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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**Egyptian Audience's Perception of Political Satire Show: An
Analysis of the Perceived and Actual Influence of Political
Comedy Programming**

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts.

By Dina Mohamed Younis

Under the supervision of Dr. Amani Ismail

July 2014

The American University in Cairo
School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

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ABSTRACT

As more Egyptians continue to expose themselves to the political comedy program Al Bernameg, scholars should seek to understand the audience's perception of the program. This study examines the perception of the Egyptian audience on the political satire show Al Bernameg. The study aims at measuring the perceived bias of Al Bernameg and the perceived and actual influence of the program. This study seeks to explore the influence Al Bernameg has on its audience in relating it to the Third Person effect theory. It examines the difference between the actual purpose for watching Al Bernameg and the perceived purpose. The study employed survey research as its primary source of data collection to investigate the research hypothesis via a purposive sample of 508 Egyptians. The research findings revealed a significant third-person effect pattern for the political satire program, especially among younger viewers.

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Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

“Turn on the television in any number of countries around the world, and you are bound to find at least one highly topical news-parody show providing its own take on contemporary events. As you forward choice clips from those shows, you will also likely encounter the newest satirical Internet video”

(Day, 2011, p. 1).

Recently, after the Egyptian revolution, most Egyptians started to watch a new form of political satire program that tackles social, cultural and political issues. This type of political satire constitutes a new method for discussing and criticizing the political arena and democracy in Egypt. Viewers have started to turn to these political shows in order to become aware of current political and social events in Egypt, to acquire political information and to gain knowledge about their political system.

Political satire shows in general receive little research in comparison to other entertainment programs. *Al Bernameg*, in particular, is underresearched in the field of political communication and persuasion. Like other global satirical shows, *Al Bernameg* has been able to successfully reach viewers who do not have high levels of political engagement, and gain their attention by using humor and comedy.

Having noticed the significance of this new and growing phenomenon in Egyptian society, the researcher decided to tackle this issue to understand the different aspects and features of this new genre of political shows, including its

reasons, its consequences, and, most importantly, the audience's perceptions of *Al Bernameg*. A number of factors account for the existence of this phenomenon and the need to research it. First, it is a new type of political satire that became prominent in Egypt after the uprisings, and thrived when the Muslim Brotherhood came to power. Second, as a consequence of the Egyptian revolution, Egyptians were given more freedom to express their opinions, whether on broadcast media or in print media. Third, little research exists regarding it.

1.2 The Evolution of *Al Bernameg*

During the January 25th Revolution in 2011, a new type of political program was introduced to the Egyptian audience online. Bassem Youssef, a cardiac surgeon, started broadcasting a new show called “The B+ Show” which was only available on YouTube.

In August 2011, at the onset of Ramadan, Bassem Youssef premiered his second political show that was broadcast on mainstream television and called it “*Al Bernameg*”. Season one was broadcast on the ONTV channel. Youssef immediately became famous for ridiculing well-known political talk show hosts, political figures and institutions. *Al Bernameg* brought a new aspect to Egyptian television that had not existed before. It gained momentum and popularity as it contained more material ridiculing famous political figures, and enjoyed more freedom than any other political program that existed at the time.

Soon afterwards, in 2012, *Al Bernameg* was renewed for a second season on a different Egyptian channel, CBC. Youssef’s program was rated the most watched television program in Egypt and it had the highest advertising rates among all political programs. Egyptians everywhere were beginning to tune in to *Al Bernameg* on a weekly basis and almost weekly Youssef would receive a good deal of criticism for his comments. During its second season, *Al Bernameg* gained most of its popularity due to Youssef’s ongoing critique and ridicule of the Muslim Brotherhood and former president Mohamed Morsi. The Egyptian audience began turning to *Al Bernameg* as a way of ventilating their suppressed feelings against the regime then in power. People everywhere were highly accepting of Youssef’s ridicule and praised his courage for publicly criticizing the ruling party and the president.

After the ouster of Mohamed Morsi by the military during the June 30th revolution, on October 25, 2013, *Al Bernameg* premiered its third season on CBC. The first episode contained large segments that severely ridiculed army chief General Abdel Fatah El Sisi. The Egyptian audience, as well as CBC, did not accept this kind of mockery, and this ultimately led to CBC's releasing an official announcement saying that it had suspended *Al Bernameg* until further notice. Shortly afterwards Youssef broke his contract with CBC.

Al Bernameg returned to television on February 25, 2014, on a different channel, MBC Misr, after Youssef negotiated a new contract with them allowing him more freedom to satirize any political issue or figure.

1.3 About Bassem Youssef

Although the use of humor in politics is not a new notion in the Arab world, Bassem Youssef was able to introduce a new form or type of political comedy programming to his Egyptian audience. Youssef, 40 years old, is an Egyptian cardiac surgeon who changed careers to work in the media industry. Youssef, a well-known satirist, also writes a column for the newspaper *El Shorouk*.

Youssef's rise to fame occurred when he first started to broadcast The B+ Show on YouTube, a program that was an instant hit among the Egyptian public, leading to many television executives offering Youssef his own political satire show on their networks. Youssef has previously mentioned that his role model is Jon Stewart, the host of *The Daily Show* in the United States. He stated that he relied on the same format as Stewart's program in *Al Bernameg*, including the use of segments from different programs.

1.4 Egypt's Political and Media Environment

In order to effectively study the political satire program *Al Bernameg*, one must first look at the Egyptian political environment to understand why the rise of such program. Studies have shown that the Arab media tend to operate with authoritarianism and social responsibility as media norms, which override liberalism. Past evidence also shows that Arab governments used press laws and intimidation to close down media and news outlets to maintain their strict control over the media and its content (Rugh, 2004; Sakr, 2011). However, there was a slow movement towards democratic reform in Egypt that allowed more freedom of the press and the adoption of western democratic press principles.

During President Hosni Mubarak's regime, the Egyptian media environment was characterized by inconsistency and uncertainty. Mubarak had strict control over media outlets and operations through various laws such as the Egyptian penal code, the 1996 press law, the Egyptian constitution, and press licensing laws. Nevertheless, in the later years of Mubarak's regime, the Egyptian media started to witness more freedom and democracy when the government allowed the establishment of the first daily independent newspaper *Al Masry Al Youm* and lifted the ban on issuing licenses for private channels (Al Masry, 2012).

However, the Egyptian television environment really started to flourish in 2000, when, for the first time, the Egyptian government agreed to issue licenses allowing private Egyptian television channels to be launched mainly because the government was under pressure to satisfy and please national business elites, indulge in state investments and outrival other Arab countries as the best in pan-Arab media production. Past studies have described how these new changes in

the Arab media, specifically changes in satellite television, led to a new era of diversification, debates and pluralism (Mellor, 2007; Zayani, 2005).

Some political movements started to have a strong political presence online due to the high levels of censorship and lack of freedom of speech and expression. The most notable was the Egyptian Movement for Change, Kefaya, which was established in 2004 by an alliance of different political forces. The movement's aim was to end Mubarak's regime and to ensure that his son, Gamal Mubarak, did not succeed him as president.

Internet social websites such as YouTube became instrumental in sharing and broadcasting videos of protests and demonstrations. Kefaya activists were able to document and post their demonstrations online for the whole Egyptian public to see. Moreover, famous bloggers such as Wael Abbas, Alaa Abdel Fattah, Manal Hassan, Hossam El-Hamalawy, and Malek Mostafa uploaded videos that showed police brutality, violations of human rights and election rigging (Abdullah, 2010).

The next important development came on April 6, 2008 when Esraa Abdel Fattah created a group on Facebook called "April 6th Strike" that asked people to protest against the wages of the working class by staying home on April 6th. From this Facebook group a movement called the April 6 Youth was established and became an opposition force. The April 6 Movement was an active participant in the January 25th Revolution (Abdullah, 2010).

1.5 The Shift from Offline to Online

The proliferation of Internet as a medium of communication, entertainment, information and commerce started during the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Egypt is considered to be the most populous country in the Middle East. With a population of 81 million, the younger generation, aged 15 to 29, numbers 23 million and represents one-third of the total population. Studies have shown that these 23 million are the main users of social media in Egypt (Spot On, 2010).

Internet penetration in Egypt is 30%, with more than half the households in Cairo having Internet; thus 50% of Internet subscribers in Egypt are located in the country's capital. Facebook has around five million users located in Egypt and it is the second most accessed website in the country after Google. YouTube is also considered a very popular website in Egypt.

With the launch of Facebook in Egypt, Egyptians started to access the website for sports and entertainment. They also saw it as a way to form a new kind of community. By 2007, the use of the Internet and computers flourished and new outlets were established such as the online radio station *Horytna*, and an online daily newspaper *El Badeel*. Moreover, in 2008, a magazine targeting youth called *Kelmetna* used its online Facebook page to promote its anti-sexual harassment campaign. The campaign gained huge word-of-mouth popularity and was transported to mainstream media when Moataz Demrdash endorsed it on his hit television show *Al Ashera Masa'an*. By then most television talk show hosts had been following different issues, subjects and political activists on Facebook and Twitter and discussing them on their programs (Sakr, 2013).

By 2008, television talk shows used footage from camera phones, blogs and YouTube to demonstrate the degree of corruption in the Egyptian government. In addition to that, the Egyptian society used Facebook to mobilize people and organize demonstrations in the streets and then these protests would move to mainstream media where TV talk shows would address the issue and talk about them.

Two important campaigns were launched on Facebook in 2010 empowering mainstream media to tackle the issue of censorship. The first was Mohamed El Baradei's campaign that gained two hundred thousand followers in May 2010 and the second was the Facebook Page of Kolona Khaled Said, which was administered by Wael Ghoneim and had more than two million followers (Sakr, 2013).

YouTube became a sensation, ranking as the fourth most accessed website; in 2008 approximately 200,000 videos were uploaded daily (Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center, 2010). It also gave its viewers the opportunity to discover comedians and satirists that were unable to find any medium other than the Internet to reach Egyptian audiences. With the absence of censorship, YouTube gave Bassem Youssef freedom to report on any issue or event.

Social media and the Internet have played an important role in Egypt in the past four years. They have provided a space and tool for creating networks and channels that Mubarak's authoritarian regime strictly controlled. They have facilitated new connections among citizens who oppose the regime. They have supported the circulation of news stories that were banned from mainstream media and allowed people like Bassem Youssef to establish and launch their own

programs and gave them the freedom to report on any news story that they wanted to (Lim, 2012).

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The aim of this research is to study audiences' perception of the political satire show *Al Bernameg*. In doing so, the study will shed light on the theoretical framework, "Third Person Effect Theory" and "Social Comparison Theory", to examine audience evaluation of *Al Bernameg* as a primary source of information about current socio-political events and political ridicule.

Bassem Youssef warns his audience that *Al Bernameg* is not a news program; rather, it consist of "fake news". However it could be more accurately called a mock news program. The program, which currently airs once a week on MBC Misr, usually begins with the reporting of various news topics in a humorous way and ends with Youssef conducting an interview with a guest. Occasionally, the program contains segments that include a song parody about a current event or issue. *Al Bernameg* has occupied a visible and well-known place in the Egyptian media and it has invited a lot of prominent political and social figures as guests. Through a survey, the study's aim is to measure viewers' perception of how they are influenced by *Al Bernameg* and the actual influence that *El Bernameg* has on them. This study aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of how audiences perceive *Al Bernameg*, specifically measuring audiences' perceptions of soft news programs.

This research will first define the term political show, and its types, focusing on political satire. Then the researcher will define how humor and politics could be integrated into political entertainment programming and the effect of political entertainment on viewers. By doing so, the researcher will be able to focus on the most famous and influential political satire show in the West that affected the establishment of other shows in Egypt. More precisely, the

researcher's aim is to focus on the Egyptian show *Al Bernameg* and how it is perceived in Egyptian society. In order to study the perception of political satirical shows, the study draws upon the Third Person Effect Theory. While examining the receptiveness of the audience towards new ideas and the factors that affect the Third Person Effect Theory, it links the Third Person Effect Theory to the Social Comparison theory.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political Shows

Over the last decade and a half, the number of programs available on television has grown dramatically. This upsurge in the number of television programs has resulted in challenges faced by news providers to create audio-visual products that broadcast news in two formats, entertainment and information (Morris, 2009). Political shows are different from regular news programs that analyze current political events and happenings. They usually take the form of talk shows where particular issues are commented on in a given time frame. These types of shows include a host, or hosts, and commentators, and they sometimes even ask the audience to participate in order to gain their attention and interest, and to motivate their interaction within the show. Throughout the show, the host(s) must educate viewers on the topic in question in full detail. He/she must engage in a discussion with the audience, receive viewers' opinions, and entertain the audience to keep them interested (Lee, 2011). Political satire comedy shows are a new form of political entertainment that has emerged in the past decade.

2.2 Political entertainment

Political entertainment refers to any program that aims to entertain while containing political themes, ideas and/or concepts. Studies have shown that political entertainment programs have shaped audiences' political knowledge, attitude and behavior (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Cao, 2008; Feldman & Young, 2008; Young, 2004). Political entertainment is a concept that includes

different types of programs: first, entertainment talk shows such as *Oprah* and *Larry King*, second, political crime dramas such as *NCSI* and *The West Wing*, third, late night talk shows such as *Jay Leno*, *Conan O'Brian* and *David Letterman*, and fourth, political satire shows, which this research will focus on, such as *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart and *The Colbert Report* (Hoffman & Young, 2012).

Scholars have been trying to research the degree to which political entertainment shows have been acting as a source of information. In 2003, Baum claimed that audiences who do not pay attention to politics and are viewers of political entertainment soft news programs are more likely to pay attention to international news and crises than audiences who are also politically inattentive but are non-viewers of soft news programs. Past scholars and studies have shown that there are numerous types of political entertainment media content that include importance, knowledge, information, perception, behavior and attitude. Holbert (2005) measured the ability of the content of political entertainment programs to produce politically significant outcomes. Moreover, a lot of research has shed light on the likelihood of “incidental exposure” to political data and information, a concept which posits that viewers of politically entertaining programs watch for the entertainment value, but end up receiving some information as a result of being exposed to the shows (Baum, 2003).

2.3 Political Satire:

Feinberg (1967) defined satire as “a playful distortion of reality”. Political satire shows are not intended to update, enlighten or inform the public about valid political information, nor are they supposed to shape public opinion. Instead, their goal is to entertain the audience. (Becker, Xenos & Waisanen, 2010). Satire has been found to be used as a vague form of comedy that demands

that audiences actively participate in a cognitive effort to process jokes.

