Television Exposure and Internet Use: Their Relationship to Political Tolerance in Egyptian Society

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a survey of 450 Egyptians aged 18 to 70 representing different socio-economic categories and different geographical regions, this study compared the effects of television exposure and Internet use on political tolerance in Egyptian society, taking into account other social, political and psychological variables. The study also investigated the targets of intolerance and how they differed among different groups. The findings shed light on the importance of TV exposure in promoting political tolerance, in addition to the significant negative effects of threat perception and religiosity. There were no significant differences in levels of political tolerance between respondents with different demographic characteristics. The implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: Television esposure, Internet use, political tolerance, Egyption society.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tolerance has been found to be one of the most common traits in the Egyptian personality (Khaleefa and Radwan, 1998; Essawi, 1986; Yaseen, 1986; Ibrahim, 1985; Refa'i, 1971). However, most political, economic and geographic circumstances throughout different historical periods have corroborated authoritarianism, centralism and different values that contradict with tolerance. This is apparent in the relative absence of political tolerance in the discourse of political parties during the various historical periods (Adly, 1998).

During the previous four decades, incidences of sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians occurred which represent a departure from what is known of tolerance among Egyptians. Some analysts have attributed this to the undemocratic political system created by the July 1952 revolution which has seen the absence of competitive management mechanisms among political forces, policies of exclusion, deportation and rejection of dialogue between the ruling party and other political forces. Such widespread negative practices at the political level are reflected in the social relations (Harb, 2010).

Intolerance in Egypt is attributed also to the rise of political Islam which has led to the emergence of extremist attitudes among the Christians under the logo of "The Bible is our constitution" as a reaction to the logo adopted by Ikhwan "Holy Quran is our constitution".

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After the defeat of the Egyptian army in June 1967, the Islamists felt that it was their time to dominate especially after the failure of the national project that was prevalent in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century. The rise of political Islam in Egypt also coincided with logos adopted by the late president, Anwar El Sadat, such as , "The Believer President" by which he aimed to diminish the effects of the socialists and Nasseriests (Heggy, 2009). The immigration of hundreds of thousands of Egyptians to the Gulf countries is considered another reason that explains the increase in intolerance and denial of the other (Harb, 2010).

Due to the previously mentioned reasons, intolerance has increased in the Egyptian society, especially in the absence of civil education programmes and mass media programmes directed at spreading values of acceptance of others.

Political reform has recently emerged as a hot issue in the Middle East attracting specialists from different disciplines to study factors that promote and hinder this reform. As tolerance is considered one of the important values in a democratic society, this study attempts to examine the role that mass media can play in increasing political tolerance in Egyptian society. This phenomenon has not been studied before by media researchers in Egyptian society, and even the literature of political tolerance has not concentrated on the role that mass media can play in promoting political tolerance in societies. This study compares between traditional media (represented by television) and new media (represented by the Internet), taking into account the social background, political and psychological variables.

2. VARIABLES STUDIED

2.1 Political Tolerance

There has been several definitions of tolerance, most of which concentrate on the rights of citizens in a democratic society, which include acceptance of groups whose ideas are objectionable and the willingness to give these groups their rights without exception. Consequently, a tolerant regime is a regime that permits the expression of ideas that contradict its own ideas (Marcus *et al*., 1995; Nie *et al*., 1996).

Given the existence of several definitions, there are also different methods of measuring this concept. The most famous of these methods are that of Stouffer which has dominated research since 1950s, and is still used in the American General Social Survey. In this measure, the researcher identifies the groups that are considered the targets of intolerance and asks the respondents if they would tolerate activities by these groups.

The other measure, which is adopted by the current study, is that of Sullivan *et al*.(1982) which is known as the 'content-controlled' measure, or the 'least-liked' measure, as it gives the respondents the chance to define their least-liked group. After identifying their target group of intolerance, respondents proceed to answer a group of questions assessing their level of intolerance towards that chosen group.

2.1.1 Political Tolerance and Mass Media

Tolerance attitudes can be subject to manipulation, crystallisation, and mobilisation (Gibson and Anderson, 1985). Therefore, media can play an influential role in increasing or decreasing the levels of political tolerance in any society through the manner in which they portray

different groups, and how they frame conflicts in society as this may affect the level of threat perception, which consequently affects the level of political tolerance. Also, there may be differences between different media in the way they portray groups and frame issues, and in their characteristics which affect the way people receive their messages. For instance, when there is a conflict between values in the society, public attitudes become ambivalent, and this ambivalence gives greater opportunities for the media to affect public attitudes towards different issues through framing (Kuklinski *et al*.,1991). In their experimental study on the effects of media framing on tolerance for the Ku Klux Klan, Nelson *et al*.(1997) found that participants who viewed the news story concentrating on the importance of free speech value showed more tolerant attitudes than participants who viewed news stories emphasising the importance of public order.

Social learning theories propose that children's attitudes are developed as a result of environmental circumstances and personal experiences; consequently, low levels of tolerance and low levels of civil liberties are due to a collective socialisation experience. That is why tolerance increases in adulthood if the individual is living in a tolerant environment (Zellman and Sears, 1975). In relating this to media effects, we can argue that media messages are among the inputs of the environment, and if they are tolerant and portray different groups positively, or at least present different points of view in a neutral way, they will create a tolerant society that accepts differences in ways of thinking.

