

1 **Memeing the Masses: Internet Memes as Educational** 2 **Tools and Expressions of Public Opinion on Social Media**

3
 4 *The proliferation of digital technology and social media has paved the way for*
 5 *teenagers and young adults to socialize on a new level. The online platform of*
 6 *social media became a place for civic engagement and public opinion expression.*
 7 *Memes are disturbed virally through the internet and therefore, each meme has*
 8 *the potential to by every powerful on the public. Thus, the study of memes paves*
 9 *the way to new venues in understanding popular political and social opinions of*
 10 *the public. Internet Memes comment on events in our society from a humorous*
 11 *perceptive, which may now always be politically correct. However, this results in*
 12 *a mirroring of the social reality on the internet specifically social network*
 13 *websites (Ortiz, Corrada, Lopez, & Dones, 2020). Internet memes are an*
 14 *important feature of digital technology and social media that spread dramatically*
 15 *into mainstream culture of the online world. Memes are defined as a public*
 16 *humorous image, video, texts, etc. that individuals copy and spread through the*
 17 *virtual sphere from one person to another or from one community to another*
 18 *(Kertcher, & Turin 2020). Using humor in creating the memes enables the*
 19 *Egyptian public to address sensitive topics and express criticism in which*
 20 *otherwise they would not be able to address. Internet memes have become a tool*
 21 *for people to express their opinions on online space, where they consider it a*
 22 *crucial part that reflects a great share of their active participation process. Memes*
 23 *are widely used by the all types of audiences, where they consider it a visual*
 24 *rhetoric that expresses their opinions and perspectives, yet its effect is still*
 25 *imprecise and needs more thorough examination especially among media*
 26 *illiterate audience. Therefore, more research is needed to study the effects of*
 27 *internet memes, the degree of their audience's usage, and their dependability on*
 28 *its structure as a user-generated media for their personal representation,*
 29 *participation, persuasiveness and entertainment (Huntington, 2017).*

30 31 32 **Social Media and Public Opinion**

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 34 Communication is a fluctuating process that needs to be changed and updated
 35 from time to time. The introduction of computers and new media affected the way
 36 man perceive and use the communication process. At first, people started to use the
 37 online platform as a space that offered anonymity (McKenna & Bargh, 2000).
 38 Nowadays, people changed their way of understanding the online space, where they
 39 started to use it as a socializing tool in the expansion of their circle of friends and
 40 relatives. The online space offered a new form of freedom of expression, where it
 41 gave the audience more empowerment through the introduction of new means of
 42 expression (Handayani & etal, 2016). "Social Media Trinity" is a notion that
 43 appeared lately, where it became an open space for blogging, micro-blogging and
 44 social networks (Safko, 2010 as cited by Handayani, Sari & Respati, 2016). In other
 45 words, any opinion can be posted online and becomes viral, hence emerging as a
 46 public opinion (Handayani & etal, 2016).

47 Related research on public opinion in social media done by Li, et al. (2020) has
 48 collected a large amount of user interaction information from an actual social

network, for example, Twitter, and analyze the dynamic sentiments of users about different topics to investigate realistic opinion evolution. The result showed two nontrivial results. First, public opinion often evolves to an ordered state in which one opinion predominates, but not to complete consensus. Second, agents are reluctant to change their opinions, and the distribution of the number of individual opinion changes follows a power law.

Memes as Social Media Visual

Internet memes are considered one of the updated forms of user-generated digital media content that may produce real-world effects on those who are exposed to it. Memes are created by anonymous regular people expressing pop culture, social and political issues. Memes reflect audiences' feelings in general, and such feelings are crucial in understanding the process of engagement with information; as it explains the changes that occur in the audiences' attention, perception, and how they see the world in general. Memes are proved to have persuasive power, as it encompasses a level of humor, visual nature, intertextuality as well as user-generated status (Huntington, 2017).

The word "meme" was introduced first by Richard Dawkins, an English biologist, in his book "The Selfish Gene". The Greek origin of the word is "mimeme" which means imitation. The tunes, ideas, and catch-phrases are all considered online memes. Dawkins made an analogy of meme with the gene in the human body, where the meme resembles the gene in major characteristics. In other words, memes spread in the meme pool moving from brain to brain like genes spreading in the gene pool and moving from body to body. Thus, such process of movement and spreading called "imitation" in a broader sense of the word (Dawkins, 2007).