Many previous studies have examined the influences and effects of exposure to political comedy programming containing a range of political behaviors and attitudes. These studies have been partially focused on studying younger viewers, as they constitute a significant percentage of the programs' audience (Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005; Young & Tisinger, 2006). Other studies concluded that exposure to these kinds of political comedy programs can impact levels of political knowledge and awareness. Moreover, it can influence the audiences' attitude towards political figures. Findings from these studies have also shown that exposure to these political satire shows can be linked to audience civic participation levels. (Baum, 2002; Hollander, 2005; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2006; Xenos & Becker, 2009). Furthermore, it has been found that hosts of political comedy programs help audiences interpret content by offering themselves as a reliable sources of information. Additionally, they establish conditions that can most often lead to the broadcasting of biased and subjective information (Beam, Landreveile, & LaMarre, 2009).

Research conducted on the 2004 presidential elections in the United States showed that viewers of *The Daily Show* were more politically informed than non-viewers (Young & Tisinger, 2006). Empirical studies done on the influences of political satire programs have examined how these programs can have an effect on elections, extending from political attention and information to political participation, discussion, efficacy and trust (Young, 2013). Research into political entertainment has argued that politically entertaining programs can be divided into two scopes. The first scope is whether the viewers expect content to be primarily political or secondarily political. The second scope is whether the

nature of the message itself is explicit or implicit. Furthermore, Holbert (2005) argued that most political satire shows are implicit or “implied” and have primary political content.

2.4 Media Bias

Media bias is frequently defined as the foundation for subjectivity and the opposite of objectivity; in other words, it can be measured by the degree to which the message is favorable towards someone, with respect to an issue or news event. Media bias usually occurs when there are only one-sided arguments in a message. As such, viewers have become very critical in analyzing media messages and a study conducted by Pew (2012) stated that 40% of Americans saw a significant amount of political bias in the media. This suggests that individuals have become attentive, and are constantly looking for clues in media messages (Hoffman, 2013). What determines whether or not a media message is biased can change depending on the context of the message. Therefore, the perception of bias takes numerous and various forms. What matters most is how individuals perceive and look at media bias because the perceptions that are formed are most often what fuel their political behavior (Hoffman & Glynn, 2008).

2.5 Humor & Politics

The politics/humor combination has increasingly gained attention over the past decade, particularly in late-night comedy shows. Young people are increasingly shifting from traditional hard news media as their source of political information to non-traditional soft news media, according to research done by

the Pew Research Center in 2004. Other empirical studies have found that particular forms of comedy news are seen as “influential sources of political information.” Another research revealed that 47% of voters aged 18-19 relied on late night programs and soft news programs as their main source of information (Kloer & Jubera, 2000). Yet another report published by Pew (1996) found that 25% of voters had obtained information regarding the presidential campaign from soft news programs such as *The Late Show with David Letterman* or the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Four years later in 2000, the study was replicated and found that the numbers had doubled, with a total of 51% of respondents claiming that they obtained their information from these soft news programs (Pew, 2000).

Past studies have shown that the use of humor in general is a powerful persuasive tool. For example, according to Schmidt (1994), using humor in messages is better at attracting audience attention than the use of non-humorous messages. Other researchers argue that the use of humorous messages raises the likeability of the source conveying the message, thus increasing the probability that audiences might agree with the host (Sternthall and Samuel, 1973). Humor was also found to produce a positive mood in those receiving it. Moreover, when audiences are in a positive mood they are less likely to disagree with the message being conveyed (Morris, 2009).

Currently, traditional news outlets are increasingly losing viewers and are not being perceived as sources of political information. Therefore, politicians have found that in order to be able to effectively reach undecided voters, they have to tap into non-traditional news sources. In the past, politicians usually had a “one-sided relationship” with comedy shows, where they were regularly the

subject of ridicule and sarcasm. However, nowadays they are starting to realize the effectiveness of satire shows and are starting to build “a mutual relationship” with them (Baum, 2005). Instead of letting these shows mock them and laugh at their expense, politicians have decided to appear as guests and join in with the conversation. Thus, they are now able to reach other viewers and undecided voters through comedy programming. This introduces the use of humor as an effective method for conveying political arguments and social commentary.

Among all the political satire shows that exist worldwide, the most powerful and influential is *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, and equally influential is its spin-off, *The Colbert Report*.

2.6 Political Satire Shows

2.6.1 *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*

Started in 1996, *The Daily Show* is a televised entertainment program, which is informative as well as sarcastic. It is a 30-minute program that follows the style of traditional hard news shows broadcast on other American networks such as ABC, CBS and NBC. In addition, *The Daily Show* includes segments that contain interviews with celebrities and political figures. The show has been able to integrate features from late night comedy shows such as *The Tonight Show*. The essence of the show is to broadcast news about current political events and happenings. However, the show labels itself as being simply entertaining and not aimed at educating the audience on current political issues. The majority of *The Daily Show's* audience falls in the 18-29-year-old category, with most having a university degree. This has led to studies being conducted about the influence and impact of the satirical humor of *The Daily Show* on youth and potential

voters. Meanwhile, the popularity of the show continues to grow, with the show attracting more famous political figures and A-list celebrity guests every year (Becker, Waisanen, & Xenos, 2010).

Studies have found that the content of political satire shows offers more essential policy information, in addition to dedicating the majority of its programs to coverage of elections and presidential campaigns, in comparison with traditional “hard” television news (Fox, Koloen, & Sahing 2007; Young, 2004). Pew Projects reported that nearly half of the content on *The Daily Show* is related to international and national politics, which is equivalent to the portion of this content on cable news. Research conducted by Fox et al. showed that the campaign stories that were aired on *The Daily Show* were longer than the campaign stories that were broadcasted on national television networks (2007). Moreover, studies have shown that the basic format of *The Daily Show's* political coverage goes beyond the election months. However, despite the fact that *The Daily Show's* audiences were proven to be politically sophisticated, some scholars have argued that the degree to which audiences obtain information from *The Daily Show* is limited (Hoffman & Young, 2012).

During the 2004 presidential election, Jon Stewart's popularity soared; he was on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine and was named one of the most influential figures in the 2004 U.S. elections. According to the Pew Research Center, by 2006, approximately 21 percent of American citizens were watching *The Daily Show*, a significant increase from 2002, when the figure was a mere 12 percent. Other empirical studies showed that a significant portion of the audience gained their knowledge and information about politics from *The Daily Show* and other political satire programs; in fact, 26 percent of viewers stated

that they had acquired information about the presidential elections from political satire shows such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* (Pew Research Center, 2004a). Moreover, several studies found that exposure to *The Daily Show's* news coverage of political issues could help affect audience attitudes, perceptions and behavior, particularly during elections (Morris, 2009).

For example, Cao (2006) discovered that there was a positive relationship between acquiring political knowledge and the viewing of political satire programs; however, this relationship was only found amongst youth and the educated. In another study conducted by Xenos and Becker (2009), it was found that knowledge-gaining and information-seeking behaviors were related to the viewing of political satire shows, but only among audiences who were not interested in politics. An empirical study conducted in 2008 showed that audiences exposed to *The Daily Show* may engage in information recognition, but they would not necessarily be able to recall that same information. In addition, when comparing the participants in the experiments to others who were exposed to traditional hard news, the study found that participants exposed to *The Daily Show* developed the least amount of political knowledge and were the least accurate in recalling the details of a certain political issue (Kim & Vishak, 2008).

Studies have shown that audiences do in fact approach late night programs and political satire shows differently from the way they approach traditional broadcast news media. While audiences, especially youth, have stated that they do turn to political entertainment programs as a source of political information, Prior (2003) showed that audiences do indeed watch politically entertaining programs not to get informed but to be entertained. Moreover,

other studies have shown that *The Daily Show* was rated by university students as much lower than other traditional news programs on a scale of political gratification (Holbert, Lambe, Dudo & Carlton, 2007).

2.6.2 The Colbert Report

Due to *The Daily Show* gaining high ratings and popularity over recent years, *The Colbert Report* was established as a spin-off from *The Daily Show*. Stephen Colbert was part of the cast of *The Daily Show*, working as a satirical correspondent on the program. *The Colbert Report* includes commentaries on political issues and media coverage in the same way as *The Daily Show*. However, the difference here is that the show concentrates on a fictional character, “Anchorman”, whose name is Stephen Colbert, played by himself. According to Colbert, this character is described as “well-intentioned, poorly informed, and a high status idiot.” The show and the fictional character are based on Bill O’Reilly and his show *The O’Reilly Factor* that airs on Fox News. Central to his character is Stephen’s obvious refusal to gain right information and facts that would enable him to engage in political arguments and debates (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006).

2.7 The Media in Egypt before the January 25th Revolution

Since the early 1990s, there has been a momentous change in the Egyptian media environment, which has brought about a new decade of a relatively free and diverse media that is distant from state control and ownership (Khamis, 2009). During President Mubarak’s regime, Egyptian television witnessed substantial developments that greatly influenced the media

landscape. These developments included the rise of privatization, the emergence of satellite television channels and the growth of Internet accessibility (Khamis, 2011).

When the Egyptian government finally allowed businessmen to establish private channels, it did so without giving them terrestrial broadcasting, thus allowing the government to continue its monopoly over it. The government then authorized both Egyptian and foreign private channels to start broadcasting and operating via satellite from a chosen free zone that is linked to the Egyptian media production city and Egypt's broadcasting satellite Nilesat, which was established in 1998. By doing so, the government was able to secure customers for both the production city and Nilesat's multichannel digital transponders.

Under the January 2000 decree, restrictions were laid down for any private channels that were established at the time. First, they were unable to transmit broadcasts by any method except digitally through Nilesat satellite. Second, they were not sanctioned to broadcast newscasts that could compete with the news of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU). These restrictions created a great deal of challenges for privately owned Egyptian television channels Dream TV and El Mehwar, established in 2001 and 2002 respectively. However, Dream TV started to look for new ways to broadcast news by bringing in Hala Sirhan, previously the host of talk shows on Arab Radio and Television (ART). Sirhan was quoted as saying that "having political analysis programs that would allow people to express their points of view is essential for a channel to survive" (Hamdy 2002).

Bahgat's launching of Dream 1 and 2 was a huge success for the Egyptian media. The Dream channels encompassed a mix of winning television programs

that contained a variety of topics, including politically edged interviews and entertaining subjects ranging from religious issues to sexual ones. Dream TV was able to get well-known and credible Egyptian journalists, such as Hamdi Kandil and Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, to participate in the discussion of various issues on Hala Sirhan's show (Mabrouk, 2010).

Soon after hiring Sirhan, the Dream TV network started to bring in more Egyptian journalists working simultaneously in both print and broadcast media. Dream started to have shows hosted by Hamdy Kandil, Ibrahim Issa, and Mahmoud Saad. Although the Dream TV network strategy did not accomplish a breakthrough in the censored issues that the regime restricted to air, it boosted and improved the number of dialogues and arguments on television (Abdullah, 2006).

Moreover, Egyptian audiences were exposed to more bold dialogues than they were on state channel broadcasts, such as when Hala Sirhan attacked the Egyptian government after the train fire incident that left four hundred people dead in 2001. Nevertheless, the government did not fully allow the network to express its opinions. As a result of this, the government stopping Issa's show *Aala Al Qahwa* after eighty-eight episodes, and Sirhan left the network after broadcasting taboos in 2001. In 2004, ERTU wanted to compete in the live talk show arena, and established the then most popular program *El Beit Beitak*. This program was hosted by many well-known figures, but Mahmoud Saad was the main face associated with the program. The program started in the Egyptian television peak season of Ramadan 2004. At first, *El Beit Beitak* had an unstable start but its managers started to employ experts from all over the Arab world; one place they specifically turned to was Orbit's program *Al Qahira Al Youm*.

Back then *Al Qahira Al Youm* did not broadcast in Egypt and its aim was to show foreigners the wonders and tourist attractions of the country. After the ban was lifted in 2003, Orbit launched its channels in Egypt. In a mere three and a half years, *Al Qahira Al Youm* had increased its expertise by adding Amr Adib, Nirvana Idris and Khairy Ramadan; the latter two moved to *El Beit Beita* in 2005. In the years 2004 and 2005, dialogue on Egyptian television shifted from celebrity gossip to politics. *Al Qahira El Youm* spearheaded this shift (Lynch, 2008).

In 2005, there were both the five-year parliamentary elections and the six-year presidential election. This generated a surge of public discontent where people were able to express their opinions offline and through online blogs. This was transported to broadcast media when, within a significantly short period, bloggers and the content that they blogged were featured on live talk shows on privately-owned broadcast channels. This trend was started mainly by Wael Abbas, a famous Egyptian blogger who became a credible source of pictures as well as information about the corrupt Egyptian regime. Afterwards, many were inspired to follow him and initiate their own blogs, leading to the mainstream media picking up the blog phenomenon and increasing public awareness of it. In May 2005, Al Jazeera broadcasted a documentary on the issue, while El Destour established a blog and various newspapers reprinted blog posts. As the Egyptian government kept forcibly ending all demonstrations by the opposition, with the creation of YouTube in 2005, online media value increased dramatically, as it became possible to record videos and share them online for the whole country and the world to see (Sakr, 2008).

Concerning the situation with broadcast media in 2005, Dream 2 TV established a program called *Al Ashera Masa'an*, which was designed to push the

limits of political freedom allowed by the Egyptian regime, in particular during the presidential election period. The program host, Mona El Shazli, interviewed analysts, officials and activists, broadcast field reports and took live phone calls from the audience. At the same time, in the print media, *Al Masry Al Youm*, an independent daily newspaper, was established to tackle politically sensitive stories. There was competition among private talk show broadcasts on different channels, mainly focusing on political issues. The private media environment in Egypt reached such a point that the government could no longer suppress it. In order to compete with *Al Ashera Masa'an*, *Al-Qahira al-Yaum*, and *El-Beit Beitak*, El Mehwar TV launched its own political talk show called *90 Daqiqa* in August 2006.

In 2008, the government tightened censorship on television licenses. At that time, successful businessmen Nagib Sawiris and Sayed al-Badawi wanted to launch their own private channels. It took nearly two years for Sawiris to launch his channel *ONTV* in 2009, and Badawi to launch *Al Hayat* in late 2008. Subsequently, due to pressure from the government and the ministry of information, Badawi had to replace most of his channel's news content with comedy and drama. Both *Al Hayat* and *ONTV* did not exist at the time of the April 6th protest in 2008 to cover the event, and the governmental media outlets refused to air, broadcast or write anything about the protest. Other private talk shows like *90 Daqiqa* and *Al Ashera Masa'an* did not report on the protest, but addressed the issue slightly the following day.

