotana, Watary, Jaroudi Media). For each label, the most viewed 10 songs were compiled, resulting in 50 songs. In the third stage, yet another list of songs was created by

choosing the most popular Arab singers on Instagram and YouTube. We chose Instagram as a popular social media platform for celebrities. A date in the middle of the constructed week was chosen and the profiles of singers on Instagram (82) were accessed and the number of their followers were recorded. The same singers were also accessed on YouTube and the number of their followers were recorded. Out of the 82 artists, the top 10 who were the most followed on both platforms were selected, with the priority going for YouTube. In fact, eight artists out of the top 10 were also in the top 20 on Instagram. The other two were not as popular on Instagram, but their YouTube following was in the millions. For each artist, the top 10 most viewed songs on YouTube were selected, making it 100 songs.

In the concluding stage, the three lists were compiled, repetitions discarded, and ranked by number of YouTube views at the time of capture. The above procedure resulted in a sample of 237 music videos. Cleaning up the sample further reduced the sample size to a final 150 videos. Deleted were entries that were lyrics-only, that were music-only (and not a song), and entries of artists performing on stage (thus, not a video clip).

Measures

The unit of analysis was the music video where the artist him/herself was considered for all variables, except for sexualized dancing of dancers that was coded at the overall video level. When the artist was solo, he or she were coded directly. When the video featured a musical band, the lead singer or most visible person was coded. Each video was coded on four basic measures and nine sexual objectification measures. The basic measures were: type of video (official video clip or fan creation); year; artist country (18 Arab countries); and artist gender (male or female).

Sexual objectification was conceptualized as instances where the person, or any of his/her body parts, was presented as an object of sexual nature. Sommers-Flanagan et al., (1993) define objectification as "instances in which the camera focuses in on an isolated body part… rather than a whole, complete human," excluding camera shots of the top half of a person, or a close-up of the face (p. 747). This was measured through gaze, exposure of body parts, and gender display.

Gaze Similar to Aubrey and Frisby (2011), we coded the presence of gaze as an explicit instance where one person checks out another with clear sexual longing. This was measured for two types of gaze: target of gaze (artist is gazed at) or perpetrator of gaze (artist gazing at someone).

Exposure of body parts This variable was conceptualized as any instance where specific (sexual) areas of the body were shown (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011). The main artist was coded for whether he/she appeared in any of the following instances: cleavage or side breasts (for females), chests with visible pectoral muscles (for males); butt cracks or cheeks; and stomach or pelvis. Answers ranged from 0 (none of the instances were present) to 3 (all instances were present).

Gender display This was measured at two levels: the subordination and sexual display of the main artist (Wallis, 2011).

Subordinate display The main artist was coded for whether he/she was subordinate on any one of the following instances, with answers ranging from 0 (none of the instances were present) to 4 (where all instances were present): delicate self-touch (touching body, face, hair, etc.), smiling shyly, averting eyes or looking down shyly, putting childish finger to/in the mouth.

Sexual display The main artist was coded for whether he/she was sexual on each of the following instances, separately: (1) suggestive/sexualized dancing or sexual posing (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011); (2) seductive facial expressions, such as sultry look, biting lips slowly, open mouth, etc. (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011); (3) provocative clothing (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011), such as lingerie, bikini, tight clothes, short clothes, clothes with slits, see-through material, towel-only, etc. (King et al., 2006); and (4) sexual movement (implicit: pelvic thrust, stroking, long lip licking, self-touching; and explicit: genitalia or breasts are being touched, or bodies are moving together in ways suggestive of intercourse) (Sommers-Flanagan et al., 1993).

Sexualized dance of dancers At the video level, actors and background dancers were coded for whether or not they were dancing in a sexualized manner (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011).

Intercoder reliability

Two graduate students majoring in journalism were trained to code approximately 15% of the sample (n = 21). We expected the gender of the coders to affect the observations, as suggested by Sommers-Flanagan et al., (1993), whose study revealed viewers' gender has a bigger effect on female characters than on male characters in crime action shows. They based their argument on previous research by Dambrot et al., (1988) who showed that female viewers more than male viewers. To avoid any bias, we balanced the gender of the coders by having one female and one male of the same age and education serve as coders.