Memes have been considered as public discourse, for their functions as rhetoric (e.g. Anderson & Sheeler, 2014), and for their memetic qualities (Shifman, 2014).

This scholarship has tended to focus on the reasons people create and share memes, rather than why people view memes. However, based on interviews with LOLcat meme sharers, Miltner (2011) suggested that some memes are shared to express emotions (as cited by Akhthner, 2021). Participants in that study described spending time finding the perfect meme to suit an interpersonal situation. Therefore, it is possible that people seek out memes as type of emotional release. Emotion may also be an important motivator for sharing memes (Guadagno, Rempala, Murphy, & Okdie, 2013 as cited by Tabatabaei & Ivanova 2021). A foundation of research has been laid for meme scholarship that gives clues about memes' qualities, their importance within a media culture, and memes' uses and functions within that culture. Thus, some cultural consequences or impacts of memes have been established in the literature. What this research does not tell us, however, are the effects or influential outcomes of these memes, particularly on the audiences who view them.

Social Media Activity and Memes: Emotional Power

Memes played a vital role in the communication interactive process initiated in the digital space. In other words, memes are considered the cultural units that creates communication between online users, where they are perceived as a form of online expression. Furthermore, the degree of effectiveness of memes usage is quite debatable according to some studies, where some show positive association between memes and online users' expressions and others proved that it is conditioned on the type of humored memes shared. Having said that, as study conducted by Brody & Cullen (2023) examined the impact of memes usage on human relationships, where it found that sharing humor memes as an enjoyment function is positively correlated with the satisfaction level of any relationship, however, using it as an apologetic expression is negatively correlated with the level of satisfaction. Moreover, most of the research participants confirmed the notion of using memes as a social expression in their closest relationships and as a mean of social communication generally, nevertheless, the results showed that memes only served the humor function and not as a more thoughtful form of communication.

Another study conducted by Zhang & Gearhart (2022) examined the difference between memes used political entertainment and memes for political observation. The study found that the most frequent shared and viewed of political memes are mainly to satisfy their political entertainment need and not for political observation need. Nevertheless, the most frequent memes created satisfy the political observation need rather than the entertainment. In other words, individuals who share and view and does contribute to engagement use the memes for political entertainment, and individuals who create and contribute to engagement use the memes for observing the politics currently in action. Another study found congruent results, where it examined the psychological reasons behind memes usage, and it provide that some individuals use the memes to moderate the stressful situation faced in the daily social life. In other words, memes are used as a tool for reinterpretation of social situation when individuals' area faced with cultural problems (Flecha, et al., 2021).

Memes and Public Opinion: Educational and Motivational Power

Memes are now managing as well as forming the political dialogue on social media platforms, thus affecting the public opinion, political participation, as well as the dynamics of the political ideology. The fast spread of the memes over social media, like Twitter, Facebook, TikTok and Instagram, contributed to its need as a tool for political participation, where it is used as a method of political terminologies. A study conducted by Al Afnan (2025) found that the memes are not considered a neutral form of communication, but rather a significant instrument that affects the political and partisan discourse. The study found that different types of memes receive different degree of engagement withing political sub-groups, for instance, conservative groups share memes reflecting capitalism, free market, and patriotism. While more liberal lenient groups share memes reflecting social justice

and environmental issues. Additionally, the study added the sentiment aspect, where it found that justice and environmental memes encourage positive sentiments, while critical political memes encourage negative ones. Nevertheless, such negative sentiments can carry some ethical misunderstandings as it manipulates “emotional responses rather than promoting for informed discussion”.

The memes and public opinions concepts are interrelated, yet some argument about their ethical concerns are existent, where another study conducted by Misra (2025) shared similar finding with the previous study mentioned above. The results showed that memes do have a significant impact on the shaping of public opinion represented on social media platforms, yet the impact varies according to the type of social media platform on the one hand. On the other hand, the type of the memes with its accompanied sentiment, either positive or negative. The study found that political memes allowed political actors to have higher levels of engagement with younger generations, also, some memes acted as a reinforcement tool for existing political beliefs, while others acted ignited the debates and discussions. The study concluded that memes is considered a powerful communication tool discussing politics, mobilization and persuasion. In other words, memes are proven to have the ability to simplify complex political terms, thus allowing diverse people to contribute to the public opinion resulting more inclusive and participatory political attitude.