In 2010, with the parliamentary election getting closer, the government found new ways to silence the opposition media in order to ensure that the National Democratic Party (NDP) would win the majority of the seats. Thus, in

September, *Al Qahira Al Youm* was taken off the air on the pretext that they did not pay transmission fees, and in October Ibrahim Issa was fired from *El Destour* as Editor in Chief and left his talk show on *ONTV*. This, however, did not stop the people from finding new outlets to use to talk and assemble.

2.8 The Media in Egypt after the January 25th Revolution

Ever since the January 25th revolution, there has been a lot of debate surrounding the issue of the financing of the private satellite television channels that have emerged. In spite of a decline in television advertising revenues, the number of private television channels has increased dramatically, with more than twenty-five private television channels launched in Egypt (Hatita, 2013). Furthermore, Egyptian television has witnessed an explosion of dozens of newly established private television channels and networks. Among the most prominent television networks established after the revolution is the Capital Broadcasting Center (CBC). CBC was established in July 2011 by businessman Mohamed Al Amin. It gained immense popularity and is now the most watched television channel in Egypt. CBC's top broadcasters are Lamis El Hadidy with her talk show *Hena el Asema*, Khairy Ramadan with his talk show *Momken* and Emad Adieb in *Behdoou'*. Ibrahim Issa, a famous journalist, launched his own channel, Al Tahrir, aimed at representing the youth who were the voice of the revolution (Mekay, 2011). In 2011, another highly popular television channel, Al Nahar TV, was launched, and has become well known for its talk shows and news reporting.

Following the consequences of the revolution, and with Egypt being divided into two sections, the liberals and the Islamists, the Egyptian media was also split in two. The media was either with the newly formed regime, which was

at the time the Muslim Brotherhood, or against them and taking an anti-government stand. Many critics stated that most private television channels such as CBC, ONTV, Al-Nahar, and Dream TV were against the Muslim Brotherhood regime. On the other hand, the most notable news channel, which was launched right after the January 25th revolution, was Misr 25. Misr25 served as the mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood and encouraged and supported the decisions of the Muslim Brotherhood. Other channels, such as Al Hafez and Al Nas, publicly promoted and supported President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood (Amin, 2013). The Salafi channels were used to promote their presidential candidate, Hazem Salah Abou Ismail. With private television channels and licenses flourishing, Al Hafez, a Salafist channel, was established and featured a persistent parade and demonstrations of angry men in beards and robes. On the other hand, Misr 25, the Muslim Brotherhood channel, featured hosts and anchors with a more modern look, all wearing formal clothing. After June 30, 2013 when President Morsi was ousted, Misr25, Al Hafez, Al Nas and Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr were taken off the air on charges of conspiring to rally against the military.

2.9 Political Satire in Egypt

Political satire in Egypt did not begin with Bassem Youssef. The use of politics and humor has long existed in the Arab world through the use of political cartoons and popular poetry expressing opinions against the ruling regimes. However, Youssef was able to successfully bring a new political satire format to Egypt by invading the television medium in an effective manner (Abu Khalil, 2014).

One of the most famous satirical poets was Ahmed Fouad Negm, whose poetry was a representation of the Egyptian underclass and the majority of Egyptian society. In his Arabic poems, Negm challenged every Egyptian president. Negm, known to be Egypt's best satirical poet, became famous in 1970 as he read his poem alongside blind musician Sheikh Imam (Salah, 2013).

With the explosion of private television channels in the beginning of the 1990s, hundreds of television stations and networks started to emerge. The use of humor was also used but only in the form of clowning (Abu Khalil, 2014).

In 2010, Mohamed Azab, a famous comedian, created a political comedy program called *The Azab Show* that mocked and ridiculed the entire Egyptian cabinet and government of Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif. The Azab Show was banned from airing, but this ban was lifted after the January 25 revolution. TV presenter Akram Hosni created a television program about a news anchor called Sayed Abo Hafiza that mocked and ridiculed famous figures and reported the news in a comedic way.

However, the most prominent program was Bassem Youssef's *The B+ Show* that was aired online on YouTube. *The B+ Show* was later transformed into *Al Bernameg*, aired on television networks ONTV, CBC and most recently MBC Misr. Youssef based his program's format and design on the American satire show *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*.

2.10 Al Bernameg

A new satirical political program was established in Egypt and broadcast on the Egyptian television channel ONTV. This show, called *Al Bernameg* (The Program), was hosted by Egyptian Bassem Youssef, who is a cardiac-surgeon-

turned-political-satirist. Media outlets and newscasts have mainly compared Bassem Youssef to Jon Stewart, who served as an inspiration for Youssef to start broadcasting his show. Youssef first began his career as a satirist in 2011, as a way to comment on the Egyptian Revolution. His first show, called *The B+ Show*, was only broadcast online on YouTube. Later on, Youssef premiered his second political satire show, *Al Bernameg*, on the Egyptian channel ONTV.

Youssef satirized and ridiculed well-known talk show hosts such as Tawfik Okasha, and famous politicians such as Hazem Salah Abo Ismail, Mohamed El Baradei and so on. *Al Bernameg* was renewed in 2012 for a second season on a different channel, CBC. The popularity of the show increased dramatically when this shift was made. The Egyptian public began to watch it weekly and ratings surged. *Al Bernameg* enjoyed what most Egyptian talk shows lacked, which was full freedom of expression with little censorship. This was made obvious by Youssef's mockery of the then-Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, the ruling party and the government.

The show first began as a humorous show focusing on political events, but has evolved into different segments. Like *The Daily Show*, *Al Bernameg* features fictional correspondents, artists' performances and well-known guests. New to the Egyptian audience, the show is still not defined clearly and the public is not well aware of its aims and influences. It uses it as a primary source of political information and data.

2.11 Egypt's Acceptance of Al Bernameg

It was a dream started by Bassem Youssef in a spare room in his apartment, where he shot *The B+ Show* as an Internet production created with

monetary constraints and low budget to be broadcast on YouTube. On March 8th 2011, Youssef made his Internet debut with his first episode that reported the nonsenses of Egyptian television coverage of the revolution. Youssef's prediction was to reach 10,000 hits; instead, within a couple of weeks, this episode reached a million hits.

Following Youssef's introduction to YouTube and the success that his first episode drew, many television executives flooded him with offers to broadcast on their channels. Meanwhile, Youssef's YouTube channel got nearly four million views and had 25,000 subscribers without doing any marketing or advertising activities (Abdallah, 2011).

For Youssef, the program is about reporting to the Egyptian audience about the revolution from different perspectives, bridging the divides between those who were exposed to the events in Tahrir and those who were not. Since the airing of the second season, Youssef became a harsh critic of Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamists. However, from time to time he would also ridicule other opposition figures (Hendawi, 2013).

Al Bernameg has gained the attention of a wide viewership, but at the same time it has earned its fair share of critics and disbelievers. Youssef has been the victim of frequent lawsuits that were mostly filed by Islamists who accused him of "corrupting morals or violating religious principles" (El Deeb, 2013).

A formal complaint against Youssef was filed by 12 people, leading the public prosecutor to issue an arrest warrant on charges of insulting President Mohamed Morsi. Moreover, the complaint accuses Youssef of "degrading President Mohamed Morsi, and mocking and underestimating him, defaming

religions, and insulting many public figures and Islamic scholars” (Egypt Independent, 2013).

Youssef had faced several court cases before that accused him of insulting Mohamed Morsi. However, Gamal Eid, Youssef’s lawyer, said that this was the first time a warrant had been issued for his arrest.

Following the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi, Youssef started to take jabs at the military chief, General Abdel Fattah El Sisi. The day after the episode was aired there were at least four complaints filed with the top prosecutors accusing Youssef of defaming the military. In addition, one of the complaints claimed that Youssef used expressions that “undermine the honor and dignity of Egypt and its people in a manner that sows sedition and spreads lies” (El Deeb, 2013).

Moreover, CBC released a statement following the airing of the episode acknowledging that the audience’s reactions were largely disapproving and saying that "CBC will continue to be supportive of the basics of national sentiment and popular will, and is keen on not using phrases and innuendos that may lead to mocking national sentiment or symbols of the Egyptian state" (Egypt Independent, 2013).

2.12 Pro/Against Al Bernameg

Al Bernameg was able to successfully increase the level of awareness of the concept of political sarcasm, a phrase that had hitherto been uncommon in Egypt.

Al Bernameg started to gain momentum and popularity during its second season on CBC. Following the premiere of the first episode in the season, *Al*

Bernameg and Youssef started to gain attention and criticism from different news outlets, and media broadcasts. There were those who encouraged Youssef and his work and there were those who were totally against his program and criticized him sharply for what he was doing. Various newspapers and channels started to mention and discuss *Al Bernameg* and its impact on Egyptian society.

The Salafists first began to criticize Youssef for making light of politics in Egypt in 2012, when Islamist Abu Islam Ahmed Abdullah said, “Youssef is so pretty he should wear a full-face veil, like women”. In December 2012, Abu Islam said on his program *Hezbollah* that airs on the Ummah Channel that Youssef should also cover his face with a niqab and he kept comparing him with actresses like Elham Shahin and Laila Elwy. Moreover, he repeatedly kept calling him “Bastard Youssef” in Arabic (Hafez, 2012).

Amr Adeeb, a TV presenter on El Qahira el Youm, filed a lawsuit against Youssef saying “in defense of my dignity and that of my colleagues, and because he makes it look as if I were a liar, I am resorting to the judiciary” (El Adl, 2012).

In 2013, Bassem Youssef made it on TIME’s 100 Most Influential People in the World list, which cited that *Al Bernameg* had achieved international fame and influence (Luippold, 2013).

Nour Abdel Hafez, known as Khamees, a former TV presenter on the Misr25 channel, has publicly announced his hatred for Youssef saying that “he is broke, with no material to air. That’s why he constantly keeps repeating the same jokes.”

In 2013, Mortada Mansour, a famous lawyer, called Bassem Youssef “a dancer”. In addition, when appearing on a talk show on the Al Tahrir channel, he

promised Bassem that he would have him imprisoned in front of all of Egypt and he would have the network that aired his program closed down.

More recently, in February 2014, former member of parliament and journalist Mostafa Bakry filed a complaint against Bassem Youssef claiming that Youssef used hate speech and repeatedly defamed the Egyptian public and the military (Metwally, 2014).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Social Comparison Theory

Initially developed by Festinger in 1954, the social comparison theory argues that individuals strive to evaluate their skills and opinions by comparing themselves with others. Thus, research done on the social comparisons theory aims to tackle numerous questions concerning when, why and with whom individuals compare themselves in addition to how these comparison can shape their judgments. The social comparison theory postulate that individuals will attempt at first to evaluate their abilities and opinions, and if they are unable to do so will start to evaluate themselves by comparing themselves with others' opinions and abilities. Most often individuals compare themselves with others without actually having any real social comparison data and information. Instead of dealing with the real comparison information, individuals simply make up data about others opinions and actions. This is known as constructive social comparison (Soon Park & Salmon, 2005).

Biernat (2005), states that there are four major motivation factors that form the basis of the social comparison theory. They are self-assessment, self-improvement, self-enhancement and self-verification. Self-improvement motive normally generate an upward comparison where an individual compare himself/herself with another person that is better than them. On the contrary, the self-enhancement motive normally generate downward comparison, where an individual compares themselves with a target that is worse off. This is because usually a downward comparison produce high self esteem in an individual and creates positive affects through comparisons between self and the

other. The self-assessment motive normally leads to sideways comparisons with individuals that are similar to each other.

This theory has produced two crucial behavioral consequences. Theoretically, the social comparison theory generates two results or consequences which are promotion and prevention. Promotion signifies seeking positive outcomes and results, whereas prevention signifies escaping the negative outcomes and results. Promotion is likely to occur when one has compared themselves to a positive target, upward comparison, and then the individual is motivated to accomplish the target's positive qualities. Prevention is likely to occur when one has compared themselves to a negative target, downward comparison, and then the individual is motivated to escape and avoid the target's negative qualities.

Prevention can be easily tied to the third person effect theory, as a downward comparison is produced when individuals believe that others are more susceptible to the influence of persuasive media messages than they are. Therefore, researchers have argued that prevention can be a possible behavioral outcome of the third person effect theory. Following the assumption that others are affected more by the media than oneself is, individuals attempt to avoid being influenced by the media by adopting a more important or skeptical attitude. Moreover, past researchers have assumed that if the prevention attempt is successful, this would mean that an individual would perceive others to be more affected by the media messages than themselves, mainly supporting the third person effect hypothesis and adding to it the prevention function where the more an individual thinks that others are more influenced, the stronger the preventive function will be.

Individuals believe that they are more open to and accepting of desirable mass media messages while they have the tendency to perceive that they are less vulnerable to the negative undesirable messages than others are. This ties the social comparison theory with the third person effect where people tend to believe that they are not vulnerable to mass media influences, while others are greatly influenced. Many studies conducted on the third person effect theory showed that the third person effect is more likely to occur with negative messages like violence on TV, pornography, sexually explicit messages and negative political messages (Soon Park & Salmon, 2005).

Moreover, Gunther (1991) argues that the third person effect is likely to happen through something he proposed as a “better than-average perception”. This is an individual’s tendency to perceive that they are better off and more intelligent than the “others”; therefore, they are driven to improve their self-esteem by seeing that they are invulnerable to the mass media influence and negative messages.

Nevertheless, numerous studies have shown that when individuals exposed themselves to positive mass media messages like public service announcements (PSA), they are more likely to perceive that they are more affected by the message than the “others”. This came to be known as the reverse third person effect or “first-person effect”. Nonetheless, the first person effect has not been well documented and researched and several empirical studies still support the argument that people have the tendency to believe that mass media messages have less effect on themselves than they have on others regardless of whether it is a positive or a negative message.

In the past two decades in communication studies there has been a

substantial amount of research done on the likelihood of individuals to perceive others as more vulnerable to mass media influence than themselves. The third person effect theory is heavily researched, constantly validated in different context and different issues in research done by Gunther & Thorson, 1992, Chia, Lu, & McLeod, 2004, Peiser & Peter, 2000. Experiments proved that this phenomenon is, in fact, not an object of the question order and direct contrast. Empirical studies on third person perception showed that this perceived influence of the media on others leads to behavioral and attitudinal outcomes and results varying from civic political participation to support for censorship on the media.

The third person effect theory is often linked to one's self-enhancement, self-esteem and ego defensive motivation. Therefore, the third person effect would decrease or when media effects are naturally desirable by the individual and the society. Furthermore, past studies resulted in the third person being linked to the individual's perception of others' characteristics like the perceived level of media that the "others" are exposed to (Eveland, Nathanson, Detenber, & McLeod, 1999; Lambe & McLeod, 2005).