After one training session and two pilot sessions where disagreements (mainly related to gender differences) were discussed and resolved, coders were deemed ready to work on the intercoder reliability sample. Intercoder reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha. All basic variables (type of video, year, country, and gender) produced an alpha coefficient of 1.0. Gaze perpetrator was 1.0, while gaze target was 0.66, which is lower than Krippendorff's recommendation. We accepted it since the presence of gaze was extremely rare and the disagreement was only in one case out of 21, providing a Holsti's percentage of 95. Each of exposure of body parts and sexualized dance of dancers were 1.0. The subordinate display was 0.81; seductive facial expressions 0.83; and each of sexualized dancing, provocative clothing, and implicit/explicit sexual movement 1.0. The reliability for all objectification variables, except for sexualized dancers, was calculated after excluding videos where the artist wasn't present, in order not to inflate the figures.

Results

In our sample, more music videos featured male artists 66% (n = 99) than female artists (n = 51, 34%). The majority of the videos belonged to Lebanese artists (n = 44, 33%), followed closely by Egypt (n = 37, 28%). Farther down the list were Syria with 18 videos (13%) and Morocco with 12 (9%). The first video in our sample was from 1991 and the latest from in 2019. All videos, except for 4 (2.7%) were in the 2000s. Out of these, 28 (22%) belong to the years between 2000 and 2010, with the rest coming from the last decade. Out of the 150 videos, 17 cases were fan creations that did not feature the artist. These were excluded when testing sexual and gender display variables, since these targeted the main artist only.

Exposure of body parts revealed the overwhelming majority of the videos (89.6%) did not show any body parts, with 9% (n = 12) only including one of the measures, and a mere 2 videos (1.4%) including two of the measures. None of the videos featured all three measures. This resulted in a heavy skew due to the presence of outliers, which were corrected by collapsing the categories into an ordinal measure: none (89.6%) and some body parts (10.4%).

RQ1a asked about the most prevalent elements in the sexual display scale. Descriptive statistics show provocative clothing (20%) and seductive facial expressions (19%) are the most prevalent, with sexual dancing coming at a distant 10% and sexual movements in a mere 4% of the videos in the sample. RQ1b was interested in whether the sexual display differed by gender. Out of the four elements, the only significant differences between the genders were in clothing and sexual posing/dancing. In the category of clothing, females were provocatively dressed in more than half of the videos (56.3%), compared to not a single instance for the males, $x^2(1) = 60.58$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was a moderately strong 0.67 measured by Cramer's V. As for dancing, female artists danced or posed sexually in slightly more than a quarter (37%) of the videos, whereas males never appeared in a sexual pose, $x^2(1) = 25.8$, $p < 0.001$. In other words, the 13 videos that included some variation of sexual dancing/posing belonged to female artists.

H1, which hypothesized that female artists will display subordinate nonverbal acts more than male artists, was supported. Females were significantly more likely to display subordinate behavior ($M = 0.75$, $SD = 0.98$) compared to males ($M = 0.02$, $SD = 0.15$), $t(48.32) = -5.23$, $p < 0.001$.

H2, which hypothesized that female artists will engage in sexual display more than male artists, was supported. The t-test revealed females were more likely to display sexual acts ($M = 1.35$, $SD = 1.37$) compared to males ($M = 0.23$, $SD = 0.5$), $t(54.05) = -5.45$, $p < 0.001$.

To encompass all elements of sexuality in the music videos, we further conceptualized sexual behavior as a combination of sexual display (Wallis, 2011) and body exposure, combining the four sexual display items (sexual dancing and posing, seductive facial expressions, provocative clothing, implicit and explicit sexual movements) with exposure of body parts. The internal reliability of the scale ($M = 0.63$, $SD = 1.1$) using Cronbach's alpha was 0.65, which is acceptable, although on the lower side. We used this measure to test RQ2 that investigated

whether differences in sexual display exist as a function of the countries and the regions. For RQ2a, the countries were collapsed into the three regions making up the Arab world: Levant, Gulf, and North Africa, in addition to 1 video from a Frenchman performing an Arabic song, which was excluded, providing an N of 133. The results of the ANOVA showed the Levant to feature a higher mean of sexual display ($M = 0.89$, $SD = 1.2$), followed by the Gulf ($M = 0.67$, $SD = 1.6$), and North Africa ($M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.5$), $F(2, 130) = 6.95$, $p < 0.005$. Here we note that the assumption of the homogeneity of variances was violated, as both Levene's test came out significant, and the ratio of variances (measured by divided the largest variance with the smallest) was larger than the recommended coefficient of 2 (Field, 2013). In this case, the Brown-Forsythe or Welch tests are to be used to verify whether the results of the ANOVA are truly significant regardless of the inequality of variances. The Welch $F(2, 12.86) = 8.76$, $p < 0.005$. For post hoc comparisons, Scheffe tests was used, since it is one of the safest tests that reduces the risk of Type I error (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009, p. 428). The results revealed the only significant differences were between the Levant and North Africa ($p < 0.005$).