Memes generally are perceived to be an “emotional contagion”, where it acts as an intermediary in spreading diverse feelings and emotions, especially emotional behaviors in social media platforms. They not only encourage the feeling, but encourage the interaction as well, where it considered a strategic communication tool for steering the collective action, sentiment and by extension the public opinion acting as an “emotional mobilization” (Tabatabaei & Ivanova, 2021). A study conducted by Akram, et al. (2021) examining the impact of memes of individual anxiety levels during covid pandemic, showed some congruent regarding emotional in general and anxiety feeling in specific results, where it found that usually anxious individuals selective choose social media to acclimate to the social uncertainties they faced during the pandemic. Additionally, they share humorous memes as a copying mechanism to elevate their general mood and decrease their anxiety. In other word, individuals resort the online space to share as well as interact with memes to reduce some of their psychiatric symptoms, like anxiety and depression, as they form social and emotional online bonds that might act as a digital supportive group.

Additionally, another study conducted by Arkam & Drabble (2022) shared the similar findings, where it showed the social media pages dedicated to humor medical memes have a positive impact on the users, as it creates some social and emotional bonds resulting the simplification of difficult expressions, thus creating a socially supportive group. Also, memes have a positive impact on specific psychiatric issues, like depression and anxiety, where they are perceived as a humous mean of social connection that decrease such insecurities. In other words, individuals use memes to alleviate their mood by laughing out their problems and forming some social connection at the same time. Finally, it could be concluded that memes are used on two different yet parallel paths, where it is used as a mean of

online expression that decreases anxiety due to its humorous nature from a psychiatric viewpoint on the one hand. On the other hand, it has an irrefutable role in the digital political life, where it constitutes a major part in public opinion due its ability to simplify complex political expressions. Subsequently, the current research paper will examine how memes could act as an educational tool for public opinion expression in a positive and enjoyable manner to overcome their anxious nature that is usually accompanied with the political participation and behavior, especially in the digital space.

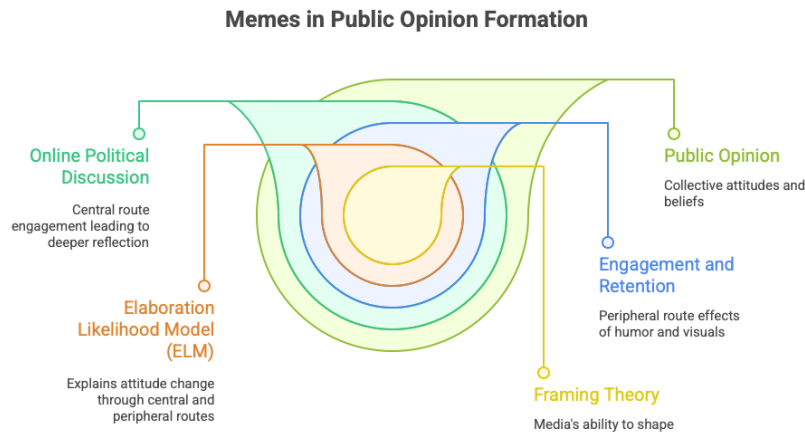
Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory and Elaboration Likelihood Model

Generally *framing theory* refers to the ability of media to create frames for several reasons, for instance, gaining public affection, normalizing viewpoints and persuasion (Guenther, et al., 2020). In the current research paper memes utilize framing theory to rapidly simplify implications and sense-makings in a digital media platform. Since farming in general is referred to as the mean to select as well as interpret situations, then memes are a *sub-category frame* as they simplify complex political terms into audio or visual humor narratives that evoke social support and understanding. In other words, it could be claimed that memes changed the decoding process of political messages, using humor, allowing it to be easily digestible by diverse audience, thus increasing the contribution to the public opinion.