3.2 The Third Person Effect Theory

The third person effect theory argues that individuals will overestimate the power of persuasive and negative messages from mass media on the attitudes and behaviors of others. An individual believe that this particular persuasive message will not have an influence on "me" and "you" but it will influence "them", who they refer to as the third person. Individuals examine and analyze the potential effect that a particular persuasive message could have and

then they compare their reaction with others (Brubaker, 2011). Therefore, the third person effect studies indirect effects or reactions that people have towards a perception of persuasive media messages (Becker, Xenos & Waisanen, 2010). The theory was proven through numerous media researches which had measured over a long period of time, the effect of the perception people have that the general public are more prone to be influenced by messages than themselves. (Schmidt, 2011)

Several empirical studies have consistently supported a third person effect such as, a study by Salwen in 1998 revealed a third person effect while measuring censorship in election messages. The researcher found that individuals' perception of election campaign messages have a much greater effect on others than on themselves. Because of this perception, individuals tended to support the decision to censor and restrict election messages. Two Studies done by Tiedge, Silverbatt, Havice and Rosenfeld (1991) and Paxton (1995) surveyed individuals on the perceived effects of the media. The study found that over 90% of participants reported that they perceive the media would affect others much more than it would affect them. Another recent study in 2007 by Pew Research revealed that 15% of respondents reported that they were more prone to vote for a particular candidate that Oprah Winfrey endorsed, whereas 69% of participants reported that they were not affected by any kind of endorsement and 60% reported a belief that Oprah's endorsement would help the candidate more, thus signifying a third person effect in Oprah's endorsement of a political candidate (Brubaker, 2011).

3.2.1 The Receptiveness of the audience

While studying the reasons and explanations for the existence of the third person effect, several studies have first examined the receptiveness of the audience towards persuasive messages. According to Davison (1983) individuals have the believe that they have access to information that others do not have access to. Therefore they have the advantage of having access to more knowledge than other people who are more prone to being influenced by the message than them.

Davison also reported that individuals view the media as subjective towards their opinion, thus they believe that, because the media is sending arguments and information that supports the wrong issue, a disparate effect will take place. The audience's reception of the message will be, therefore, unbalanced and they believe that in order to have an objective media the messages should be sending correct issues. However, the problem here is the audiences' failure to acknowledge that even their subjective correct issues are a broadcast persuasive message. Additionally, individuals have a limited comprehension about their cognitive state and their thoughts regarding mass media's persuasive messages. They think that they are more perceptive towards harmful media persuasive messages, and thus they have the belief that they are not affected by whatever message is conveyed to them (Brubaker, 2011).

3.2.2 Factors Affecting The Third Person Effect

There are several factors that play a role in reinforcing the third person effect. The first self-enhancement; when people perceive a persuasive message as unattractive and unfavorable, a third person effect is more likely to occur. A

study done to measure the third person effect of celebrity endorsements in presidential elections found that endorsements of the opposing candidate were reported to be highly unfavorable, thus a third person effect took place through the self enhancement factor (Brubaker, 2011). Many researches revealed that self-enhancement is a fundamental mechanism of the third person effect perceptions (Gunther& Mundy, 1993; Gunther & Thorson, 1992). People like to perceive themselves as being more resilient than vulnerable to persuasive messages, thus leading them to believe that they are better than other individuals. Nevertheless, if a persuasive message is seen as desirable by an individual or having a positive influence on them the third person effect is likely to diminish.

The second is self-esteem, other studies have found that factors such as self-esteem and self-worth contribute to the occurrence of a third person effect. Based on the self-esteem factor, the third person effect was regularly found in issues with antisocial messages such as cigarettes and gambling advertising and violent television. Moreover, the third person effect occurs when individuals have the need to boost their self-esteem and well being by comparing themselves to less intelligent and less fortunate people. More precisely individuals tend to compare themselves with people are less educated and less knowledgeable than them and are less educated. Individuals believe that these people will not be able to notice and understand the persuasive media message, thus making themselves vulnerable to the effect of the media. (Kim & Shin, 2011)

3.2.3 Perception towards persuasive messages

“ Persuasion is a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other

people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice.”

A persuasive message overwhelms the audience with numerous arguments leading the viewers to be forced to give in. Moreover, individuals are the ones who persuade themselves to change their attitude or behavior, as the person communicating the message only set up the bait by providing the argument(s) (Perloff, 2003). *“You can’t force people to be persuaded—you can only activate their desire and show them the logic behind your ideas”* (Wahlen, 1996).

A study conducted by Gunther and Mundy in 1993 studied the difference between persuasive and informative message formats. The study revealed that messages that had the intention to persuade produced a more third person effect than message that were informative without having persuasive intentions.

When studying the effects of media on the individual’s perception, there is one theory that has received a lot of attention. The third person effect has been well acknowledge and documented in this area in nearly three decades of research. The third person effect suggests that there are several important factors that can help strengthen or lessen the media effect. For instance the social-distance factor argues that the more the audience is away, the greater the third person effect is. There are also demographic factors such as age, education, and social class that can influence the third person effect (Hoffman, 2013). Therefore it is of great importance to examine the audience’s perception of Al Bernameg and study its relation to the third person effect theory.

This study will try to link together both the Third Person Effect Theory and Social Comparison Theory by arguing that individuals engage in a downward

comparison when they refer to the audiences as “them” or “others” being more affected by the persuasive message of *Al Bernameg* than they are.

Chapter Four

4. Research Hypotheses

The study aims to conduct an in-depth understanding of how the audiences perceive *Al Bernameg*, specifically measuring the indirect effects of *Al Bernameg*, the perceived bias of the program and the perceived (entertainment) and actual (information) influence of the show. The researcher will examine whether the audience learn from Bassem Youssef and how does the program affect them. Given the literature presented in the previous chapter on the third person effect, there is some evidence that examines and analyzes how political satire programs are perceived.

The Third Person Effect Theory argues that people will perceive persuasive mass media messages as having a much greater persuasive influence on “others” than on “them”. Thus, the third person effect examine the indirect effects of the message and the audiences’ responses to the perceived media influence, instead of examining the direct effects of messages on attitude and behavior change. Therefore, the third person effect theory can be used to analyze and examine the content of the political satire show *Al Bernameg*, and act as a valuable framework to measure the perceived and actual influence of the show. As such the researcher was able to reach the first hypothesis (Becker, Xenos&Waisanen, 2010).

H1: Individuals who watch *Al Bernameg* believe that they are being entertained more than they are being politically informed.

Individuals examine and analyze the potential effect that a particular persuasive message, *Al Bernameg*, could have and then they compare their reaction with others (Brubaker, 2011). In summary, past studies conducted have revealed that there is a significant third person effect of political satire shows and this third person effect is much greater in these shows than in hard news programming. Therefore, the researcher was able to reach the second hypothesis of the perception of the audience regarding political comedy and the third person effect on the audience perception of *El Bernameg*.

H2a: Individuals will perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves.

Xenos and Becker (2009) found that knowledge gaining and information seeking behaviors were related to the viewing of political satire shows but only among audiences who were not interested in politics. Moreover, Young and Tisiniger (2006) found that the viewers of *The Daily show* were more interested and knowledgeable about politics than others.

H2b: Individuals with higher levels of political interest are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves.

Additionally, Cao (2006) examined the relationship between the viewing of *The Daily Show* and political knowledge and found a positive relationship only among viewers of younger age and viewers who were more educated.

H2c: Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves.

H2d: Younger viewers are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves.

Gibbon & Durkin (1995) have shown that viewers who perceive media content to be subjective and biased are more likely to experience a heightened third person effect. Therefore, understanding the perceived media bias for political satire programs is of great importance given the subjectivity of the satirical nature of the content in *Al Bernameg*. Although Bassem Youssef ridicules political figures and institutions of all affiliations and ideologies, viewers still perceive the program to have a more liberal orientation. This led the researcher to the third hypothesis.

H3a: Individuals whose political affiliations are inconsistent with the show's content will exhibit a greater perceived bias towards *Al Bernameg*.

H3b: Individuals with a liberal political ideology are less likely to experience a third person effect vis-à-vis *Al Bernameg*.

There are several factors that play a role in reinforcing the third person effect. For example self-esteem, other studies have found that factors such as

self-esteem and self-worth contribute to the occurrence of a third person effect. More precisely individuals tend to compare themselves with people are less educated and less knowledgeable than them and are less educated. Individuals believe that these people will not be able to notice and understand the persuasive media message, thus making themselves vulnerable to the effect of the media (Kim & Shin, 2011). Given the fact that the third person effect theory is often linked to one's self-enhancement, self-esteem and ego defensive motivation and that the third person effect occurs most likely when individuals want to boost their self-esteem the fourth hypothesis states:

H4: Individuals who have higher levels of political self-assessment are likely to experience a greater third person effect.

Chapter Five

5. Research Design and Methodology

5.1 Type of Research

Quantitative research is used

“To measure and statistically analyze social and cultural phenomenon, usually on the basis of large- scale, representative samples of people, opinions or data.” (Jonker& Pennink, 2009)

Quantitative research involves collecting, tabulating, summarizing and analyzing numerical data in order to be able to answer the researcher research questions or support the research hypothesis. Moreover quantitative research encompasses putting a theoretical contrast to test (Jonker& Pennink, 2009).

5.2 Method of Data Gathering

Survey is a descriptive, non-experimental research design and method. Survey research is one of the oldest methods for data gathering; however, it is, to this date one of the most frequently used technique for gathering information and data in the field of social sciences (Babbie& Rubin, 2008). Typically studies that use survey usually have individuals serve as the unit of analysis. Since this study aims at examining the Egyptian audience the best method to use is survey research as it helps in describing a very large population that cannot be observed directly by any other method (Babbie, 2012). Survey research can help the researcher collect a lot of information at a relatively low cost. Moreover it is a quantitative method that helps the researcher run statistical tests and analysis (Wimmer, 2012).

5.3 Type of Survey

There are four different types of surveys that are the most popular; they are mail survey, Internet survey, self-administered survey, and telephone survey. These types vary in terms of format, costs, question types and procedures. For this study the researcher used a self-administered survey as it allowed the researcher to guarantee anonymity for the respondent, it is relatively low in cost, it has a high response rate and it eliminates interviewee bias (Dominick, & Wimmer, 2011). The respondents were first informed that their answers were completely confidential and that they were free to discontinue from answering the questionnaire at any time they want.

5.4 Approaches to the Study

This study employs a quantitative survey for empirical investigation of the Egyptian audience's perception of *Al Bernameg* in relation to the Third Person Effect theory. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze and examine the indirect effects of *Al Bernameg*, the perceived bias of *Al Bernameg* and the difference between the actual influence of *Al Bernameg* and the viewers' perceived influence of *Al Bernameg*. A questionnaire was distributed in the Egyptian society to measure the research hypotheses. Certain variables were measured in order to understand the viewers' perception of *Al Bernameg* and the influence the program has on them, consequently supporting or rejecting the research hypotheses.

5.5 Data Collection

This study is conducted through a self-administered survey. The researcher first obtained full consent from the respondents to participate in the study. A self-administered survey was then distributed among the sample during the period of Thursday, March 9th, 2014 until Sunday, March 16th, 2014 and the period of Wednesday, May 28th 2014 until Monday, June 2nd, 2014. Respondents were asked to assess their use of media, media credibility, media exposure, political affiliation, knowledge, and interest. They were also asked several questions on their media habits, past political conversations, past political participation and their affinity towards certain social and political groups (Rojas, Liebhart, Minzlaff, & Nan, 2007).

5.6 Sampling

The researcher used a non-probability sample technique in this study. A non-probability sample

“Is particularly well suited for exploratory studies where the focus is on the research ideas” (Paul S. Gray et al, 2007, pg. 105).

This study used a purposive technique to obtain data. A purposive sampling technique is used when the respondents share certain characteristic that makes them eligible to participate in this study.

“ Researchers purposefully choose data that fit the parameters of the project’s research questions, goals and purposes” (Tracy, 2012, pg.107).

Since this study’s aim was to understand the perception of the Egyptian audience on Al Bernameg, the researcher saw that a purposive sample was the most appropriate technique to be used in obtaining information, as the respondents

must meet the researcher's purposes of watching Al Bernameg. The questionnaire was distributed to individuals that Al Bernameg targets, individuals who were aware of Al Bernameg and individuals who had watched Al Bernameg at least once before .

5.7 Sample Selection

The researcher distributed the survey based on a number of different variables. The first variable was the respondents' age, where the researcher wanted to include different generations of the Egyptian audience in order to accurately measure the relationship between the third person effect, audience's perception of Al Bernameg and the audience's age. Therefore, the researcher distributed the sample in different Egyptian clubs to be able to reach elderly people starting from the age of 50 and above. The researcher distributed the survey in Shooting Club, El Gezira Club, El Ahli Club, and Heliopolis Club (N= 80). The second variable was the respondents' education level, where the researcher wanted to reach people that hold different degrees from both private and public education sectors. Taking into consideration that the researcher purposively choose to distribute the survey on the Egyptian audience that are educated, but vary in their degree level. Therefore, the researcher distributed the survey among under graduates in Modern Science and Arts University (MSA) (N=61), under graduates in Cairo University (N= 40), graduate students in the American University in Cairo (AUC) and MBA students in Arab Academy for Science and Technology and Maritime Transport (N= 104). Furthermore, the researcher distributed the survey among individuals who worked in private corporate organizations (N=223). These organizations included Philips, Commercial

International Bank, Vodafone, Bticino, Allianz, Valeo, Juhayna, EFG Hermes and Future Group Company.

5.8 Questionnaire Design

A self-administered questionnaire composed of four parts was designed for this study. A total of twenty-one multiple-choice questions were developed out of the literature presented above. The questionnaire was designed in both English and Arabic languages.

Since the researcher needed respondents that fit a certain criteria, a filtering question was asked at the beginning of the questionnaire to eliminate respondents who did not meet the researcher's aims. Respondents were first asked to answer whether or not they had seen Al Bernameg before or not. Respondents who answered that they had not seen it before were thanked and asked to not complete the questionnaire. This question was asked on a nominal scale to get an accurate and precise answer. Moreover, two follow up questions about the individual's exposure to Al Bernameg were asked on an interval and ordinal scale respectively.

- *Did you watch Bassem Youssef's program Al Bernameg before?*
- *How often do you watch Al Bernameg?*
- *Approximately how many episodes have you watched since Al Bernameg started, whether live on television or on the Internet?*

The questionnaire was then divided into four parts:

- 1- General questions on the individual's political affiliation and interest
- 2- Questions regarding Al Bernameg's credibility, accuracy and biasness.

- 3- Questions measuring the Third Person Effect of Al Bernameg.
- 4- Demographic questions about individuals' age, gender and education level.

The first part of the questionnaire asks questions to understand the respondents' political ideology and affiliation and to know the level of their political interest in order to be able to measure H2b, H3a and H3b.