For instance, the Internet, as a relatively new medium, in comparison to the television, is correlated with more selectivity and more motivation for seeking information, and people usually search for the messages that confirm their ideas and attitudes. This behaviour, according to the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) aims to maintain cognitive equilibrium. People usually avoid exposing themselves to information that contradicts their existing attitudes. This approach in dealing with the media will lead to less informed, more polarised, more fragmented and intolerant citizens (Prior, 2007; Sunstein, 2001). This selectivity poses a danger to democratic systems as it prevents the formation of an informed opinion (Mutz and Martin, 2001). This will lead to a more 'balkanised society' where deliberating groups move towards a more extreme point, and it is supposed that the Internet creates a big risk as it facilitates like-minded people speaking with each other creating 'echo-chambers' (Sunstein, 2009). Consequently, it is expected that intolerant persons look for information that strengthens their negative attitudes towards their disliked groups, and so it is expected that there will be a negative relationship between Internet use and political tolerance, while there will be a positive relationship between exposure to television and political tolerance, as TV channels are more conservative in speaking about different groups than the Internet.

2.2 *Other Factors that Contribute to Levels of Tolerance*
Levels of tolerance in the society are not only affected by media, but are also affected by other factors like the economic and political systems in the society and other individual-level variables, such as (i) social background variables of level of education, gender, religion, geographic location and other demographic variables; (ii) political variables which include commitment to democratic norms, political involvement and political affiliation; (iii) psychological and personal traits variables which include threat perception, personal traits

such as dogmatism, self-esteem and interpersonal trust which are sometimes grouped into a construct called psychological security, tolerance of uncertainty and religiosity.

2.2.1 Social Background Variables

Social background variables shape the environment of the citizens in any society, and consequently shape their perceptions and attitudes. Social background variables may have direct and indirect effects on political tolerance.

Among the demographic variables that were found to be related to this phenomenon is education, which has been considered in the studies of tolerance prior to the work of Sullivan *et al.* (1982) as the single most powerful factor affecting tolerance. It is found, according to Stouffer's measure, that education is positively correlated to tolerance as it is supposed to make persons more open minded and more aware of different ways of thinking, and consequently, acceptable of differences among people (Stouffer, 1955; Prothro and Grigg, 1960; McClosky, 1964; Jackman, 1972; Lawrence, 1976; Beatty and Walter,1984; Karpov, 1999; Wang and Chang, 2006). But according to the measure of Sullivan *et al.*(1982), the effect of education is exaggerated, and when individuals are given the opportunity to select the group they oppose, the effect of education is reduced considerably, and consequently, they concluded that the effect of education is inflated by the ideological bias in the selection of the target groups (Sullivan *et al.,* 1979; 1982; Shamir and Sullivan, 1983).

Regarding the effect of gender, studies have shown that there are differences between men and women in both the level (Gibson, 1992; Marcus *et al.*, 1995; Golebiowska, 1999) and targets of political intolerance (Sullivan *et al*., 1982). These differences are thought to be due to gender differences in education, religiosity, personal anxiety, in addition to exposure to men and to a diversity of ideas outside the home. Controlling for these variables does not completely eliminate differences. Child-rearing practices may be responsible for men's greater openness to political diversity as parents give boys more freedom (Stouffer, 1955). Gender differences may be also due to levels of political expertise (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Tolleson-Rinehart *et al.*, 1996). The lack of political expertise among women might partially account for their lower levels of tolerance as political novices show less tolerance than political experts (Marcus *et al.,* 1995). However, some studies found that gender plays only a minor role in political tolerance (Wang and Chang, 2006), or no effect at all (Sullivan *et al*., 1982).

Some studies show that there is an impact of the region where citizens live and the city size on levels of tolerance. It is found that residents of metropolitan areas are more tolerant than others (Stouffer, 1955; Nunn *et al.,* 1978). This effect is attributed to the fact that living in bigger cities gives people the chance to contact with diverse ideas, and therefore are more tolerant. On the other side, Sullivan *et al.* (1982) found that urbanisation and region of the country have no impact on levels of tolerance, although they do strongly affect target group selection.

This current study is conducted in three different governorates: Cairo, the capital of Egypt which is cosmopolitan; Baihera in the North, with urban and rural areas; and a third governorate, Assiut, which is in the South, also with urban and rural areas. It is therefore predicted that there will be differences in political tolerance among citizens in these governorates.

Political tolerance has long been linked to religion, but the results have been inconsistent. Some researchers, following Stouffer's measure, found a connection between religious denomination and political tolerance. However, Sullivan *et al.* (1982) attributed these differences to content bias in tolerance measures which diminished when respondents were allowed to determine their target group. Also, Beatty and Walter (1984) found that targets of intolerance varied from denomination to another.

In Egypt, as we have mainly two religious groups, Muslims and Christians, with a majority of Muslims, this study tries to examine if there are differences between Muslims and Christians in political tolerance.