ELM on the other hand, complements the notion of framing theory in the current research, where it provides a thorough explanation on how memes affect attitudes through both central and peripheral routes of persuasion (Widyaningsih, Ramadhani, & Prihantoro, 2025). The use of humor as well as emotional appeals in memes usually affect the both the attention and the acceptance of the audience (peripheral route). The visuals found in memes encourages sharing, engagement as well retention attitudes. Meanwhile, accordingly, when audience are deeply involved, they will reflect profounder and deeper attitude (central route) that leads to online political discussion, thus contributing to the public opinion. Together framing theory and ELM constitutes a deep explanation as well as comprehension on how memes act as an educational tool in public opinion, as it shows how meanings as well as emotions are framed through humorous memes, developing high levels of engagements as well as motivation that would eventually either enlighten or redesign collective support and understanding.

1 **Figure 1. Theoretical Framework**



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4 In this paper, we analyze how memes serve as a vehicle to express an individual
5 or collective voice, and how individuals use these memes as a main source of
6 communication.

7
8 The researchers wanted to examine if: first, social media activity and meme
9 engagement, the viewing of memes will result in perceiving memes as a new method
10 of communication.

- 11
12 ■ Second, usage of memes as an emotional coping mechanisms.

13
14 Third, the relationship between memes, public opinion and social anxiety. if
15 the viewing of memes will result in perceiving memes as a new source of
16 information and knowledge

17 Thus, the following research hypothesis were developed to measure the above
18 variables:

- 19
20 • **H1:** There is a positive relationship between the level of social media
21 activity and the likelihood of viewing or sharing memes
22 • **H2:** Users who find memes emotionally relieving are more likely to
23 perceive them as useful for understanding or responding to public opinion
24 during crises.
25 • **H3:** Exposure to memes that address public opinion issues contributes to
26 users' learning and understanding of social and political topics.
27 • **H4:** Individuals who agree that memes help them “cope with public opinion
28 anxiety” are more likely to believe memes influence or reflect public
29 opinion.
30 • **H5:** Engagement with memes (viewing/sharing frequency) affects lower
31 self-reported anxiety toward current public issues information online.
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Methodology

Using a quantitative descriptive research design, the researchers conducted an online survey to explore how internet memes influenced participants' engagement, emotional regulation, and public opinion on current issues. The survey intended to measure participants' social media engagement, meme utilization, and psychological response to internet memes as part of their online communication behaviors.

An online survey was distributed among the sample to help understand and analyze the use of memes in expressing an individual's opinion and how they use it as its main source of communication on online social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (N=163).

Sampling

The study employed a purposive sample, where the sample must meet the researcher's aim in being active online participants on social media platform and being teenagers and young adult, since they are the main users of these online social media platforms. All participants were active users of popular social media networks, i.e. X, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat. Non-probability sampling was adopted as it helps researchers to collect respondents that were knowledgeable about the phenomenon that was being researched, in this case, the consumption and sharing of memes on current issues that affect the public opinion.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered using online survey that was distributed through popular social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. People shared the survey link over a period of 2 weeks and respondents participated voluntarily and anonymously. respondents were informed about the purpose of the survey and that their responses would be kept confidential and used for academic research only.

This structured questionnaire consisted solely of closed-ended questions only, that are:

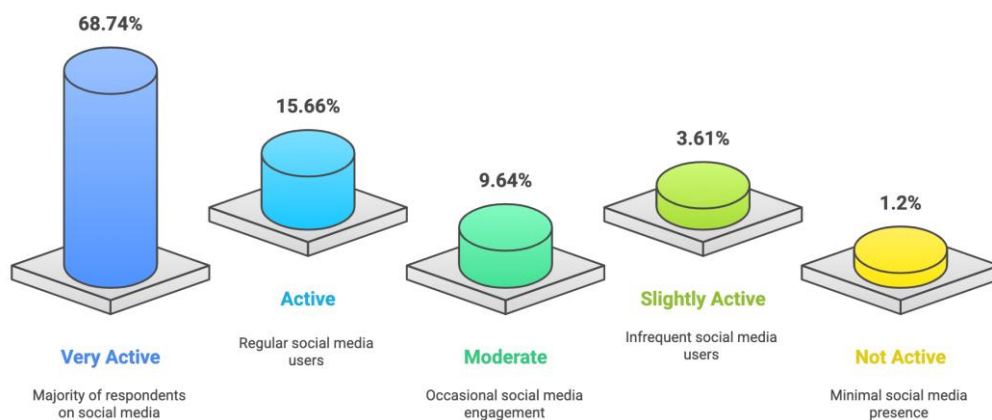
- Social media activity and meme exposure (e.g., viewing, sharing, or creating memes)
- Emotional perceptions (e.g., coping with anxiety, forming social bonds, and interpreting public opinion through memes)
- Demographic information (gender, age, education)

Responses to attitudinal items were measured using a 3-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral, 3 = Agree).