- *Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as:*
- *How interested are you in matters related to politics and the government?*
- *How often do you talk about politics with your friends, family or colleagues?*

The second part of the questionnaire includes questions that ask the respondents information about their perception of the degree of Youssef's objectivity, and the amount of accurate and credible information. Questions were asked on an interval level by a five point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree. This will also allow the research to measure H3a and H3b.

- *Overall, Al Bernameg provides me with accurate information*
- *Al Bernameg provides trustworthy information*
- *Al Bernameg deals with all sides of the story fairly*

The third part measures the Third Person Effect and asks questions about how viewers see and interpret the information presented in the program and how they perceived it to be influential on others. Questions were asked on an interval level by using a five point Likert scale ranging from 1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree. This allowed the researcher to measure H1, H2a, H4.

- *Al Bernameg provides me with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt*

- *I believe that Al Bernameg provides Egyptians, in general with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt*
- *I believe that Al Bernameg is a satirical program*
- *I believe that most Egyptians who watch Al Bernameg believe that it is a satirical program*
- *I believe that I am generally well informed about current political events in Egypt*
- *I believe that I am generally well informed about political parties and terminologies.”*
- *I believe that Al Bernameg plays a role in influencing my opinions on political issues in Egypt.”*
- *I believe that Al Bernameg plays a role in influencing Egyptians’ opinions on political issues in Egypt*
- *Overall, how would you rate the performance of Al Bernameg in satirizing political issues in Egypt?*

The last part include in the questionnaire asks about the demographics of the Egyptian audience. Respondents were asked basic demographic questions to know their gender, age and education level. The gender question was asked on a nominal level, while the age and education question were asked on an ordinal level. These questions will help the researcher measure H2c and H2d.

5.9 Pilot Study:

The researcher conducted a pilot study on 15 participants in order to test the reliability and internal validity of this study. Participants answered almost all of the questions and showed no misunderstanding or problem, except for one

question, which included a difficult word that most individuals did not understand. This led the researcher to include a definition of the word in the new draft of the questionnaire.

5.10 Operationalization of the study variables:

Audience perceptions of political satire show Al Bernameg:

Perception of Al Bernameg was measured by how individuals regard, comprehend, and interpret the program's content. Moreover, the researcher wanted to understand the way individuals see and understand Al Bernameg. Perception was measured by a set of statements on a Likert scale to be able to determine the opinions and views of individuals about Al Bernameg.

Perceived Bias and Youssef's credibility:

"Media bias is often defined as the opposite of objectivity, in that the content can be measured as being favorable toward some side of an issue"

(Lee, 2008)

This study measures the perceived bias of Al Bernameg by asking respondents several questions about the accuracy of the content, the fairness of the issues presented, the trustworthiness of the information, Youssef's credibility and the coverage of events.

Self Esteem and Self-Assessment:

"The third-person effect seems to occur especially through downward comparisons in which people enhance their self-esteem and subjective well being via comparison to other people" (Kim & Shin, 2011)

This study measures individuals self esteem and assessment of their political knowledge by providing several statements on how they feel about the current political events and happenings.

Liberal and Conservative:

Liberal: a liberal person is defined as an individual who believes that the government should actively support social and political change. In Addition, a liberal person supports concepts such as freedom of the press, free trade, free and fair elections, civil rights, freedom in civil society, and private property.

Conservative: a conservative person is defined in this study as an individual who holds to tradition attitudes and value. This individual is very cautious to change or new ideas that are normally related to politics and religion.

5.11 Measurements

Political Satire Television Exposure: this variable measures the amount of time that the respondents were exposed to *Al Bernameg*. The variable will measure the frequency of viewing through the use of a four point scale with 1= “regularly” to 5= “rarely” (Hoffman, 2013).

Al Bernameg’s Credibility: credibility includes two aspects accuracy and competency. The researcher defined accuracy as the degree to which Al Bernameg portrays an event, or issue with precision. Competency refers to the skills and knowledge of the program and the host. This variable measures the respondent’s media trust and the perceived bias of Al Bernameg and Bassem Youssef by providing statements such as “ Overall, Al Bernameg provides

accurate information”, “Al Bernameg provides trustworthy information” and “Al Bernameg deals with all sides of the story fairly (Hoffman, 2013).

Demographics: three basic demographic variables are included in the study. First, the gender of the respondents, second education level measured on a scale ranging from high school until graduate degree and third the respondents’ age (Hmielowski, Holbert& Lee, 2011).

Political orientation: here the researcher operationalized the individual’s political orientation by their political party identification. The survey will include a question in which respondents need to identify their political ideology on a 5-point scale ranging from very liberal to very conservative. (Hmielowski, Holbert& Lee, 2011).

Political Knowledge: this variable will measure the amount of information, data and knowledge that viewers have gained from *Al Bernameg* directly and indirectly. Respondents are asked to answer a five point Likert scale on statements such as: ““*Al Bernameg* provides me with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt.” This variable also measures the Third Person Effect theory by providing statements such as “I believe that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program.” “I believe that most Egyptians who watch *Al Bernameg* believe that it is a satirical program.” (Hoffman & Young, 2011).

Political Interest: this variable measures the degree of political interest the viewers have by providing questions such as “ how interested are you in

what is currently going on in the country “ 1= not at all, 5= very (Hoffman & Young, 2011).

Self Esteem: this variable measures the respondents’ self esteem in relation to how they acquire political information. Respondents were provided with statements such as “I believe that I am generally well informed about current political events in Egypt.” , and “I believe that I am generally well informed about political parties and terminologies.”

5.12 Statistical Analysis:

In order to accomplish the primary purpose and objectives of this study, the researcher used SPSS to analyze the data gathered. Several statistical techniques were employed to calculate the frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation. The researcher used two different types of statistical tests to calculate the probability value ANOVA and Correlation test.

Chapter Six

6. Results

The purpose of this study is to examine two notions first, Egyptian audience's perception of the political satire show *Al Bernameg* and second, the perceived bias of Bassem Youssef and *Al Bernameg*. In doing so, the study conducted an in-depth understanding of how the audiences see *Al Bernameg* by measuring their attitudes and perceptions towards the program. Specifically, the study aimed at examining the perceived and actual influence of *Al Bernameg* and the perceived bias of Bassem Youssef as the program's host. The actual influence was measured by utilizing a number of statements about an individual's attitude towards *Al Bernameg*. In addition, the researcher used a five point Likert scale to measure the degree of perceived influence of the program on the respondents and the perceived influence of the program on the Egyptian audience. The study also aimed to utilize the third person effect theory in order to examine the indirect effects of the message and the audiences' responses to the perceived media influence.

6.1 Description of the sample

The questionnaire was distributed among the sample that included 508 respondents (N=508). The survey was conducted among both males and females, with a total of 279 females (54.9%) and 229 males (45.1%). The majority of participants were from an age range of 16-24 constituting 35.2%, 31.7% were from 25-30 years, 9.4% were from 31-35, 2.6% were from 36-40, 10.4% were from 41- 49, 5.5% were from 50-59 and 5.1% were from 60 and above. Concerning the respondents' education, the vast majority, 60%, held a bachelor's

degree, 27% held a postgraduate degree, 12.6% were still undergraduates, while a mere 0.4% held a diploma. Below are tables 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 that further explain the data frequencies of the demographic variables.

Table 1.1 Gender

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	279	54.9	54.9
Male	229	45.1	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.2 Age

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
16-24	179	35.2	35.2
25-30	161	31.7	66.9
31-35	48	9.4	76.4
36-40	13	2.6	78.9
41-49	53	10.4	89.4
50-59	28	5.5	94.9
60- above	26	5.1	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.3 Education

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High School	64	12.6	12.6
Bachelor Degree	305	60	72.6
Postgraduate Degree	137	27	99.6
Other	2	.4	100
Total	508	100	

6.2 Descriptive Analysis

6.2.1 Frequencies

Respondents were first asked about their level of exposure to *Al Bernameg*. Participants had to first answer how often they watched *Al Bernameg*.

The majority consisting of 44% watched *Al Bernameg* regularly, 22.2% answered that they watch the program most of the time, 24% watched the program sometimes and only 10% said that they rarely watched *Al Bernameg*. Results are further elaborated in Figure 1. Respondents were then asked to mention the approximate number of episodes of *Al Bernameg* that they had watched since the program started, whether live on television or on the Internet. 42.1% of the sample said that they had watched 21 or above episodes, 16.9% said they had watched 16-20 episodes, 15.4% said they had watched 11- 15 episodes, 12.8% said they had watched 6-10 episodes and only 12.8% said that they had watched 1-5 episodes. The data is further elaborated in Table 1.4.

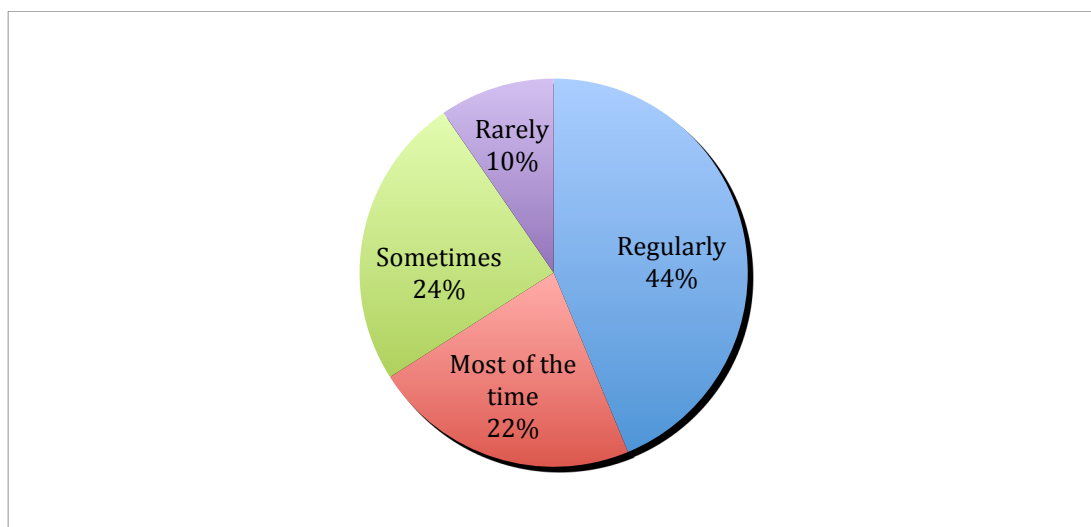


Figure 1: Al Bernameg Views

Table 1.4 Number of Episodes

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-5 Episodes	65	12.8	12.8
6-10 Episodes	65	12.8	25.6
11-15 Episodes	78	15.4	40.9
16-20 Episodes	86	16.9	57.9
21 or above episodes	214	42.1	100
Total	508	100	

Concerning the participants' political views and political affiliation, respondents were asked to generally describe their political views from a scale ranging from very liberal to very conservative. Results showed that 11.8% of the respondents viewed themselves as very liberal (N=60), 35.6% viewed themselves as liberal (N=181), the majority constituting 42% viewed themselves as neither liberal nor conservative (N=214), 9.1% viewed themselves as conservative (N=46), while only 1.4% said that they were very conservative (N=7). The sample mean rested in the middle of the scale (N= 508, M= 2.48, SD= 0.82). Results are detailed in figure 2.

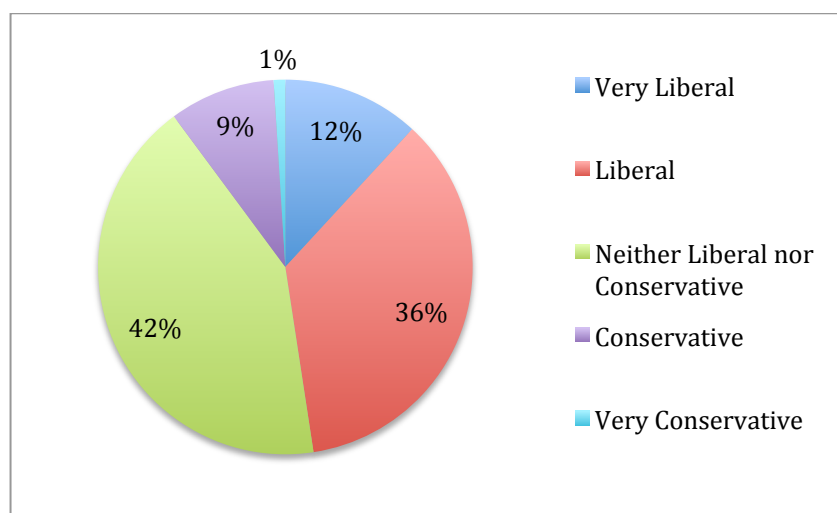


Figure 2: Respondents' Political Views

Respondents were then asked about their reason for watching Al Bernameg. Participants were asked to choose all that could apply from three multiple-choice answers and one other section if they had other reasons. 61.1% answered that they watched Al Bernameg for entertainment purposes (N=406), 22.6% answered that they watched Al Bernameg to stay aware of current events (N=150), 10.8% answered that they watched Al Bernameg to acquire political information (N=72), while 5.6% answered that they watched Al Bernameg for

different reasons, which were mainly to understand Bassem Youssef's point of view and opinions (N=37). Results are showed in figure 3.

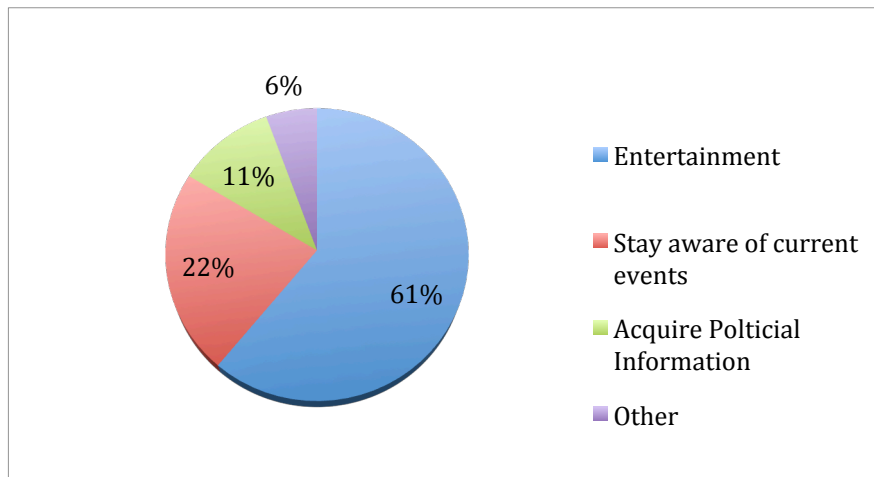


Figure 3: Reason for watching Al Bernameg

To measure the respondents' political interest, participants were asked how interested they were in matters related to politics and the government. In addition, they were also asked how often they talk about politics with their friends, family and/or colleagues. 31.3% answered that they were somewhat interested in political and governmental matters, 29.5% answered that they were interested, 25.6% answered that they were very interested, 13.6% answered that they were not at all interested. 42.1% of the respondents answered that they sometimes talked about politics with their friends and family, 23% answered that they rarely talked about politics, 30.5% answered that they frequently talked about politics and 4.3% answered that they never talked about political issues. Data frequencies are elaborated more in Table 1.5 and Table1.6.