Other demographic variables have been studied in the previous studies, among which comes age which is found to be inversely correlated with political tolerance as younger people are supposed to be more well educated, more liberalised and experiencing more different ideas and consequently more open-minded in accepting different ideas (Stouffer, 1955; Nunn *et al.*, 1978; Golebiowska, 1999; Karpov, 1999), but in other studies, age was found to affect targets not levels of intolerance (Sullivan *et al.*,1982; Wang and Chang, 2006). Also, the effect of income and personal economic well-being has been studied, but some studies found no significant relationship between personal economic well-being and political intolerance (Wang and Chang, 2006).

2.2.2 Political Variables

Sullivan *et al.*(1982) found that commitment to democratic norms is an important predictor of political tolerance. Gibson (2002) argues that people who believe in the rule of majority and the protection of minority rights are more likely to tolerate their most hated political enemies. However, McClosky (1964) and Prothro and Grigg (1960) argue that there is little relationship between support for general norms of democracy and the actual application of these norms. In a study of Israeli attitudes, Shamir and Sullivan (1983) failed to find a significant correlation between norms of democracy and tolerance. However, Lawrence(1976) found a direct relationship, while some studies revealed that once we move away from abstract democratic norms to talking about specific groups, consensus among individuals evaporates (Wagner, 1986). Generally, it is found that support for democratic norms is more prevalent among more educated elites (Prothro and Grigg, 1960).

Political involvement (generally defined as a combination of interest in and knowledge about politics) leads to what is called democratic learning which occurs in multiple ways including observing civil liberties disputes and employing democratic methods to oppose one's government in an active way (Hinckley, 2009). So the give-and-take included in political involvement teaches citizens how to compromise and accept different points of view. Consequently to remedy political intolerance, we should encourage more political participation and involvement, not to restrict it. However, this process of democratic learning is more probable in societies with more established democratic practices where citizens are more accustomed to participating in political life and enjoying civil rights. And that may be the reason for the lack of a significant relationship between political participation and political tolerance in Taiwan (Wang and Chang, 2006). Also, political learning and socialisation may be inhibited or facilitated by individual-level traits and values.

2.3.3 Psychological Variables and Personal Traits

Psychological variables and personal traits are considered among the most influential set of factors on the levels of political tolerance. They include threat perception, psychological security variables, tolerance of uncertainty and religiosity.

Threat perception is considered the most important predictor of political intolerance as people who feel threatened by a group are more likely to express intolerance towards it, and this result appears in different studies, whether those which depend on Stouffer's measure or the 'least-liked' measure (Sullivan *et al.*,1982; Duch and Gibson, 1992; Chanley, 1994). From a psychological standpoint, some people perceive the presence of threat even if it does not exist, and others do not perceive the presence of threat even if it exists, so threat perception may reflect a perceptual bias. From a political standpoint, people feel threatened due to objective evaluations of the strength and dangers posed by a dissident group (Sullivan *et al.*,1982).

It is noteworthy that the relationship between threat perception and political tolerance seems to be reciprocal. This was evident in the panel study conducted by Gibson to analyse political tolerance in Russia in 1996 and 1998, who found that tolerance " seems to inoculate, to some degree, people against seeing their enemies as threatening" (Gibson, 2002: 325), as tolerance in 1996 had an independent effect on tolerance in 1998, in the sense that people who were more tolerant in 1996 tended to be less threatened by their political enemy in 1998.

The second important psychological security predictor of political intolerance is the individual's psychological security. It is found to have a significant, direct impact on political tolerance (Sullivan *et al.,* 1982). Psychological security variables include interpersonal trust, self-esteem and dogmatism.

People who lack trust in others are less tolerant than trustful people. Sullivan *et al.*(1982) found a moderate relationship between trust and political tolerance, as the correlation was -.20; so respondents who lacked trust in other people were slightly less tolerant than trustful respondents. However, there are insufficient studies on this relationship.

The personality trait self-esteem is shown to have an impact on tolerance levels. Sniderman (1975) argues that low self-esteem impedes social and political interaction, making it difficult to come in contact with a direct tolerant culture. He explains the effect of self-esteem in light of social learning theory. He argues that the idea of tolerance is abstract and consequently difficult to understand, and as people with high self-esteem have positive self-attitudes, they are more likely to be exposed to the flow of information in the society, and more likely to understand the information they receive due to their superior capacity for social learning which increases their chances to learn the norms of political culture and democratic values, including political tolerance. He argues also that low self-esteem interferes with the motivation to learn norms and ideals such as tolerance.

The most common individual trait implicated in tolerance judgments is dogmatism (Rokeach, 1960). There is usually a negative relationship between dogmatism and tolerance (Gibson, 2002; Gibson and Gouws, 2003). Sullivan *et al.(*1982) found that the zero order correlation between dogmatism and tolerance is -.36, the strongest correlation among the independent variables they examined. Dogmatism may inhibit democratic learning by

motivating dogmatic thinkers to frame politics as a contest between actors who are morally 'good' or 'bad'. This cognitive frame crystallises the belief that disliked groups are unworthy of democratic rights (Hinckley, 2009).

Earlier studies of tolerance have found that a 'predictability' versus 'unpredictability' continuum is one of the strongest determinants of tolerance. Fear of the unknown is a strong stimulus to intolerance than 'certainty' about the obvious 'badness' of the group (Sullivan *et al.*, 1982); so tolerance of uncertainty is positively correlated to political tolerance.