Results

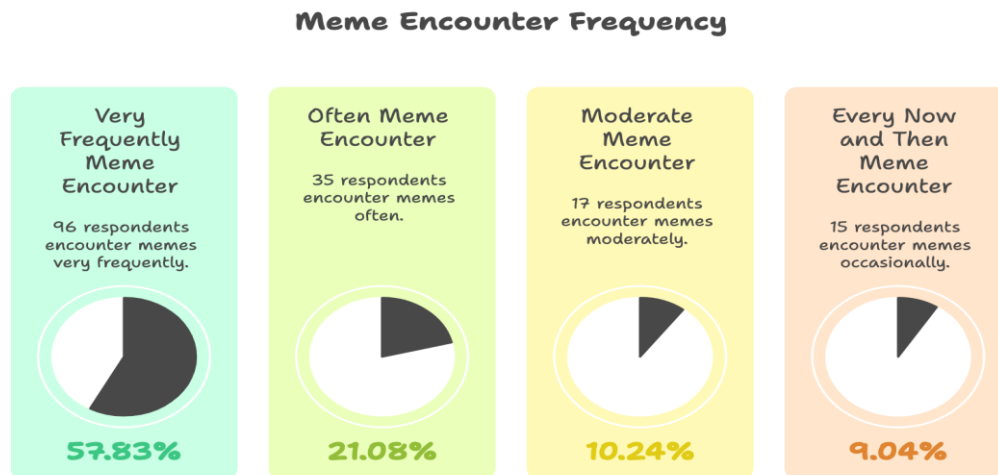
For the survey purpose a filtering question was added in the beginning asking whether or not respondents were active social media users. All of the respondents answered with “Yes” they are active social media users (n=166). The most common used social media platform was found to be Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp with 77% of the respondents answering that they use it the most. When the respondents were asked how active you are on social media? The majority with 68.74% answered very active (n=114), while 15.66% answered active (n=26), 9.64% answered with Moderate (n=16), 3.61% answered with slightly active (n=6) and only 1.2% answered with not active (n=2). Results are shown in more details in figure 1.

Figure 2. level of social media active users



Concerning the knowledge of what is a meme, the most common response was yes, I know what a meme is (n=163). The majority of the respondents answered that they view memes regularly with 94.58% (n=158) and only 4.82% answered no (n=8). When asked whether or not the respondents enjoy reading memes, the majority answered yes they enjoy with 96% (n=160) and only 4% did not enjoy reading memes (n=6).

In analyzing the frequency of participants encountering memes throughout their day, the results indicate a significant level of exposure and engagement with meme content. The majority of respondents 57.83% (n=96) reported that they come across memes very frequently, suggesting that memes have become a part of daily online interactions. 21.08% stated that they encounter memes often (n=35), further emphasizing the consistent visibility of memes across social media platforms. A smaller proportion 10.24% described their exposure as moderate (n=17), while (9.04%) noted that they come across memes only every now and then (n=15). Results are shown in Figure2.

1 **Figure 3. Frequency of Memes encountered by users**

2
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4 Moving on, respondents were asked whether they repost or shared memes
5 before the majority answered Yes with 82.53% (n=137) and only 17.47% answered
6 that they don't share memes (n=29). On the contrast, when asked if they ever created
7 their own memes, the majority answered no with 66.27% (n=110) and only 33.73%
8 answered yes (n=56). Respondents were then asked if they would recommend or
9 send a meme to their friends, the majority said that yes, they would with 92.77%
10 (n=154), while they minority said they don't with 7.23% (n=12).

11 Concerning memes covering social issues respondents were unaware, the
12 majority answered Yes with 90.36% showing a strong response to the role of memes
13 as a source of education to current public opinion issues (n=150). This shows that
14 memes moved to become an influential tool for social awareness and public
15 discourse. Only 9.46% answered no to the question (n=16).