Table 1.5 Political Interest

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Interested	130	25.6	25.6
Interested	150	29.5	55.1
Somewhat Interested	159	31.3	86.4
Not at all Interested	69	13.6	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.6 Talking about politics

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Frequently	155	30.5	30.5
Sometimes	214	42.1	72.6
Rarely	117	23	95.7
Never	22	4.3	100
Total	508	100	

To examine the perception and perceived bias of Al Bernameg respondents answered a five point Likert scale, on the following statements “Overall, *Al Bernameg* provides me with accurate information”, “*Al Bernameg* provides trustworthy information” and “*Al Bernameg* deals with all sides of a given story fairly.” 12.8% answered that they strongly agreed with the fact that Al Bernameg provided them with accurate information, 31.5% answered that they agreed, 33.1% were neutral, 16.9% disagreed with the statement and only 5.7% strongly disagreed (N=508, M=2.7, SD= 1.06). Concerning the statement that Al Bernameg provided trustworthy information 12.8% strongly agreed with it, 33.3% agreed, 30.3% were neutral, 16.3% disagreed and only a mere 6.5% strongly disagreed (N=508, M=3, SD=1.18). When asked if they agree with the statement that Al Bernameg dealt with all sides of the story fairly 10% of the

respondents strongly agreed, 28.7% of the respondents agreed, 22.8% of the respondents were neutral, 27.8% of the respondents disagreed, and 10.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed (N= 508, M=2.6, SD= 1.09). Data frequencies are further elaborated more in Table 1.7, Table 1.8, and Table 1.9. In addition, respondents were asked to rate the performance of *Al Bernameg* in satirizing political issues in Egypt. 36.3% rated the program's performance as excellent, 42.2% rated it as good, 15.8% rated it as fair, 4.4% rated it as poor and only 1.2% rated it as very poor.

Table 1.7 Accurate Information

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	65	12.8	12.8
Agree	160	31.5	44.3
Neutral	168	33.1	77.4
Disagree	86	16.9	94.3
Strongly Disagree	29	5.7	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.8 Trustworthy Information

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	69	13.6	13.6
Agree	169	33.3	46.9
Neutral	154	30.3	77.2
Disagree	83	16.3	16.3
Strongly Disagree	33	6.5	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.9 Fairness

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	51	10	10
Agree	146	28.7	38.8
Neutral	116	22.8	61.6
Disagree	141	27.8	89.4
Strongly Disagree	54	10.6	100
Total	508	100	

Table 2.1 Mean Scores of perceived bias of Al Bernameg

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Accurate Information	508	1.0	5.0	2.7126	1.06961
Trustworthy Information	508	1.0	5.0	3.0020	1.18088
Fairness	508	1.0	5.0	2.6890	1.09766
Valid (N)	508				

To measure the third person effect theory, participants were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with two statements, one referring to them and one referring to the Egyptian audience. 11.8% of the respondents answered that they strongly agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides them with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt, 34.4% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 28.5% were neutral, 18.3% disagreed and 6.9% strongly disagreed (N=508, M=2.7, SD=1.00). Respondents were asked the same statement but in reference to the Egyptian audience. 12.6% strongly agreed with the statement, 36.2% agreed, 25.4% were neutral, 19.3% disagreed and only 6.5% strongly disagreed (N=508, M=2.7, SD=1.11). Data frequencies are elaborated in Table 1.10 and Table 1.11.

Table 1.10 Provides me with a reasonable understanding of political issues

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	60	11.8	11.8
Agree	175	34.4	46.3
Neutral	145	28.5	74.8
Disagree	93	18.3	93.1
Strongly Disagree	35	6.9	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.11 Provides Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of political issues

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	64	12.6	12.6
Agree	184	36.2	48.8
Neutral	129	25.4	74.2
Disagree	98	19.3	93.5
Strongly Disagree	33	6.5	100
Total	508	100	

Respondents were then asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements “I believe that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program” and “I believe that most Egyptians who watch *Al Bernameg* believe that it is a satirical program.” 38.2% strongly agreed with the statement that they believe that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program (N=194), 38.6% agreed (N=196), 16.1% were neutral (N=82), 5.1% disagreed (N=26) and only a mere 2% strongly disagreed (N=10). (M=1.94, SD=0.96). Concerning the latter statement 16.7% answered that they strongly agreed (N=85), 34.6% agreed (N=176), 26.6% were neutral (N=135), 19.3% disagreed (N=98) and 2.6% strongly disagreed (N=13) (M= 2.5, SD= 1.06). Results are shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5.

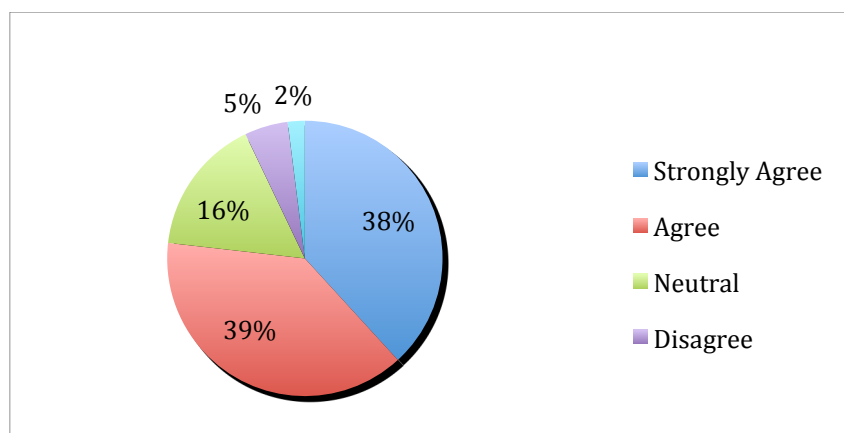


Figure 4: Individuals Believe that Al Bernameg is a satirical Program

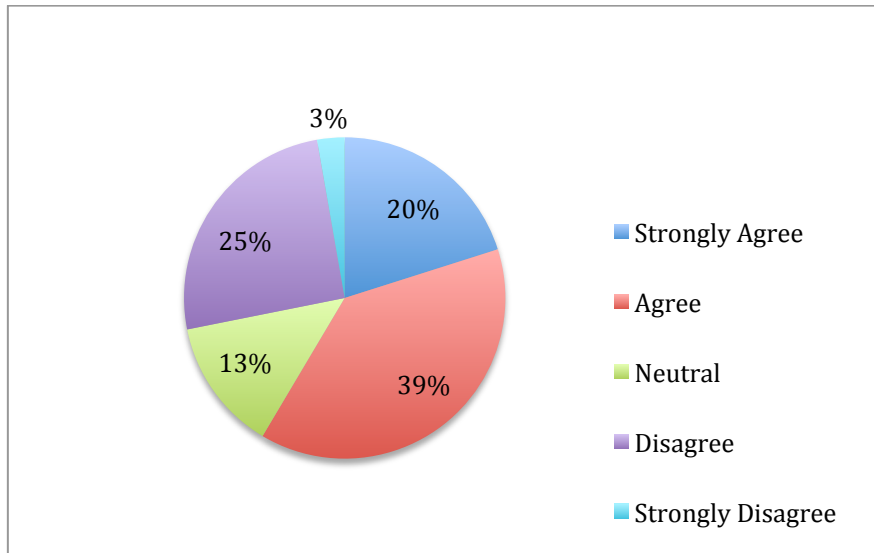


Figure 5: Individuals believe that Egyptian believes Al Bernameg is a satirical Program

To further measure the third person effect theory, respondents were asked two sets of statements about whether or not they believe that Al Bernameg played a role in influencing their opinions on political issues in Egypt and also in influencing Egyptians' behavior. 9.8% answered that they strongly agreed with the statement that Al Bernameg influenced their opinion, 33.5% answered that they agreed, 21.9% were neutral, 23.8% answered that they disagreed and 11% answered that they strongly disagreed (N=508, M=2.9, SD=1.18). Concerning that statement that Al Bernameg plays a role in influencing Egyptian's opinions on political issues 16.9% answered that they strongly agreed, 42.5% agreed, 23.2% are neutral, 12.8% disagreed and 4.5% strongly disagreed (N=508, M= 2.4, SD= 1.05). Data frequencies are elaborated more in Table 1.12 and Table 1.13.

Table 1.12 Influencing my opinions

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	50	9.8	9.8
Agree	170	33.5	43.3
Neutral	111	21.9	65.2
Disagree	121	23.8	89
Strongly Disagree	56	11	100
Total	405	100	

Table 1.13 Influencing Egyptians' opinions

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	86	16.9	16.9
Agree	216	42.5	59.4
Neutral	118	23.2	82.7
Disagree	65	12.8	95.5
Strongly Disagree	23	4.5	100
Total	508	100	

Table 2.2 Mean scores of the audience's perception of Al Bernameg

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Provides me with an understanding	508	1.0	5.0	2.7402	1.10021
Provides Egyptian with an understanding	508	1.0	5.0	2.7087	1.11196
Satirical Program	508	1.0	5.0	1.9409	.96100
Egyptians believe it's a satirical program	508	1.0	5.0	2.5621	1.06023
Influencing my opinions	508	1.0	5.0	2.9272	1.18530
Influencing Egyptians' opinions	508	1.0	5.0	2.9272	.99125
Valid (N)	508				

Finally, to measure the participants' self esteem toward political issues they were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: "I believe that I am generally well informed about current political

events in Egypt” and “I believe that I am generally well informed about political parties and terminologies.” Results showed that 15.4% answered that they strongly agreed with statement number one, 42.3% agreed, 29.5% were neutral, 9.4% disagreed and 3.3% strongly disagreed (N=508, M=2.4, SD=0.97). Concerning statement number two 8.1% strongly agreed, 36.4% agreed, 31.7% were neutral, 19.7% disagreed and 3.9% strongly disagreed (N=507, M=2.7, SD=0.99). Data frequencies are elaborated more in Table 1.14 and Table 1.15.

Table 1.14 Well-informed about political events

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	78	15.4	15.4
Agree	215	42.3	57.7
Neutral	150	29.5	87.2
Disagree	48	9.4	96.7
Strongly Disagree	17	3.3	100
Total	508	100	

Table 1.15 Political Terminologies

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	41	8.1	8.1
Agree	185	36.4	44.6
Neutral	161	31.7	76.3
Disagree	100	19.7	96.1
Strongly Disagree	20	3.9	100
Total	507	100	

Table 2.3 Mean scores of audience’s Self esteem

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Well informed about politics	508	1.0	5.0	2.4311	.97158
Political terminologies	507	1.0	5.0	2.7495	.99125
Valid (N)	508				

Inferential Statistics

Hypotheses Testing:

H1: individuals who watch *Al Bernameg* believe that they are being entertained more than they are being politically informed. This hypothesis measures the perceived and actual influence of the program where individuals perceive that they are only being entertained (perceived influence), while the actual influence is that they are being politically informed on current issues and events. Results showed that 36.8% of *Al Bernameg* regular viewers answered that they watched the program for entertainment purposes, and 8.9% of regular viewers answered that they watched the program to acquire political information. On the other hand more than half of the respondents answered that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the fact that *Al Bernameg* provided them with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt (N= 235). Statistical tests were employed to know whether the results were significant. Table 3.1 displays findings from a one-way ANOVA test that shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the viewing of *Al Bernameg* and the audience perception of the program ($p = .000$). Findings supported H1.

Table 3.1: ANOVA Test to measure the relationship between exposure to Al Bernameg and the audience perception of the program.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	74.974	4	18.743	20.187	.000
Within Groups	467.026	503	.928		
Total	542.000	508			

H2a: individuals will perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. H2 directly measures the third person effect theory on viewers of *Al Bernameg*. Cross tabulation was conducted that showed 30.3% of regular viewers agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing Egyptians' opinions on political issues in Egypt, while 5.1% of regular viewers disagreed with the statement. Moreover, a correlation test was conducted that showed a positive relationship with watching *Al Bernameg* and an increase in the third person effect ($R=.220$). Table 3.2 shows that there is a significant difference between individuals who watch *Al Bernameg* and the third-person effect ($p=0.021$). Finding supported H2a.

Table 3.2: Correlation test to measure the relationship between watching Al Bernameg and the third person effect theory

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval Pearson's R	.220	.046	5.080	0.021
N of Valid Cases	508			

H2b: Individuals with higher levels of political interest are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. H2b measures the relationship between an individual's political interest and the third person effect theory. Results showed that 32.2% of respondents who were either very interested or interested in political matters answered that they agreed that *Al Bernameg* played a role in influencing Egyptians' opinions on political issues in Egypt. Results also showed that 27.3% of the respondents who are interested in politics answered that they agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt. Moreover, 13.8% of the respondents

who are interested in political matters answered that they disagreed with the statement that Egyptians were aware that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program and 11.2% were neutral. A one-way ANOVA test showed that there is no relationship between individual's political interest and the third person effect theory as the result are insignificant ($p = .713$). Findings did not support H2b.

Table 3.3: ANOVA Test to measure the relationship between viewers' political interest and their perception of the Egyptian's audience.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.664	4	4.916	5.042	.713
Within Groups	490.436	503	.975		
Total	510.100	508			

H2c: individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. Results showed that 39.8 % of the respondents who held either a bachelor's degree or graduate degree answered that they agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt. In addition, 49% of bachelor's and graduate degree holders answered that they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing Egyptians' opinions. An ANOVA Test showed that there is a significant difference between the audiences' education, the third person effect theory and their perception of *Al Bernameg* ($p = .002$). Findings supported H2c.

Table 3.4: ANOVA Test to measure the relationship between viewers' education level and their perception of the Egyptian's audience.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between	6.365	4	1.591	4.192	.002

Groups					
Within Groups	190.963	503	.380		
Total	197.329	507			

H2d : Younger viewers are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. This hypothesis measures the relationship between the audiences' age and the perceived influence of *Al Bernameg* on them and on others. Findings showed that 20.7% of the respondents aged 16-24 and 16.1% aged 25-30 answered that they agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt while only 8.5% of the respondents aged 36 and above answered that they agree with the statement. Moreover, half of the respondents (50.1%) aged 16-30 answered that they agreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing Egyptians' opinions on political issues in Egypt and only 7.5% of respondents aged 36 and above answered that they agreed with the statement. An ANOVA Test showed that there is a significant difference between the audiences' age and the perception of *Al Bernameg* ($p= 0.000$). Findings supported H2d.