Religiosity is one of the personal traits that is often thought to inhibit the development of tolerant attitudes. As citizens think they know the truth with certainty from their religion, then exposure to divergent viewpoints is not considered advantageous (Jelen, 1982; Jelen and Wilcox, 1990). Smidt and Penning (1982) argue that people with high religiosity may not be intolerant towards certain groups, but intolerant towards certain behaviours exhibited by individuals of these groups that may be against their religious beliefs. Stouffer (1955) found that religiosity is related to tolerance in the sense that those who attended church regularly tended to be much less tolerant than those who did not. The same result was confirmed by other studies (Smidt and Penning, 1982; Beatty and Walter, 1984). However, the empirical evidence regarding the effect of religiosity on political tolerance has been mixed (Wald, 1987).

Generally, we contend that tolerance reflects stable social, political and psychological characteristics, in addition to contextual, political and environmental factors including the activity of the mass media.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Question and Hypotheses
Research Question: Are there differences in the targets of intolerance among respondents due to differences in demographic variables (levels of education, gender, governorates, religion)?

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive correlation between TV exposure and political tolerance, while there is a negative correlation between Internet use and political tolerance.

Hypothesis 2: The level of political tolerance is affected by the following variables:

(i)   Media variables (TV exposure – Internet use)

(ii)   Social background variables (gender / age / governorate / SES / religion)

(iii) Political variables (party affiliation / political involvement / commitment to democratic norms)

(iv) Psychological and personal traits (threat perception/ self-esteem / dogmatism / trust/ religiosity/ tolerance of uncertainty)

3.2 Procedure and Sample
In January 2010, a one-on-one survey was conducted on 450 Egyptian respondents between 18 and 70 years of age. The questionnaire included media exposure scales, psychological

traits scales, political variables scales in addition to questions about the social background and the demographics of the respondents. The study depended on a multi-stage area sample representing the three main geographical provinces in Egypt. Cairo, Baihera and Assiut governorates were randomly chosen to represent great Cairo, Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt respectively. The sample was divided equally among the three governorates. Within the Cairo governorate, three areas were chosen representing different socio-economic levels, and within the two other governorates, we chose a city and a village. Males represented 57.1% of the sample, while females 42.9%. The sample included different educational categories; 42.2% were university graduates, 38.7% had moderate education (equivalent to high school education, 7.3% had lower than moderate education, 6% had post-graduate education and 1.8 % were illiterate. Regarding the religion, 93.1% were Muslims and 6.9% were Christians. About 80.5% of the respondents self-identified themselves as non-affiliated to any political party, 17.3% as being affiliated with the National Democratic party (the ruling party), and 2.2% as being affiliated with different oppositional parties.

3.3 Measurement of Variables

3.3.1 Media Variables: Television Exposure
To assess the level of exposure, respondents were asked the following question: 'Approximately, how many hours do you spend watching television daily?' The range of the answers was from one hour to thirteen hours daily; the mean was 3.4 hours watching television per day, with SD= 2 .

3.3.2 Media Variables: Internet Use
To assess the level of Internet use, respondents were asked the following question: 'Approximately, how many hours do you spend using the Internet daily?' The range of answers was from zero (no use at all) to one hour per day; the mean was .4 hours using the Internet daily, with SD= .5, which reveals a relatively low level of Internet use among the sample.

3.4 The Least-liked Groups (Targets of Intolerance)

3.4.1 Respondents Choice of Least-Liked Group:
Respondents were asked to choose the group whose ideas they found as the most dangerous and threatening to society. They were given a list that includes: The Muslim Brotherhood, people with different religions, people calling for normalisation of relations with Israel, Naserists, Wafdians, Leftists, Others (they were given the chance to define a group if the list did not include their least- liked group).

3.4.1 Tolerance of Respondents to Least-Liked Group
An additive scale composed of five items, asking respondents to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement on a five- point Likert- type scale was used, with strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose, and strongly oppose as response options. The scale range was from 5 to 25 points, with the mean score equal to 17.8, and standard deviation equal to 3.96. The reliability of the scale was satisfactory

(alpha= .7). By factor analysing the items of the scale, two factors were identified to explain 63.4% of the phenomenon which reveals a satisfactory level of validity. The items of the scale were:

(i)   Members of the (R's least-liked group) should be banned from running for public office.

(ii) The group (R's least-liked group) should be outlawed.

(iii) Members of the (R's least-liked group) should be allowed to talk with the media.

(iv) Members of the (R's least-liked group) should have their phones tapped by the government.

(v)   Members of the (R's least-liked group) should be allowed to hold public rallies.

3.5 Psychological and Personal Traits

3.5.1 Perceived Threat
An additive five-point Likert-type scale composed of six items was used. The scale range was from 6 to 30 points, with the mean score equal to 19, and standard deviation equal to 5. The reliability of the scale was good (alpha= .83). By factor analysing the items of the scale, one factor was identified as explaining 60.7% of the phenomenon which reveals a satisfactory level of validity. The items of the scale were: (i) I find this group threatening to the Egyptian way of life; (ii) I find this group extreme; (iii) I find this group engaging in illegal activities; (iv) I find this group against the Egyptian society; (v) I find this group personally threatening to me.