16 When asked the respondents about the usage of memes as a method of self-
17 expression in online communication and texting, the majority 76.51% answered that
18 they do use memes to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions in digital
19 interaction. A small part of the respondents 22.89% answered that they do not use
20 memes as a form of self-expression (n=38).

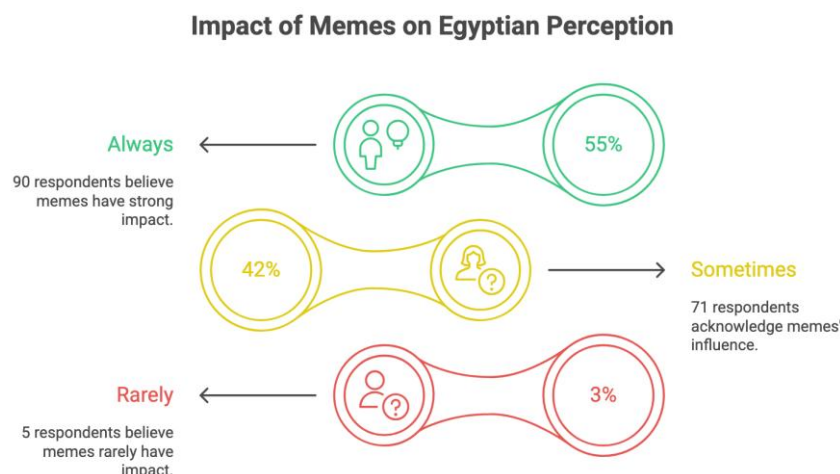
21 Regarding if respondents use memes to contribute to public conversations
22 regarding current public opinion issues, the results showed a tendency toward using
23 memes as a form of participation and social commentary. 57.36% answered "yes"
24 that they actively engaged in public discourse through meme sharing or creation
25 (n=96). On the other hand 41.57% stated "No," implying that a significant minority
26 still view memes primarily as entertainment (n=69).

27 When asked if the respondents believe that a meme related to current public
28 opinion issues, the majority with 59% answered No, this shows a level of skepticism
29 among social media users regarding the credibility of meme-based information
30 (n=98). In the meantime, 41% admitted to believing a meme at some point (n=68).

31 Concerning the issue if respondents believe that memes have a strong impact
32 on how Egyptian perceive current issues, the majority 55% answered "Always"
33 (n=90). While 42% answered with "Sometimes" showing that they acknowledged

the influence of the memes (n=71). And a small percentage 3% answered with “Rarely” (n=5). Results are shown more in Figure 3.

Figure 4. *Impact of Memes on Egyptian users' perception*



Regarding the variable of communication and the usage of memes, results showed how respondents perceive memes as a tool for persuasion, interaction, and education related to current public opinion issues. When asked where they thought memes are persuasive, 50% of the respondents remained neutral, while 35.54% of the respondents agreed and 12.65% disagreed. Likewise, then evaluating whether memes were convincing 47% remained neutral, 34% agreed and 17% disagreed. Respondents were asked whether they believe memes help them communicate better with others regarding current public opinion issues, 36% agreed, 37% remained neutral and 26% disagreed. Likewise, when asked whether memes help them find common ground with others, (42.17%) were *Neutral*, 58 (34.94%) agreed, and 36 (21.69%) disagreed. When examining the entertainment dimension, a majority of participants (55.42%) agreed that memes are considered online entertainment, (28.92%) remained neutral, and (14.46%) disagreed, reinforcing that memes are primarily viewed as enjoyable digital content even when they address serious topics. Finally, when analyzing whether memes are a good source of communication regarding public opinion issues, (36.14%) remained *Neutral*, 57 (34.34%) agreed, and 45 (27.11%) disagreed.

Regarding the variable of freedom and the usage of memes, results showed how respondents perceive memes as a source of awareness, knowledge and affirmation in relation to current public opinion issues. When asked whether memes make them more aware of current public opinion issues, responses were evenly distributed: 35.54% chose *Neutral*, 32.53% disagreed, and 31.93% agreed. Likewise, concerning if memes make the respondents feel more knowledgeable, the majority disagreed with 37.35%, followed by 33.13% remaining neutral and 28.92% agreed. In a related question regarding awareness of current public opinion issues, 37.95% remained neutral, while 33.73% disagreed and 28.31% agreed. Finally, when asked

whether memes strengthen their views regarding current public opinion issues, 42.77% were *Neutral*, 33.73% disagreed, and 22.89% agreed.