Results for RQ2b revealed Lebanese artists were significantly more likely to display sexuality ($M = 1.3$, $SD = 1.3$), than Egypt ($M = 0.24$, $SD = 0.5$), all other nationalities combined ($M = 0.3$, $SD = 0.7$), $F(2, 130) = 18.9$, $p < 0.001$. The assumption of the homogeneity of variances was violated in this test as well; we, therefore, used Welch's test, which yielded a significant result, $F(2, 81.02) = 12.52$, $p < 0.001$. Post hoc comparisons using Scheffe tests revealed the differences were significant when Lebanon was compared to Egypt ($p < 0.001$) and all other countries ($p < 0.001$).

Based on the above results, and the significant differences in sexual objectification between Lebanese and other artists, we were further interested in finding out whether gender predicts sexual behavior, above and beyond the country of origin. To build the multiple regression model, we entered country (Lebanon vs others) as the control variable in the first block, and gender in the second block. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 130) = 27.18$, $p < 0.001$, and accounted for 28% of the variance. Both predictors in the model were significant. Even after controlling for country, which was associated with a half point unit increase of sexual display when the artists were Lebanese, unstandardized beta = 0.58 (SE = 0.2), $p < 0.01$, the gender of the artist had an effect, where females were more likely than males to display sexuality, unstandardized beta = 0.72 (SE = 0.19), $p < 0.001$. The two tests combined reveal that Lebanese artists significantly showed more sexuality than others, averaging a measure of 1.3 on a scale of 5, compared to others who averaged 0.24 at most. The effect of the country remained significant when combined with gender, indicating that being Lebanese can still predict a change in sexuality, where artists will behave more sexuality (half a point increase on a scale of 0 to 6) compared to others.

RQ3a asked whether the amount of body parts differs by artists' gender. A chi-square test of independence indicated significant differences between females and males, where female artists revealed more body parts (86%) than males (14%), $x^2(1) = 16.93$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was a weak 0.36 measured by Cramer's V. Within the categories themselves, males were featured in exposed body parts only 2% of the time, compared to females who exposed their body in 25% of the videos.

RQ3b examined the differences between the countries in the exposure of body parts. Testing the relationship between the countries indicated Lebanese artists were significantly more likely (77%) than artists from Egypt (15%) and all other countries combined to feature exposed body parts, $x^2(2) = 12.81$, $p < 0.005$. The effect size was weak (by Cramer's $V = 0.30$). Based on these results, we tested the predictive power of country and gender of artist on their likelihood to expose their bodies in the videos. The binary logistic model consisting of country and gender was significant, $x^2(2) = 16.84$, $p < 0.001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.25$. Of the two predictor variables, only gender was significant, unstandardized beta = 1.9 (SE = 0.93), $p < 0.05$, indicating females are almost twice as likely to expose their bodies compared to males. This indicates that even though Lebanese artists were shown to differ from other nationalities in the exposure of body parts (RQ3b), the result is attributed to the gender of the artists more so than their nationality.

H3, which predicted female artists will be targets of gaze more than male artists, was supported. Chi-square revealed that females were twice as likely (67%) than males (33%) to be targets of gaze, $x^2(1) = 12.1$, $p < 0.005$. The effect size, however, was small (Cramer's $V = 0.3$). Within their own category, females were targets of gaze in a third of the videos, compared to only 9% for males. As for gender differences in being the perpetrators of gaze (RQ4), the results were not significant. We also did not find significance between target of gaze and body exposure, even when it applied to female artists only (RQ5), and between sexualized dance of dancers in relation to the artist's gender (RQ6).

Discussion

This study aimed to examine sexual objectification and gender display in Arabic music videos. The results revealed clear patterns regarding the role of gender, and in some cases, the role of the country of the artist, in determining the gender representations in music videos produced in the Middle East and North Africa. Searching for the most Arabic popular music videos on YouTube provided us with data that are recent but also some cases that dated back to 1991. According to our sample, the music videos scene is dominated by a few countries, with Lebanon getting the biggest share of one third of what's out there, followed closely by Egypt, and remotely by Syria and Morocco. With the exception of a few videos from the 1990s, all were from the 2000s.