3.5.2 Dogmatism
An additive five-point Likert-type scale composed of six items (adopted from the 1978 NORC survey) was used. The scale range was from 6 to 30 points, with the mean score equal to 20.1, and standard deviation equal to 4.6. The reliability of the scale was good (alpha= .6). By factor analysing the items of the scale, one factor was identified as explaining 34% of the phenomenon. The items of the scale were: (i) Of all the different philosophies that exist in the world, there is probably only one which is correct; (ii) In the long run, the best way to live is to have friends and associates whose tastes and beliefs are the same as one's tastes and beliefs; (iii) There are two kinds of people in this world: those who are for the truth and those who are against it; (iv) Most of the ideas that get printed nowadays aren't worth the paper they are printed on; (v) To compromise with our political opponents is dangerous because it usually leads to the betrayal of our own side; (vi) A group which tolerates too many differences of opinion among its own members cannot exist for long.

3.5.3 Self-esteem
An additive five-point Likert-type scale composed of four items (adopted from the 1978 NORC survey) was used. The scale range was from 4 to 20 points, with the mean score equal to 12.7, and standard deviation equal to 3.2. The reliability of the scale was (alpha= .41). By factor analysing the items of the scale, two factors were identified as explaining 62.5% of the phenomenon which reveals a good level of validity. The items of the scale were: (i) I

never try to do more than I can, for fear of failure; (ii) I think that in some ways I am really an unworthy person; (iii) When I look back on it, I guess that I haven't gotten as much out of life as I had once hoped; (iv) I often feel that I have done something wrong or evil.

3.5.4 Interpersonal Trust
An additive five-point Likert-type scale composed of three items was used. The scale range was from 3 to 15 points, with the mean score equal to 7, and standard deviation equal to 2.95. The reliability of the scale was satisfactory (alpha= .7). By factor analysing the items of the scale, one factor was identified as explaining 61% of the phenomenon which reveals a satisfactory level of validity. The items of the scale were: (i) Most of the time people are just looking out for themselves; (ii) Most people would try to take advantage of me if they got a chance; (iii) Generally speaking, I cannot trust most people.

3.5.5 Tolerance of Uncertainty
An additive five-point Likert-type scale composed of five items, previously used by Golebiowska (1999), was used. The scale range was from 5 to 25 points, with the mean score equal to 14.5, and standard deviation equal to 3.7. The reliability of the scale was (alpha= .5). By factor analysing the items of the scale, one factor was identified as explaining 48% of the phenomenon. The items of the scale were : (i) I often have to stop what I am doing because I start worrying about what might go wrong; (ii) I often stop what I am doing because I get worried, even when my friends tell me everything will go well; (iii) Usually I am more worried than most people that something might go wrong in the future; (iv) It is extremely difficult for me to adjust to changes in my usual way of doing things because I get so tense, tired, or worried; (v) I rarely worry about terrible things that might happen in the future.

3.5.6 Religiosity
The respondents were asked the following question:
How often do you keep practising your religious pillars and prayers?
(i) often, (ii) sometimes, (iii) rarely, or (iv) not at all?
The answers were coded as 3 for often, 2 for sometimes, 1 for rarely and zero for not at all. The mean was equal to 2.6 and the standard deviation was equal to .75.

3.6 Political Variables

3.6.1 Commitment to Democratic Norms
An additive five-point Likert-type scale previously used by Golebiowska (1999), and composed of six items was used. The scale range was from 6 to 30 points, with the mean score equal to 15.6, and standard deviation equal to 4.5. The reliability of the scale was good (alpha= .62). By factor analysing the items of the scale, one factor was identified as explaining 36.1% of the phenomenon. The items of the scale were : (i) It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they can become disruptive; (ii) If someone is suspected of treason or other serious crimes, he shouldn't be entitled to be released on bail; (iii) Free speech is just not worth it if it means that we have to put up with danger to society of radical and extremist political views; (iv) When the country is in great

danger, we may have to force people to testify against themselves in court even if it violates their rights; (v) Society shouldn't have to put up with those who have political ideas that are extremely different from the majority ; (vi) Because demonstrations frequently become disorderly and disruptive, radical and extremist political groups shouldn't be allowed to demonstrate.

3.6.2 Political Involvement

The respondents were asked three questions to assess their political interest and engagement. The total points of the scale were seven, with the mean score equal to 4, and standard deviation equal to *2*. The questions were: (i) How interested are you in politics and national affairs? (ii) Are you very interested, somewhat interested, only slightly interested, or not interested at all?; (iii) Would you say you engage in political discussions often, sometimes, rarely or not at all? (with answers coded as 4 for the very interested, 3 for interested, 2 for somewhat interested, 1 for only slightly interested and 0 for not interested at all); (iv) Are you affiliated with any political party? (with answers coded as yes=1, no=0).

3.7 Social Background Variables

3.7.1 Socio-economic Status(SES)

Respondents were asked nine questions to assess their SES. The questions included:

(i)   Level of education: it was an ordinal level variable with respondents being asked to self-identify themselves as either illiterate, lower than middle education, middle education, university graduate, post-graduate.

(ii)   Occupation: respondents were asked to mention their occupation, which was coded into three levels, with 3 referring to the highest level, 2 referring to the moderate and 1 referring to the lowest level.