Results related to the variable of the viewing of memes and personal opinions, it showed an emotional and social dimensions of meme engagement among participants, revealing how memes serve not only as tools for opinion expression. When asked whether memes help them express their opinions regarding current public opinion issues, 36.75% remained neutral, 35.54% agreed and 27.71% disagreed. In regards to the emotional relief, the majority with 47% agreed that memes reduce the anxiety they feel regarding current public opinion issues, 36.14% remained neutral and 16.27% disagreed. Likewise, respondents were asked if memes help them better cope with current public opinion issues, 39.16% remained neutral, 31.33% agreed and 28.92% disagreed. Finally, respondents were asked if memes allow them to form bonds with others who share similar views, 45.18% agreed, 36.75% were neutral and 18.07% disagreed.

Regarding demographic information, the age of the responded were distributed among 21-25 years (54.22%), 16-20 years (18.67%), 26-30 years (15.06%), and 31 years or older (10.84%). The majority of the participants were females(n=133) and a small portion were males (n=33).

In terms of education, most respondents were undergraduate students 60.84%. 22.89% had a bachelor's degree, and 13.86% held a master's degree. A few respondents (1 each, 0.6%) had a PhD, or other postgraduate studies.

Discussion

The first hypothesis argues that there is a positive relationship between the level of social media activity and the likelihood of viewing or sharing memes. Which means that it was expected that the more active users are on social media, the more they would engage with memes, whether by viewing them, sharing them, and/or reposting them. Basically, individuals who use social media for more than four hours per day should be more involved with meme culture than in active individuals. A chi-square test was employed to analyze the relationship between social media users' activity level and meme engagement. The results showed to be not statistically significant ($p=.554$), this shows that the level of social media users' activity does not have an impact on meme engagement. Results did not support H1.

Table 1. *A chi-square test conducted to test the statistical difference between social media users' activity level and meme engagement*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.021 ^a	4	.554
Likelihood Ratio	3.359	4	.500
Linear-by-Linear Association	.015	1	.903
N of Valid Cases	166		

a. 5 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .52.

The second hypothesis claimed that users who find memes emotionally relieving are more likely to perceive them as useful for understanding or responding to public opinion during crises. Meaning that when individuals feel that memes help them reduce stress, fear or anxiety, they start to view the memes as being valuable tools for learning and making sense of what is happening in society. This is especially seen during times of crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic or wars. A chi-square test was employed to analyze the relationship between emotional relief from memes and their perceived usefulness during crises. Results were found to be statistically significant ($p < .001$) showing that individuals who find memes emotionally relieving are more likely to perceive them as informative, educational and useful too. Results indicate that the more memes make users feel emotionally better, the more users will believe that memes will help them with understanding what is happening in society.

Table 2. *A chi-square test conducted to test the statistical difference between emotional relief from memes and their perceived usefulness during crises*

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	189.983 ^a	64	.000
Likelihood Ratio	175.575	64	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	69.260	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	164		

a. 75 cells (92.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .44.

The third hypothesis argues that exposure to memes that address public opinion issues contributes to users' learning and understanding of social and political topics. Mainly H3 suggests that individuals see memes about current public opinion events, they don't just laugh, they actually educate themselves and learn something from it. memes that include social issues, simplify political ideas or use humor in certain situations, may lead to the increase of individuals' awareness and understanding of public discussions. A Pearson correlation test was done to examine the relationship

between memes exposure and the learning outcome about public opinion issues. Results showed a statistically significant positive correlation ($r(158), p = .036$). this suggests that users are more frequently exposed to memes are slightly more likely to report learning or gaining information of current public opinion topics. Results supports H3 that meme exposure contributes to informal learning and social awareness among users.