Table 3.5: ANOVA Test to measure the relationship between viewers' age and their perception of Al Bernameg.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	168.833	4	42.208	14.035	.000
Within Groups	1512.694	503	3.007		
Total	1681.528	507			

H3a: individuals whose political affiliations are inconsistent with the show's content will exhibit a greater perceived bias towards *Al Bernameg*. This

hypothesis measures the relationship between individuals' political views and the perceived bias of *Al Bernameg*. The researcher measured the perceived bias through a series of three statements about the program. Results showed that 13.1% of the respondents who had either moderate or conservative political views disagreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides accurate information, 16.3% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides trustworthy information, 27.8% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that *Al Bernameg* deals with all sides of the story fairly. An ANOVA Test showed that there is a significant difference between the audiences' age and the perception of *Al Bernameg*. Findings did not support this H3a.

Table 3.6: ANOVA Test to measure the relationship between individuals' political views and the perceived bias of *Al Bernameg*.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.164	4	2.541	3.450	.009
Within Groups	370.503	503	.737		
Total	380.667	507			

H3b: individuals with a liberal political ideology are less likely to experience a third person effect vis-à-vis *Al Bernameg*. H3b measures the relationship between individuals who have liberal viewpoints and their perception of *Al Bernameg* in relation to the third person effect theory. Results showed that 20% of liberal respondents agreed to the statement that *Al Bernameg* influenced their opinions on political issues and 29.3% of the respondents answered they agree with the statement that *Al Bernameg* influenced Egyptians' opinions on political issues. Furthermore, 22.9% of the

liberal respondents answered that they agreed that *Al Bernameg* provides them with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt and 25% of the respondents answered that they agreed that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt. A correlation test was conducted that showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the results ($p=0.003$). Findings did not support H3b.

Table 3.7: Correlation test to measure the relationship between Individuals with liberal political ideology and the third person effect theory

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval Pearson's R	.133	.049	3.023	0.003
N of Valid Cases	508			

H4: individuals who have higher levels of political self-assessment are likely to experience a greater third person effect. This hypothesis measures the factors that can influence or affect the third person effect such as self-esteem and self-assessment. Results showed that 28.5 % of the respondents answered that they believed that they were well informed about current political events in Egypt and that they agreed to the statement that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing Egyptians' opinions on political issues. 30.8% of the respondents answered that they believed that they were well informed about current political events in Egypt and that they agreed to the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptian with a reasonable understanding of current political events. 21.1% of the respondents answered that they believed that they were well informed about political parties and terminologies and that they agreed to the statement that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing Egyptians' opinions on political issues. 24.1% of the respondents answered that they believed that they were well

informed about political parties and terminologies and that they agreed to the statement that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of current political events. A correlation test was conducted that showed that there is a statistically significant difference in the results ($P=0.003$). Findings supported H4.

Table 3.8: Correlation test to measure the relationship between Individuals self esteem and the third person effect theory

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error	Approx. T	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval Pearson's R	.148	.053	2.998	0.003
N of Valid Cases	508			

Chapter Seven

7.1 Discussion

The researcher saw an opportunity to fill an important void in the research area of political satire programs in Egypt. To date, political satire in Egypt has been under researched and unacknowledged. This study examined the political satire program *Al Bernameg* and the audience's perception of the program. The aim of the study was to measure two notions: first, the perceived bias of *Al Bernameg* and second, the difference between the perceived and actual influence of *Al Bernameg*. In order to do so, the study had to draw upon the light of the third person effect theory and relate it to the audience's evaluation of *Al Bernameg*.

H1 postulates that individuals will believe that they are being entertained more than they are being politically informed. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that more than half of the respondents claimed that they watched *Al Bernameg* for entertainment purposes. Moreover, the same respondents agreed with the statements that *Al Bernameg* provides them with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt and that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing their opinions on political issues. This shows that individuals believe that they watch *Al Bernameg* to be entertained and amused, and do not become informed about political issues, terminologies and current events in Egypt. Most significantly, results suggest that while most of the respondents were regular viewers of *Al Bernameg*, they did not claim to be watching the program for political news and information. On the contrary, respondents claimed that they watched the program only for entertainment purposes. Additionally, most

respondents claimed that *Al Bernameg* had little or no influence on their opinions and views about current political issues. This leads the researcher to claim that just because individuals do watch *Al Bernameg*, it does not mean that they perceive themselves as gaining political knowledge from it.

One of the main aims of this study was to measure the difference between the perceived and actual influence of *Al Bernameg* on the Egyptian audience. H1 was able to support the researcher's claim, that individuals will perceive that *Al Bernameg* influences the audience only from an entertainment perspective. However, the actual influence has shown that individuals do acquire political information about current events and public figures from the program. The data collected shows that there is a significant difference in the Egyptian audience's perception of *Al Bernameg* since most of them agree with the fact that *Al Bernameg* provides trustworthy and accurate information and that it deals with all sides of the story fairly.

This study aimed at linking together the Third Person Effect theory and the Social Comparison theory in studying the perception of the Egyptian audience towards political satire shows specifically Bassem Youssef's, *Al Bernameg*. One of the main consequences of the Social Comparison theory that can be linked with the Third Person Effect is the prevention consequence. In this context, individuals perceived the Egyptian audience to be more influenced by the messages that *Al Bernameg* conveys than themselves. Furthermore individuals believe that they are more open to accepting the mass media message without being influenced by it and that they are less vulnerable to the

persuasive messages of *Al Bernameg* than the Egyptian audience. Results supported the prevention consequences in the Social Comparison theory.

H2a postulates that individuals will perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. Here the researcher was able to link together the Third Person Effect theory with *Al Bernameg's* influence. Results supported the second hypothesis, as regular viewers of *Al Bernameg* believed that it is a satirical program. However, they believe that the Egyptian audiences do not believe that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program. Furthermore, they believe that *Al Bernameg* influences the Egyptian audience's opinions on political issues more than it influences their opinions.

Individuals also perceived that *Al Bernameg* provides most Egyptians with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt while they believe that they are well informed about current events and political terminologies from different sources. Individuals perceive the program as a means of entertainment only; they do not perceive it as a means for obtaining and acquiring political information, nor as a means of becoming aware of the current political events in Egypt. This hypothesis supported the third person effect in watching *Al Bernameg* among the Egyptian audience and that the Egyptian audience engage in a downward comparison when they refer to others as being more affected by *Al Bernameg* than themselves.

H2b postulates that individuals with higher levels of political interest are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on

others than on themselves. This hypothesis was not supported as results showed that the data collected was insignificant. Findings also showed that individuals' political interest does not play a role in the perceived political influence of *Al Bernameg*, as there is no correlation between the level of political interest and people's perception of the political influence of the program. Results showed that the majority of the respondents were somewhat interested in political matters, making them, to some extent, neutral about what is happening politically in the country.

H2c states that individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. H2c aims to link together the respondents' education level and the third person effect theory. Findings supported this hypothesis as individuals who held a bachelor's or a postgraduate degree believed that they were aware that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program. However, they believe that the Egyptian audiences are not aware that it is a satirical program and that *Al Bernameg* plays an important role in influencing Egyptians' opinions about political issues in the country. Moreover, regular viewers of *Al Bernameg* with a postgraduate or bachelor's degree believed that *Al Bernameg* did not provide them with a reasonable understanding of political issues in the country; however it does provide the Egyptian public with a reasonable understanding of political issues. H2c was successful in supporting the researcher's claim that a third person effect theory exists among individuals who are more educated. Furthermore a correlation was found that suggested that the higher the degree an individual obtained, the greater they will perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to

be on others than on themselves.

Previous studies have claimed that political satire shows and political entertainment programs have become a primary news sources for obtaining and acquiring political information by younger viewers, particularly those between the 18-19 demographic age group (Baum, 2002; Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Baym, 2005). Therefore, the researcher hypothesized in H2d that younger viewers are more likely to perceive the political influence of *Al Bernameg* to be greater on others than on themselves. Findings supported H2d as it showed a significant relationship between the viewers' age, their perception of *Al Bernameg* and the third person effect. Additionally, the younger the viewers were, the more they perceived *Al Bernameg* to have a greater influence on others than on themselves, and the more they perceived the Egyptian audience to be unaware that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program.

H3a stated that individuals whose political affiliations are inconsistent with the show's content will exhibit a greater perceived bias towards *Al Bernameg*. Results did not support H3a although the data collected was found to be significant. The second aim of this study was to measure the level of perceived bias that individuals have towards *Al Bernameg* and towards its host Bassem Youssef. Thus respondents were asked a series of questions relating to how they evaluate *Al Bernameg's* performance and the credibility and accuracy of the information presented in the program. Results showed that the majority of the respondents rated Bassem Youssef and *Al Bernameg's* performance as either excellent or very good. Moreover, they mostly agreed with the statements that *Al*

Bernameg provides accurate and trustworthy information. The mean score of these statements lay in the higher section. Moreover, regular viewers of *Al Bernameg* saw that the program deals with all sides of the story fairly leading to the conclusion that respondents do not believe that *Al Bernameg* and Bassem Youssef are biased toward a certain public figure, issue or ideology.

H3b postulated that individuals with a liberal political ideology are less likely to experience a third person effect vis-à-vis *Al Bernameg*. Most of the respondents did not see themselves as having a distinct political view or ideology as more than half of them described themselves as neither liberal nor conservative and they chose not to identify with any political party. Therefore H3b was rejected, as findings did not show any information that could lead the researcher to claim that conservative viewers will experience the third person effect more than liberal viewers.

To further measure the accuracy of the third person effect theory, the researcher based the fourth hypotheses on the factors that affect the third person which are self-esteem and self-assessment. H4 postulates that individuals who have higher levels of political self-assessment are likely to experience a greater third person effect. Results supported H4 as they showed individuals who had higher levels of political self-assessment were found to have a higher third person effect than individuals with lower levels of political self-assessment. Moreover, the social comparison theory states that individuals would attempt to evaluate their opinions and skills by comparing them to others. The theory argues that there are several motivation factors that influence the individual. The

main factors that the researcher studied and linked it to the third person effect were self-assessment and self-esteem. Whereby individuals engaged in a downward comparison by comparing themselves with others that were worse off. In this study, respondents compared themselves to the “Egyptian audience”. As such this type of comparison generates high level of self-esteem and self-assessment.

In conclusion, this study has shown a significant third person effect on the Egyptian audience while watching *Al Bernameg*. The researcher was able to link the third person effect theory with the social comparison theory by arguing that individuals engaged in a downward comparison when the respondents mentioned *Al Bernameg* to influence “others” opinions, when they contended that most Egyptians are were aware that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program and when they responded that *Al Bernameg* provides “others” with a reasonable understanding of current political issues. Moreover, the study showed that there that the audience did not perceive Bassem Youssef and *Al Bernameg* to be biased or subjective towards a certain political figure or issue. Instead, results showed that the majority of the respondents perceived *Al Bernameg* to have an objective point of view and convey trustworthy and accurate information.

7.2 Conclusion

Political satire programs have greatly influenced the western world. Nowadays they have started gaining momentum in terms of viewership and popularity in the Arab world. *Al Bernameg* has been able to create a unique brand of satire that differs significantly from previous political comedy

programming such as *The Azab Show* and *Sayed Abo Hafiza*. Therefore, it is of great importance to study how audiences perceive this program in Egypt, as they are just being introduced to such a genre.

One key point that needs to be stressed in this context is that when studying political entertainment media and political satire, researchers need to view this type of content as distinct from soft and hard news programming. Satirical programs take a different approach when covering political issues in Egypt than the approaches taken in newsrooms. As such, researchers need to understand how audiences perceive and approach satirical programs and how they use the information that is conveyed.

It is clear from this study that the audience's main motive for watching *Al Bernameg* is entertainment, while results showed that the majority of respondents gained a better understanding of politics from watching *Al Bernameg*. This study was able to provide, for the satirical content of *Al Bernameg*, a proper theoretical assessment as a sole entity on the media landscape. The researcher was able to effectively show how individuals deal with the information presented to them by *Al Bernameg*, and how they automatically claim that *Al Bernameg* does not influence their opinions and does not provide them with political information. Moreover, the study showed that there is a significant third person effect in watching *Al Bernameg*.

A substantial percentage of the sample claimed that they are aware that the program is only satirical; however, they still acquire political information from it and they still tune in to become aware of political issues and events. Moreover, the responses differed greatly according to the age of the sample. The older the respondent, the more *Al Bernameg* and *Youssef* were perceived as

being biased, and as providing untrustworthy and inaccurate information. Surprisingly, after the program's third season, most of the older people in the sample turned against Youssef as they saw him as a threat to national security and a traitor to his country. They saw Youssef as a weapon and believed that youth need to be aware of his messages as youth are much more vulnerable to his influence than older people are. This supports the Third Person Effect Theory in the viewing of *Al Bernameg*.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

This study faced some limitations in terms of timing, as the researcher wanted to conduct the study before the high levels of criticism that *Al Bernameg* faced for ridiculing the military, and before some of the audience turned against him. Moreover, this study faced a lot of external obstacles due to repeat bans placed on the program *Al Bernameg* and continuous criticism of the host Bassem Youssef.

As this type of format of political satire is new to the Egyptian audience, the study found a limitation in finding sources and previous studies that tackle the issue of audience perception of satire programs in Egypt. Most studies that were found were conducted from a western perspective.

The researcher also faced some limitations in the sample. First, as the researcher used a non-probability sampling technique, the study lacked external validity. Therefore, its results cannot be generalized to the Egyptian public. Second, due to place constraints, the researcher was not able to reach a wider sample to study. Third, the majority of the sample was young people, as the response rate was much higher from them than from older people. Fourth, as the

study included only respondents who held an academic degree, the researcher needed to have a percentage of non-degree-holding respondents lacking such education and illiterate respondents.

Moreover, due to the fast-paced change characteristic nowadays of the Egyptian political environment, people's perceptions and attitudes towards Bassem Youssef and *Al Bernameg* changed dramatically from when the researcher first started this study.

7.4 The Significance of the Study

To date, few empirical studies have been done on political satire shows in Egypt. As mentioned in the previous literature, this type of political satire and political comedy programming are considered to be a novelty in the Egyptian media environment. Therefore, this study's aim is to provide an understanding of how Egyptian audiences perceive the political satire program *Al Bernameg*. Furthermore, the researcher used the Third Person Effect perspective in order to show that Egyptian audiences are skeptical, that they do question the media, but not among themselves. They believe that it affects "others".