(iii) Income: it was an ordinal level variable with respondents being asked to choose one of three categories of income which they belonged to.

(iv) Type of residence place: it was an ordinal variable with respondents being asked to choose one of three levels of residence which were: a leased apartment, an owned apartment, or a villa (or a big house).

In addition, questions were asked on (v) possession of a car, (vi) number of cars in family, (vii) the brand of the car, (viii) participation in a sports club, and (ix) the level of the sports club. The nine questions formed a scale with 19 points. The mean was 9.1 with standard deviation equal to 3.1.

Respondents were also asked about their age, the governorate and their religion.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Impact of TV and the Internet on Political Tolerance

The first part of the first hypothesis was supported as r= .1, p< .05 (.036), indicating that there was a positive correlation between TV exposure and political tolerance, even though

it was a weak correlation. After controlling for the social background variables, political variables and the psychological variables, the correlation became stronger as r= .2, p< .001. Consequently, the first part of the hypothesis is accepted.

For the second part of the first hypothesis, there was no significant correlation between Internet use and political tolerance as r= .05, p> .05 (.26). After controlling for the other variables, the correlation changed into negative and became weaker, as r= -.004, p> .05 (.933). The non-significant effect of Internet use in this study may be due to the low levels of Internet use among the respondents in this sample, as M= .4 hour, with maximum level of use not exceeding one hour. This because people use the Internet for so many different goals, and using it to get political information is more relevant to levels of political tolerance than using it for other purposes. A comparison was therefore made between respondents who used the Internet for getting political information and those who used it for other purposes using the independent sample T-test. The test showed that respondents using the Internet for political information were more tolerant (M= 13.6, SD= 3.1) than those using it for other purposes (M= 12.7, SD= 2.9), t= 2.7, p< .01 (.007). Consequently, we can say that Internet use is influential in increasing political tolerance if it is used for getting more political knowledge. Consequently, we reject the second part of the hypothesis.

To assess the impact of both TV exposure and Internet use on political tolerance, regression analysis was conducted. The overall model was not significant as F= 2.64, P> .05 (.07), but the standardised coefficient (Beta) showed that TV exposure had a significant effect as Beta = .1, t= 2, p< .05 (.046), which means that any hourly increase in TV exposure increases political tolerance by 0 .1 point, and this is in line with our expectations. As TV presents diverse messages representing a spectrum of different ways of thinking, in addition to its availability to citizens with different socio-economic levels, it leads to high accessibility of different ways of thinking, and consequently, less levels of polarisation, and higher levels of political tolerance.

4.2 The Least- Liked Groups (Targets of Intolerance)

Respondents were asked about their least-liked group whose ideas they find threatening and dangerous for the society. The group of people who were for normalisation of relations with Israel came first as 41.8 % defined them as the most threatening; then came the Muslim Brotherhood group with 22%; then came people with different religions with 20.9 %, and this was followed by the Naserists with 5.3%, the Leftists with 5.1%, people in the ruling party and the government with 3.1%, and lastly the Wafdians with 1.8%.

These results show that, although the group of people calling for normalisation with Israel are not influential in Egyptian society, and their numbers are too small to represent any real threat to society, respondents chose them as the group with the most threatening and dangerous ideas. This may be attributed to the priming effect caused by including this group in the list as this may have made the deeply rooted emotions and attitudes towards Israel more accessible and on the 'top-of-the-head' with respondents expressing their attitudes. So although this group is relatively weak and not very influential, people may have projected their attitudes towards Israel on this group of people. There may be also another reason which is the tendency of persons to make a good image of themselves. As

this group, calling for normalisation with Israel, is highly criticised in society, expressing a negative attitudes towards them will provide for out of the 'Band Wagon' effect. The relatively lower percentage assigned to the Muslim Brotherhood group, although they are more influential, may be due to two main reasons; the first is that their threats to the regime have been relatively eliminated or neutralised, and the second is that this group has strong popularity at the grass roots level which is reflected in their success in winning in successive parliamentary elections especially in 2005.

The results have shown that there are not big differences in targets of intolerance across different levels of education. Also, there are no significant differences between men and women nor between Muslims and Christians in their targets of political intolerance.

However, the results have shown that there are differences in targets of intolerance among different governorates. For respondents living in Cairo, the main targets of intolerance were as follows: the Muslim Brotherhood came first with 37.3%, then people calling for normalisation with Israel came second with 22.7%, then people with different religions with 20%. For respondents living in Baihera, people calling for normalisation with Israel came first with 39.3%, then people of different religions came second with 25.3%, then Muslim Brotherhood came third with 22%. For respondents living in Assiut, people calling for normalisation with Israel came first with a very high percentage of 63.3%, then people with different religions came second with 17.3%, then Muslim Brotherhood came third with only 6.7%. So it appears that in the more urbanised areas like Cairo, intolerance toward the Muslim Brotherhood increases while intolerance towards people calling for normalisation with Israel decreases. The opposite happens in the less urbanised areas where intolerance towards people calling for normalisation with Israel increases, and reaches its maximum level in Assiut with 63.3%, while intolerance towards Muslim Brotherhood records its lowest level in Assiut with only 6.7%. This may be attributed to the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood group has a more influential presence in these areas rather than in Cairo. Intolerance towards people with different religions was the least in Assiut (17.3%) where there is higher percentage of Christians in comparison to the other two governorates, and we can attribute that result to the fact that more personal contact between people of different religions make people more tolerant of the 'Other', as generally people feel more threatened of what they do not know.