With regards to the main theme of the study, findings revealed female artists were significantly more likely than males to exert sexuality in their behavior and exposure of their bodies. Over the two decades of music videos, female artists displayed gender-related and sometimes stereotypical behavior, whether that was acting in a subordinate manner or behaving in sexual ways. They smiled shyly and averted their eyes, but also danced sexually and touched their bodies suggestively. Gender differences were additionally evident in the individual measures for sexuality, where females were dressed provocatively quite frequently, danced or posed sexually more often than not, and revealed their bodies much more compared to male artists who either never displayed sexuality or rarely did so.

Besides gender, some differences appeared among the countries making up the Arab world. In general, artists from the Levant were more likely to show their bodies and display sexuality. Further analysis revealed the reasons to be related to one country. Lebanese artists were six times more likely to display sexuality than Egyptian artists, and four times more than all other nationalities combined. They were also featured exposing their bodies in three quarters of the videos. Interestingly, when gender was used to gauge the relationship, this effect disappeared, indicating gender is the only predictor. Put simply, even when Lebanese artists were more likely than others to expose their bodies and engage in sexual behavior, being a female was still more powerful than where the artist came from. Unlike the West, however, Lebanese artists' sexual behavior is at the lower end of the scale, fulfilling approximately one measure of sexuality out of the five available ones. In comparison, females in Western music videos expose an average of three elements of their body, engage in sexualized dance in a third of the videos, and are sexually objectified in the majority of the videos (Frisby & Aubrey, 2012). They are also sexualized through provocative clothing and sexually suggestive dancing, among others, in at least a third of the videos (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Wallis, 2011).

Taken as a whole, sexuality in Arab music videos was less prevalent than what extant research has shown about Western music videos. In our sample, the overwhelming majority of the videos did not show any body parts. For the remaining 10%, cleavage was predominantly more visible than stomach and buttocks. This is most likely due to censorship and restrictions of visual content in the region. Arab society also tends to normalize breasts more than other body parts, hence exposing cleavage is more acceptable than buttocks that would be considered highly indecent (Goldfield, 2017). Displays of sexuality were also on the lower sexuality meter, with the less sexual measures occurring more often than explicit sexual acts. Provocative clothing, for instance, is more acceptable in Arab culture than, say, nudity or overt sexual movements. Females can be provocatively dressed without being nude, generally through tight clothing that does not expose the skin but is sexually suggestive enough to induce sexual undertones. In that manner, female artists can circumvent local customs by arguing they are not showing any skin, while at the same time, fulfilling the desire to appear sexual. Seduction in facial expressions is also more acceptable, since it could be construed as dependent on the viewer, and is rather ambiguous (Karsay et al., 2019). In other words, sexuality is implicit; it is wanted but cannot be overt in the traditional society of Arab countries. Scholars have argued Arab societies could be witnessing "incomplete modernity," evident through Arab women's captivation with non-Arab soap operas that depict themes of modernity, westernization, and globalization while battling with local traditions (Salamandra, 2012). In such instances, patriarchal discourse could take place in form of criticism and anxiety, while masking itself as defense against moral deprivation (Salamandra, 2012). The music scene as well has witnessed discussions that parallel those in the film and television industries, highlighting the threat they pose to the preservation of traditional Arab music performance (Abdel Aziz, 2010). As part of larger transformations in the music video industry, the openness of the characters who are depicted as sexual much more often than was permissible in the past could be understood from both globalization and commercialization viewpoints. Some believe the

"vulgarity" in Arab music videos is allowed in a world of profit-driven private satellite television because some individuals lack an appreciation of the social and moral value systems that have always regulated by Egyptian society (Al Wassimi, 2010, p. 94). The popularity of music videos on television channels is partly due to the endorsements that Arab artists carry to market the products of multinational corporations, as well as advertising agencies that strive to attract the attention of youth in order to expand their consumption bases (Abdel Aziz, 2010). Lebanese artists seem to have exploited this market, fostering close relationships with businesses, contributing to a growing confusion about the artistic and sociocultural value of Lebanese women singers (Cestor, 2010). This could be one of the contributing factors to the sexualization of Lebanese female artists compared to other nationalities in our study, in addition to more liberated and "Westernized" lifestyles that women in Lebanon enjoy with regards to the rest of the Middle East. One other explanation to the use of sexual connotations and provocative gestures in Arab music videos is the autonomy of the video clip as an imaginary, liberated territory produced through popular entertainment (El Khachab, 2010).