Table 3. A Pearson correlation test conducted to test the statistical difference between memes exposure and the learning outcome about public opinion issues

		Correlations	
		memelearn	How2doyouencounter memesduringyourday
memelearn	Pearson Correlation	1	.167*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.036
	N	160	158
How2doyouencounter memesduringyourday	Pearson Correlation	.167*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036	
	N	158	164

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The fourth hypothesis argues that individuals who agree that memes help them cope with public opinion anxiety are more likely to believe memes influence or reflect public opinion. This means that individuals who uses memes as an emotional coping mechanism with stress and tension also tend to see memes as powerful communicative tools. Moreover, if memes help people feel better about current public opinion issues that are more likely to think that these memes matter more, or that they shape public attitudes. A Pearson correlation was done to measure the relationship between individuals' perceptions of memes as a coping mechanism for public opinion anxiety and their belief in memes' influence of the public's attitudes. Results showed statistically significant and a strong positive correlation ($r(164), p < .001$) meaning that individuals find memes emotionally comforting are more likely believe that memes influence or may reflect the public opinion. Results supports H4 where emotional engagement with memes influence individual's perception of their social and communicative impact.

Table 4. A Pearson correlation test conducted to test the statistical difference between individuals' perceptions of memes as a coping mechanism for public opinion anxiety and their belief in memes' influence of the public's attitudes

		Correlations	
		memeviews	memefreedom
memeviews	Pearson Correlation	1	.652**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	165	164
memefreedom	Pearson Correlation	.652**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	164	165

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The fifth hypothesis states that engagement with memes (viewing/sharing frequency) affect lower self-reported anxiety toward current public issues information online. Meaning that users who have higher level of engagements with memes, by viewing them, liking them, or sharing them are more likely to experience less anxiety or stress when getting information about current public opinion issues. Moreover, the more individuals relate to memes, the calmer and less anxious individuals feel about serious or social topics. A Pearson correlation test was done to examine the relationship between meme engagement levels and individuals' anxiety level toward current public opinion issues. Results showed a weak and a non-statistically significant correlation ($r(164), p = .38.$) showing that higher level of engagement with memes does not necessarily mean lower anxiety levels. Therefore, results did not support H5. The result implies that while memes may provide entertainment, they do not substantially influence emotional responses such as anxiety toward social or political issues.

Table 5. A Pearson correlation test conducted to test the statistical difference to examine the relationship between meme engagement levels and individuals' anxiety level toward current public opinion issues

Correlations			
		ViewsandMe meslAniexty	memeengag ment
ViewsandMemeslAniexty	Pearson Correlation	1	-.069
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.379
	N	165	164
memeengagement	Pearson Correlation	-.069	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.379	
	N	164	165

Conclusion, Limitation and Recommendation

Conclusion

The current study examined the relationship between social media memes as an educational tool for public opinion, where survey was implemented to quantitatively measure the online participants' online engagement, meme usage, as well as their psychological response. The questionnaire was distributed among the desired sample on Facebook and Instagram, using purposive sampling technique, to scrutinize the role of memes as a part of their online communication tools and expressions. The study examined several hypotheses, and the results goes as follows: first the relationship between the level of social media users' activity does not have an impact on meme engagement behavior. Second, individuals who find memes emotionally relieving are more likely to perceive them as informative, educational and useful, thus H2 was supported. Third, meme exposure contributes to informal learning and social awareness among users. Fourth, emotional engagement with memes influences individual's perception of their social and

communicative impact. Last, the results imply that while memes may provide entertainment, they do not substantially influence emotional responses such as anxiety toward social or political issues.

Limitation

The current study offered an insightful perspective regarding memes as acting as an impactful educational tool, nevertheless, it did face several limitations. First, reliance on purposive sampling hinders the idea of generalizability of the study findings as well as the number of the respondents contributed. Second, the data was affected by the self-reported measures that might affect the participants objectivity and contributing to the research bias and subjective analyses, especially since it examined an emotional variable. Third, using cross-sectional survey design limits the idea of claiming some causality between meme engagement and emotional responses.

Recommendations

For the future research, the following is recommended to be explored, first, the educational and emotional perspectives of online memes in different cultural, social contexts, as well as demographics. Second, a comparative study between different social media platforms could be done instead of examining them together, for instance, TikTok versus Instagram could be more insightful since the nature of the platform differs as well as the format and engagement levels. Third, applying mixed methods, qualitative method, in this case would be beneficial is establishing some insights and deep analysis about the users' memes usage regarding civic issues. Lastly, adding the variable of algorithmic exposure would be very insightful and richer as memes not only used as means of entertainment, but they are also now perceived as more meaningful tools of casual learning and public discussions.

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