4.3 Impact of the Psychological and Personal Traits

To assess the impact of the psychological and personal traits variables on political tolerance, the following predictors were added to the model: threat perception, dogmatism, self-esteem, interpersonal trust, tolerance of uncertainty and religiosity.

The results of the regression analysis revealed that the psychological and personal traits increased the efficiency of the model in explaining the phenomenon of political tolerance as adjusted $R^2 = .304$; the model was able to explain 30.4% of the phenomenon, F= 10.33, p< .0001. The incremental F= 24.9, P< .001. The two significant variables in the psychological and personal were threat perception and religiosity. Both of the two variables had a negative relationship with political tolerance, a result that came in line with the dominant attitude in the literature of political tolerance.

Regarding threat perception, t= -11.1, p< .001, with standardised Beta = -.5, and controlling for the effect of the other variables, every point increase in threat perception, decreased the level of political tolerance by .5 (Duch and Gibson, 1992; Chanley, 1994).

For religiosity, t= -2.9, p< .01 (.004), with standardised Beta = -.12 and controlling for the effect of other variables, every point increase in religiosity, decreased political tolerance by .12 (Beatty and Walter, 1984, Jelen, 1982; Jelen and Wilcox, 1990; Smidt and Penning, 1982; Stouffer, 1955).

However, dogmatism, self-esteem, interpersonal trust and tolerance for uncertainty had no significant effects on political tolerance.

In this fully specified model, we notice that the effect of some variables become more significant such as the effect of television exposure which changed from .1 (p<.05) to .16 (p< .0001), while other variables become non-significant, such as the effect of the government (Cairo), the effect of political involvement and commitment to democratic norms, indicating the presence of a suppressor effect among the variables.

Generally, according to the standardised beta, the variables with significant effects in the fully specified model are (i) threat perception which has a negative relationship with political tolerance, (ii) television exposure with a positive relationship with political tolerance, (iii) religiosity with a negative correlation with the phenomenon, and (iv) being a Muslim which positively affects the level of political tolerance.

4.4 Impact of Political Variables

Adding the political variables into the model changed it into a significant model explaining 10.5% of the phenomenon as the adjusted R^2 = .105, F= 3.4, p<.0001, and the incremental F = 7.8, p< .0001. The significant political variables in the model are commitment to democratic norms and political involvement.

Controlling for the other variables, a one- point increase in commitment for democratic norms increased the level of political tolerance by .23, as the standardised estimate (Beta) = .23, t= 4.97, p< .001. This result is in agreement with previous studies (Lawrence, 1976; Sullivan et al., 1982).

Regarding the effect of political involvement, the regression analysis revealed that there is a negative relationship between political involvement and political tolerance, as Beta = -.12, t= -2.14, p< .05(.03). A one point increase in the level of political involvement decreased the level of political tolerance by .12. This result differs from previous studies as there was a positive correlation between political involvement and political tolerance (Stouffer,1955; Nunn et al., 1976), where some studies found no impact for political involvement on political tolerance (Sullivan et al.,1982; Wang, and Chang, 2006). This may be attributed to the fact that political involvement has a positive effect on democratic learning and consequently on tolerance in societies with well-established democratic systems where citizens are more accustomed to participating in political life and enjoying civil rights.

There is also no effect for political affiliation of the respondents on the level of political tolerance. This can be attributed to the weak influence of political parties in Egyptian society, a result that has been proven through several previous studies (Table 1).

4.5 Impact of Social Background Variables

To assess the impact of all the social background variables on political tolerance, the following predictors were added to the regression model: gender, age, governorate, religion and SES (education, occupation, income and other determinants mentioned in the methods section). The results of the regression analysis revealed that the social background variables had no significant effect on political tolerance as F= 1.68, p> .05 (.08) and the F change was not significant as the incremental F = 1.46, p> .159.

The findings of the current study are consistent with the studies that have used similar methods of measuring intolerance. Regarding the effect of education, the results are in agreement with that of Sullivan *et al.* (1979,1982) who have found that the effect of education has been exaggerated, and may be inflated with the effect of ideological bias in Stouffer's measurement of political tolerance. It is found that when respondents are given the chance to define their targeted group of intolerance (as the case is in this study), the effect of education is diminished. Similar results appeared in the case of the effect of area of living and religion. In spite of that, the standardised coefficients (Beta) showed that the religion variable (Muslim) was significant in the model as Beta = .11, t= 2.2, p< .05 (.027), this means that being a Muslim, controlling for other variables, slightly increases the level of political tolerance by .11 point. Also, living in Cairo governorate had a significant effect in increasing the political tolerance as Beta=.12, t= 2.1, p< .05 (.04). This means that living in Cairo, controlling for the other variables, increases the political tolerance by .12.

However, the addition of social background variables did not change the model into a significant one in explaining the phenomenon of political tolerance. This result confirms that of Sullivan *et al.* (1982) as they contend that generally, social and demographic variables have very little impact on political tolerance in comparison to political and psychological variables

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of traditional media, represented by television, and new media represented by the Internet, in addition to other social, political and psychological variables on political tolerance in the Egyptian society using a multi-level area sample of 450 Egyptians from three governorates representing the main geographical provinces. The study also investigated the targets of intolerance and whether they vary or not among respondents with different demographic and social characteristics.