Another form of sexual objectification is the use of the female self as an object for sexual longing. Although instances of sexual gazing were rare in the study, females were more frequently checked out and leered at sexually compared to the male artists, but their gender did not relate to them gazing at others. For females, being the targets of gaze, was not related to whether their body was exposed or not. This is interesting, albeit unsurprising, considering the male gaze is prevalent in Arab societies (Jackson, 2020). The results here are insightful for objectification research as well, further suggesting that women are gazed at with sexual longing or lust, regardless of what they are wearing. This gives more ground to the feminist discourse online, which is represented in memes that denounce the male gaze. The subject of such discourse is a juxtaposition of a woman in a bikini and another in a burka, with texts reading a variation of "It's not about what we wear" (Higgs, 2017; Kendall, 2016). As a final measure of sexual objectification, the study found the presence of background characters who danced in a sexualized manner was not related to whether the artist was a male or a female. This points to objectifying the body, presenting it as a sex object that has no more than a decorative role in the video (Aubrey & Frisby, 2011).

Conclusion and Limitations

What do viewers see when they watch the most popular Arabic music videos on YouTube? Our study suggests they see female artists acting in stereotypical manners, displaying subordinate behavior, but also a sexual one. When the artist is a woman, she would pose or dance sexually, use facial expressions to seduce, and expose her skin. As for the male artist, he is rarely depicted as sexual, although he is often caught gazing with lust at others.

Taken at face value, the results of this study do not seem to add much to existing literature. Hundreds of studies have measured female representations and sexual objectification of women on thousands of music videos. Like our study, they mostly

found women to be sexually objectified much more than men (e.g. Andsager & Roe, 2003; Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Karsay et al., 2019; Wallis, 2011). Regardless, we believe our study makes a significant contribution to the large body of literature on two levels: international and regional communication. Sexual objectification seems to exist in music videos, whether they are Arabic, rap, hip-hop, country, or rock. Consequently, the findings suggest the position of women in the media remains to be depicted as inferior to men, irrespective of geography, social norms, media type, or measurement type. For what concerns Arab societies, the sexual tones that characterize women in music videos produced by Arab record labels suggest a reinforcement of the existing objectification of women. Females are subordinate to men and exist to be looked at as objects that fulfil male pleasures, same as their American counterparts (Emerson, 2002). This explanation does not, however, negate the possibility that the music video industry, including female artists themselves, "exploits men's interest in women's sexuality to enhance the value of the videos," which men cannot do based on females' relatively lower interest in men's sexuality (Editor, personal communication). Scholars have contended female artists objectify their own bodies, centered on the awareness that their value lies, at least partially, in their ability to use their bodies to attract viewers sexually (Frisby and Aubrey 2012). Female artists' sexual objectification, then, could be viewed as the outcome of "cultural and industry expectations," which motivate these women "to participate readily in their own sexual objectification" (Aubrey et al., 2011, p. 360). Such behavior could start a chain reaction of self-objectification that signals to female newcomers objectifying themselves is a model for success (Frisby and Aubrey 2012). Experimental research has additionally documented the priming effects this behavior has on young men, triggering their belief "that women use their sexuality to their advantage," perhaps even suggesting "that women have little basis to complain if men reciprocate the interest" (Aubrey et al., 2011, p. 374).

The significance of these results is also related to the videos being hosted on YouTube. The platform has been a leading online platform for music videos (Holt, 2011; Liikkanen & Salovaara, 2015; Park et al., 2018). As young Arab males consume YouTube, they expose themselves to a world of objectification against women, packaged as entertainment. How they evaluate and treat women, could therefore mimic what they see normalized in these videos (Ward et al., 2005; Wright & Rubin, 2016). As for young Arab females, viewing sexualized and objectified women in music videos could influence their psychological well-being and lead to lower body self-esteem and self-objectification (Aubrey & Gerding, 2015; Grabe & Hyde, 2009; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Szymanski et al., 2011; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012).

As with most studies drawing their sample from an online platform, the ephemeral nature of the web poses challenges to generalizations. Although, we cannot claim true representativeness, the multi-stage sampling technique that we devised made use of two other lists of artist popularity that are not related to YouTube. Another limitation lies in the nature of the measures themselves. Although this study, as the case with previous ones, uses sexuality measures that theoretically apply to both men and women, we cannot ignore the fact that most of these measures target women more than men. This is not to be regarded as a flaw in the research design, but rather a byproduct of patriarchy. Where one could easily find examples

of provocative clothing for women, there are far less for men. In today's society, women are given disproportionately more ways to appear sexual, underlining the necessity of sexual appeal of females. Finally, future research on Arabic music could focus on the characters that play the love interest of the main artist, as a potential area to explore regarding objectification.

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