Our understanding of what draws the Egyptian audience to view *Al Bernameg* has been limited. Is it used as a source of entertainment or information? This current study advances the research on political satire in various crucial ways. First, young people said that they watched *Al Bernameg* for "entertainment" and because the content is "funny". Moreover, they perceive the content to be "truthful, accurate and unbiased". Second, the usage of the Third Person Effect Theory provides an important insight into the study of political humor audiences and its effects. Media experts and practitioners need to be

aware of the hazardous effects satirical programs can have on individuals. Third, the connotation of this study lies in the third person effect perspective where individuals overestimate the persuasive messages of *Al Bernameg*, making themselves more vulnerable to media messages than they are aware of.

Furthermore, the study serves to provide a proper theoretical assessment of the political satire program *Al Bernameg* and aims to differentiate satire from hard and soft news programming within the media landscape. In addition, the study shows how the content of *Al Bernameg* works in coordination with the perception of the Egyptian audience.

7.5 Direction for further research

The findings from this study lead to a more in-depth understanding of the way *Al Bernameg* is being perceived by Egyptian audiences, especially when analyzing it as the primary source of information. Because there is a lack of research done in the area of political satire programs in Egypt, this study attempts to inform future studies about the indirect political effects of *Al Bernameg*. The researcher was able to use the Third Person Effect Theory and the Social Comparison Theory as valuable theoretical frameworks to understand how Egyptian audiences perceive *Al Bernameg* and to measure its influence on them. The most important finding of this study is the perception by viewers of *Al Bernameg* as a primary source of information and a gateway to politics. This finding posits that the use of humor in *Al Bernameg* can ignite greater political interest and involvement among people. Surprisingly, most Egyptians claim that they are well-aware that *Al Bernameg* is only a satirical program and that its content is not to be taken seriously. Future researchers could include in their

sample uneducated audiences, as this study included only educated viewers who held different degrees. Future researchers could also conduct a study that examines differences in audience perception between those who are educated and those who are not. Furthermore, future studies could investigate the differences between the older generation and the younger generation in their responses, and to include more respondents from the older generation. Finally, future researchers could adopt an experimental approach when studying the effects of *Al Bernameg* on Egyptian audiences to understand causality.

Afterword

Al Bernameg was the first political comedy program in Egypt that was able to combine humor & politics in a way that effectively grabbed the audience attention. The program became a huge hit within the Egyptian society and popularity of the show increased dramatically when Al Bernameg started to air on CBC. The Egyptian public began to watch it weekly and ratings surged. Al Bernameg enjoyed what most Egyptian talk shows lacked which was full freedom of expression with little censorship. Still, due to Youssef's ridicule and mockery of President Abdel Fatah El Sisi and the military and Al Bernameg moving to another network MBC Misr the program started to lose its audience. The Egyptian audience started to oppose the program, especially the older generation.

Data collected for this thesis was before and after Al Bernameg's cancellation, the researcher noticed a significant shift in the audience's attitude towards Bassem Youssef. Most importantly, the researcher found that the older generation is totally against Youssef and Al Bernameg, claiming that he is trying to invade the Egyptian society with western ideas that do not go along with the Egyptian culture. Youssef was able to successfully penetrate the area of political comedy programs in Egypt. Al Bernameg became a huge hit in the Egyptian media and it drastically changed the political satire landscape. Al Bernameg was able to revive the world of advertising at a time where the Egyptian's economy was disintegrating due to the high ratings. However, due to the fast paced

changes that are happening in the Egyptian political environment, the audience became very skeptical and cynical of Youssef and his program. In addition, to Youssef being limited by boundaries set and new censorship laws. Therefore on June 3rd, 2014 Bassem Youssef and his team held a press conference announcing that the show is canceled. Youssef said

“Pulling the show off the air is a victory for us, because I prefer to end the program rather than offend it by conforming to censorship.”

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Appendix

Dear Participant,

Thank you so much for your cooperation, and your participation in this research is highly appreciated. This is a survey about Bassem Youssef's show *Al Bernameg*. Please answer the questions as completely honest as possible. Please note that this survey is anonymous and is conducted for an academic purpose. Also all of your answers are highly confidential.

Thank You

Please circle the appropriate answer:

- 1- Did you watch Bassem Youssef's program *Al Bernameg* before? (If no, Thank You and kindly do not answer this questionnaire)

1= Yes
2= No

- 2- How often do you watch *Al Bernameg*?

1= Regularly
2= Most of the time
3= Sometimes
4= Rarely

- 3- Approximately how many episodes have you watched since *Al Bernameg* started, whether live on television or on the Internet?

1= 1-5 episodes
2= 6-10 episodes
3= 11-15 episodes
4= 16-20 episodes
5= 21 or above episodes

- 4- Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as:

1= Very liberal
2= Liberal
3= Neither liberal nor conservative
4= Conservative
5= Very conservative

- 5- Why do you watch *Al Bernameg*? **(Please choose all that apply)**

1= To be entertained
2= To stay aware of the current events

- 3= To acquire political information
- 4= Other: _____

6- How interested are you in matters related to politics and the government?

- 1= Very interested
- 2= Interested
- 3= Somewhat interested
- 4= Not at all interested

7- How often do you talk about politics with your friends, family or colleagues?

- 1= Frequently
- 2= Sometimes
- 3= Rarely
- 4= Never

Please circle to what extent do you agree with the following statements

8- "Overall, *Al Bernameg* provides me with accurate information."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

9- "*Al Bernameg* provides trustworthy information."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

10- "*Al Bernameg* deals with all sides of a given story fairly."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

11- "*AlBernameg* provides me with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

12- "I believe that *Al Bernameg* provides Egyptians, in general with a reasonable understanding of political issues in Egypt."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

13- "I believe that *Al Bernameg* is a satirical program."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

14- "I believe that most Egyptians who watch *Al Bernameg* believe that it is a satirical program."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

15- "I believe that I am generally well informed about current political events in Egypt."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

16- "I believe that I am generally well informed about political parties and terminologies."

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

17-“ I believe that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing my opinions on political issues in Egypt.”

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

18-“ I believe that *Al Bernameg* plays a role in influencing Egyptians’ opinions on political issues in Egypt.”

- 1= Strongly agree
- 2= Agree
- 3= Neutral
- 4= Disagree
- 5= Strongly disagree

19-Overall, how would you rate the performance of *Al Bernameg* in satirizing political issues in Egypt?

- 1= Excellent
- 2= Good
- 3= Fair
- 4= Poor
- 5= Very poor

Kindly fill out the following information:

20-Age

- 1= 16 – 24
- 2= 25 – 30
- 3= 31 – 35
- 4= 36 – 40
- 5= 41 or above

21-Gender

- 1= Female

2= Male

22-Education

1= High School

2= Bachelor Degree

3= Postgraduate Degree

4= Other _____

عزيزي المشارك،

تكراراً لتواكم ومشاركتم في هذا البحث. هذا الاستبيان عن برنامج باسم يوسف "البرنامج".
رجاء الاجابة على الأسئلة مع العلم أن هذا الاستبيان للإستخدام الأكاديمي فقط.

برجاء إختيار الإجابة التي تناسبك :

1 هل سبق لك أن شاهدت برنامج البرنامج ؟
1 = نعم
2 = لا

2 ما مدى متابعتك للبرمايج ؟
1 = بانتظام
2 = معظم الوقت
3 = أحيانا
4 = نادرا

3 قديماً عملت على التي شاهدتها من برنامج "الذمج"، سوا عملت على لفرني
أو على شبكة الإنترنت ؟

1 = 1 5 الحلقات
2 = 2 10 الحلقات
3 = 3 15 الحلقات
4 = 4 20 الحلقات
5 = 5 21 أو أعلى الحلقات

4 بصفة عامة ، بم تصف أرائك السياسية :

1 = ليبرالية جدا
2 = ليبرالية
3 = لا الليبرالية ولا المحافظة
4 = محافظ
5 = محافظ جدا

5 هل تجد نفسك في أي من الأيدولوجيات السياسية التالية ؟

1 = حزب الحرية والعدالة
2 = حزب النور
3 = جبهة الإنقاذ الوطني
4 = تمرد
5 = حركة 6 أبريل

6 = لا شيء مما سبق

7 = أخرى

6 لماذا تشاهد برنامج "البرنامج"؟

1 = للتسلية

2 = للبقاء على العلم بالأحداث الجارية

3 = لاكتساب المعلومات السياسية

4 = أخرى:

7 إلى أي مدى تهتم بالمسائل المتعلقة بالسياسة والحكومة؟

1 = مهم جداً

2 = مهم

3 = مهم إلى حد ما

4 = غير مهم على الإطلاق

8 إلى أي مدى تتحدث عن السياسة مع الاصدقاء ، الأسرة أو زملاء العمل؟

1 = بصفة متكررة

2 = أحيانا

3 = نادرا

4 = أبدا

برجاء إختيار الإجابة التي تمثل مدى موفقة كل من للعبارات التالية :

9 بشكل عام، "البرنامج" يمدني بمعلومات دقيقة

1 = أوافق بشدة

2 = أوافق

3 = محايد

4 = لا أوافق

5 = لا أوافق بشدة

10 "البرنامج" يمدني بمعلومات جديرة بالثقة

1 = أوافق بشدة

2 = أوافق

3 = محايد

4 = لا أوافق

5 = لا أوافق بشدة

11 "البرنامج" عادل في طرح جميع وجهات النظر

- 1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

12 "البرنامج" يمدني بمفهوم واقعي للأحداث السياسية في مصر

- 1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

13 أنا مؤمن بأن البرنامج يمد المصريين بمفهوم واقعي للأحداث السياسية في مصر

- 1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

14 أنا مؤمن بأن "البرنامج" برنامج ساخر

- 1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

15 أن مؤمن بأن المصريين الذين يشاهدون البرنامج على الأعتقاد بأنه برنامج ساخر

- 1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

16 أنا مؤمن بأنني على وعي عام بالأحداث السياسية الجارية في مصر

- 1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد

4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

17 أنا مؤمن بأنني على وعي عام بالأحزاب السياسية والمفاهيم السياسية

1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

18 أن مؤمن بأن البرنامج له دور في التأثير على آراء المصريين في القضايا المصرية

1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

19 أن مؤمن بأن البرنامج له دور في التأثير على آراء المصريين في المواقف السياسية المصرية

1 = أوافق بشدة
2 = أوافق
3 = محايد
4 = لا أوافق
5 = لا أوافق بشدة

20 بشكل عام ، كيف تصنف آراء البرنامج في السخرية من المواقف السياسية

1 = ممتاز
2 = جيد
3 = مقبول
4 = ضعيف
5 = ضئيلاً

برجاء الإدلاء بالمعلومات التالية :

العمر :

24 16 = 1
30 25 = 2
35 31 = 3
40 36 = 4
41 أو أكثر = 5

النوع :
1 = أنثى
2 = ذكر

الشهادة العلمية:

1 = ثانوية عامة
2 = حاصل على درجة البكالوريوس
3 = الدراسات العليا
4 = أخرى



To: Dina Younis
Cc: Nihal El-Gammal
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB
Date: Feb 26, 2014
Re: Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "Egyptian Audience's Perception of Political Satire Shows: An Analysis of the Perceived and Actual Influence of Political Comedy Programming," and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Atta Gebril'.

Dr. Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
T: 02-26151919
Email: agebril@aucegypt.edu

A graphic consisting of a yellow square on the left and a dark blue rectangle on the right.

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قرار رئيس الجهاز المركزي للتعينة العامة والإحصاء

بالتفويض

رقم (٦٢٢) لسنة ٢٠١٤

في شأن قيام الباحثة / دينا محمد عبد الوهاب بونس - المسجلة لدرجة الماجستير بقسم الصحافة والاعلام - الجامعة الامريكية بالقاهرة - باجراء دراسة ميدانية بعنوان: (مفهوم المشاهد المصري للبرامج السياسية الساخرة).

رئيس الجهاز

- بعد الإطلاع على القرار الجمهوري رقم (٢٩١٥) لسنة ١٩٦٤ بشأن إنشاء وتنظيم الجهاز.
- وعلى قرار رئيس الجهاز رقم (٢٣١) لسنة ١٩٦٨ في شأن إجراء الإحصاءات والتعدادات والاستفتاءات والاستقصاءات.
- وعلى قرار رئيس الجهاز رقم (١٣١٤) لسنة ٢٠٠٧ بشأن التفويض في بعض الاختصاصات.
- وبعد الإطلاع على مذكرة العرض على رئيس الجهاز وموافقة سيادته على ما ورد بها.
- وعلى كتاب الجامعة الامريكية بالقاهرة الوارد للجهاز في ٢٠١٤/٥/٨.

قـرـر

- مادة ١: تقوم الباحثة / دينا محمد عبد الوهاب بونس - المسجلة لدرجة الماجستير بقسم الصحافة والاعلام - الجامعة الامريكية بالقاهرة - باجراء الدراسة الميدانية المشار اليها عالياً.
- مادة ٢: تجري الدراسة على عينة حجمها (٤٠٥) اربعمائة وخمسة مفردة من الجمهور المصري المشاهد للبرامج السياسية الساخرة وذلك بمحافظتي القاهرة والجيزة.
- مادة ٣: تجمع البيانات اللازمة لهذه الدراسة طبقاً للاستمارة المعدة لهذا الغرض والمعتمدة من الجهاز المركزي للتعينة العامة والإحصاء وعدد صفحاتها ٥ صفحات (خمسة).
- مادة ٤: يراعى موافقة مفردات العينة - مع مراعاة سرية البيانات الفردية وعدم استخدام البيانات التي يتم جمعها لأغراض أخرى غير أغراض هذه الدراسة.
- مادة ٥: يجري العمل الميداني خلال شهرين من تاريخ صدور هذا القرار.
- مادة ٦: يوافق الجهاز المركزي للتعينة العامة والإحصاء بنسخة من النتائج النهائية لهذه الدراسة.
- مادة ٧: تلتزم الباحثة / دينا محمد عبد الوهاب بونس - بإبلاغ مديرتي الأمن بمحافظتي القاهرة والجيزة بصورة من هذا القرار وقبل البدء في التنفيذ مرفقاً بها بيانات القائمين على الدراسة (الأسم - الرقم القومي - تاريخ بدء وانتهاء تنفيذ هذه الدراسة الميدانية بالمحافظتين).
- مادة ٨: ينفذ هذا القرار من تاريخ صدوره.
- صدر في: ٢٠١٤ / ٥ / ١٥.

٥/١٥
٢٠١٤

أحمد عطية محمد

مدير عام الإدارة العامة للأمن