The findings shed light on the importance of TV exposure in increasing the level of political tolerance, a result that should be of benefit for politicians interested in promoting democracy and political reform, especially that TV is the most affordable and available medium for all people, especially those with low levels of SES. On the other side, Internet use proved that it should not be blamed for increasing polarisation and intolerance depending on the argument that it facilitates like-minded people communicating with each other in what is claimed to be 'echo-chamber'. The findings of this study showed that respondents who use the Internet for getting political information are more tolerant than respondents who do not use it for that reason. This result gives a more optimistic view of the role of the Internet in achieving political tolerance and promoting democratic values as

Table 1. Hierarchical regression results

Variable	Model 1 β	Model 1 SE	Model 2 β	Model 2 SE	Model 3 β	Model 3 SE	Model 4 β	Model 4 SE
Media exposure								
TV exposure	.10*	.069	.12	.07	.13*	.07	.16***	.06
Internet use	.04	.07	.03	.07	.01	.07	-.02	.06
Social background								
SES			-.01	-.12	-.01	.05	.01	.05
Male			.03	.29	.03	.29	-.01	.25
Cairo Gov.			.12**	.37	.16**	.37	-.03	.36
Baihera Gov.			-.04	.35	-.03	.34	-.04	.3
Muslim			.11	.56	.09	.55	.10*	.48
18-25 years old			.12	.61	.08	.60	.09	.52
26-35 years old			.11	.61	.07	.59	.08	.52
36-45 years old			.06	.62	.03	.61	.06	.53
46-55 years old			.09	.63	.06	.61	.07	.53
Political variables								
Political involvement					-.12*	.10	-.01	.09
Commitment to democratic norms					.23***	.03	.07	.03
Non affiliated					-.22	.93	-.14	.81
Ruling party					-.17	.97	-.11	8 5
Psychological & personal variables								
Threat perception							-.50***	.03
Self-esteem							-.07	.04
Dogmatism							-.03	.03
Interpersonal Trust							.02	.05
Tolerance of uncertainty							.06	.04
Religiosity							-.12*	.17
Constant	44.3		10.2		7.4		11.4	
F	2.6		1.68		3.4		10.3***	
F change			1.46		7.8***		24.9***	
R²	.012		.041		.105		.34	
Adjusted R²	.007		.304		.074		.30	

*p< .05, **p< .001, ***p<.0001

it may be an easy way to learn more about diverse topics and opinions. This result contradicts the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), which presumes that people avoid counter-attitudinal messages and seek messages that reinforce their pre-existing attitudes, and is in line with recent reviews which reveal that evidence about avoidance of counter-attitudinal information is inconsistent and contradictory (Chaffee *et al.,* 2001; D'Alessio & Allen, 2007; Iyengar *et al.*, 2008).

The findings also confirm the importance of threat perception in predicting political intolerance, a result that held for all societies (Sullivan *et al.*,1982: Duch and Gibson, 1992; Chanley, 1994). This variable proved to be the most influential in this phenomenon, with its negative relationship with political tolerance. One of the most important reasons of threat perception is the anonymity of the 'other' or the lack of information about other groups, so once we get to know the 'other', levels of threat perception diminish, and consequently levels of political tolerance increases. Mass media can play an important role in this arena, as they are the main source of information in any society, and if they succeed in disseminating correct and unbiased information about the 'other', and encouraging dialogues in societies, they will be able to promote tolerance and democracy.

Although there were no significant differences between respondents with different demographic characteristics in levels of political tolerance, there were some differences in their targets of intolerance, a result that came in line with that of Sullivan *et al.* (1982). The most apparent differences in targets of intolerance were among different governorates, a result that confirms the importance of the environmental and contextual factors in drawing the parameters of political cultures in different societies.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study depended on the content-controlled measure of political tolerance which has its own weaknesses as it asks the respondents about their most disliked group. It therefore does not differentiate between respondents who dislike only one group and those who dislike almost every group other than their own. The study also did not take into consideration, the respondents' perceptions of the performance of both the economic and political systems in Egypt. The experiential theory yields important hypotheses to explain short-term attitude changes based on these perceptions (Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Gibson, 1996) which may add more depth if they are taken into account in future studies. In addition, as a study of short-term attitude change has its limits in predicting the future of the democratic reform efforts, we need longitudinal studies that take into account the political, economic and social circumstances at the macro-level, to assess how these contextual factors affect the levels of political tolerance at different points in time. Also, as the study has depended on a random sample; it did not include individuals who depend mainly on the Internet to get their information, and this may be a reason for the non-significant effect of the Internet in this study. Future studies should include heavy Internet users and heavy television viewers to compare between the effects of dependence on each of the two media on levels of political tolerance. It will also be helpful in exploring the phenomenon by conducting studies on the political activists and political elites as Sullivan *et al.*(1982) argue that there are differences in the processes generating political tolerance between those activists and

ordinary citizens both in degree and kind. Conducting experimental research will help also in exploring the effects of media frames on political tolerance.

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