



POWER2YOUTH

Education, Income and the Uncertainty of Being Young in Egypt

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Nadine Sika¹

Abstract

This paper analyses the extent to which young people's background - gender, education and income - influences their life chances. Based on a national sample survey of 1,200 young people conducted in April 2016, the research found that young people in Egypt are not equally excluded or marginalized. The majority of youth are to some extent included in the polity, one way or another, with variances in marginalization. Young people can be perceived as constituting three different categories, with three different levels of marginalization and uncertainty. The first category is the most deprived of all: young uneducated people from poor families who are marginalized in the employment market, and have the lowest income levels. The second category comprises young people who have attained secondary education and whose families typically fall in the mid and low income levels. They have high aspirations for change and are very likely to participate politically through voting and engaging in election campaigns. The level of marginalization of these young people depends on their family income level: the lower the family income the more likely they will be unemployed. Young people with university education, the third category, have the greatest life chances. They are more likely to engage in public life, for instance through civil society organizations or by voting, to promote the political and social change they aspire for. Even though young women have an equal chance of attaining secondary and higher education, their life experiences are different from those of young men, especially with respect to employment and political participation.

Keywords: Egypt | Youth | Education | Employment | Income | Migration

INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of the Power2Youth research project, whose main concern is to analyse young people's transformative impact in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region. Taking Egypt as a case study, the paper builds on previous research on the structural impediments to young people's inclusion in the civic, economic and political spheres in the region (Paciello and Pioppi 2014, Destremau and Catusse 2014, Sika and Albrecht 2015, Catusse and Destremau 2016, Sika 2016a). It seeks to understand how young people's individual characteristics and background - such as gender, education level, place of residence and income level - impact their life opportunities. How is education related to a young person's chances of becoming employed? How does poverty impact a young person's access to education and employment? Is education related to a young person's civic and political engagement levels? Does it impact the levels of trust in formal and informal institutions? To understand these questions, the paper analyses data from a sample survey of 1,200 individuals aged 18-29 carried out in eight Egyptian governorates during the spring of 2016.

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The paper is divided into two parts. The first analyses the neoliberal economic system in Egypt and how it affects young people's life chances. It identifies the structural background of regime policies toward young people, and how this context develops social and economic opportunities for some young people, while marginalizing others. The second part analyses the survey data with a specific emphasis on the individual characteristics of the sample. The main thrust of the analysis in this part is the extent to which a young person's structural background and environment impact that person's life chances. I am also concerned here with understanding which young people are most likely to engage in civic and political activities. In addition to statistics, the paper draws on qualitative interviews conducted with more than 60 young members of civil society organizations, political parties and independent activists in 2015.²

1. NEOLIBERALISM AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIFE CHANCES

Neoliberalism emphasizes the importance of deregulation, liberalization of the market, fiscal discipline, privatization and the commercialization of social programmes (Bogaert 2013). These policies assume the restricted influence of government on economic policies, and the restriction of the state vis-à-vis the government. Following David Harvey's view of neoliberalism as an economic policy project, it should be analysed as an international political project based on a class strategy that enhances "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey 2003). Thus, relations of power within a polity may add to the exploitative character of one group, mainly the ruling elite or the economic elite, against the social and economic interests of another group, mainly the poor and the middle class (Bogaert 2013). Neoliberalism as it developed in the Middle East and North Africa was tied to patronage and crony capitalism, strengthening links between the political and the economic and adding to the disenfranchisement of the majority (Henry and Springborg 2010). Neoliberal reform became an integral part of generating wealth in urban cities, and increased income for the upper classes against the general progress of society and the equal distribution of income (Bogaert 2013). As Robert Springborg (2011) asserts, countries in the Middle East and North Africa developed a crony capitalist system that was unable, and in which political decision-makers were unwilling, to include the quickly eroding middle class and the high number of socially and economically excluded youth.

1.1 Neoliberalism and Regime Policies toward Young People

From the early days of the Mubarak regime until today, young people in Egypt have been perceived as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they can be a force for socio-economic development, while on the other they have been seen as a source of political threat (Sika 2016a). The regime's official discourse centres on the importance of building long-term development strategies for youth through an educational system which could help transition young people from school to the market. In addition, the various regimes from Mubarak to al-Sisi have voiced their intention to generate employment opportunities for young people. The al-Sisi regime went a step further in 2015 through establishing a "Presidential Leadership Programme" to help develop employment opportunities and to train young people to become part of the

² For more information on the qualitative fieldwork, see Sika (2016b).

political and governance process.³ A closer look at these strategies, however, reveals a lack of sustainable policies to reap the benefits of the various programmes. Studies have also found that there is no unified strategy for the development of employment opportunities for young people (El-Megharbel 2007, Assaad and Krafft 2013, Barsoum et al. 2014). One of the major concerns for the enhancement of employment opportunities for young people is the neoliberal economic policies that have been forcefully implemented from the mid-2000s until today. Apart from cronyism and nepotism, the policies have concentrated on a service-based economy, which is incapable of developing much needed employment opportunities (Adly 2014). Another structural problem is that the regime is mainly concerned with developing education and employment opportunities for young urban men, while excluding young women and young men from rural areas (Sika 2016a). Exclusion in this sense is the denial of life opportunities, especially in education and employment. Ray Bush (2004), for instance, argues that the poor are poor due to their incorporation into capitalist economies.

From a political perspective, young people have been urged time and again - and especially under the al-Sisi regime - to place blind trust in the regime, following the political and economic strategies that it enacts. The regime has been adamant in sending a clear message to young people that they are welcome to be involved in various national projects or in the government through the Presidential Leadership Programme, however only if they do so in support of the government. If they want to support the opposition, or criticize the regime, then they should “stay out of politics” (Dunne and Bentivoglio 2014).

1.2 Different Economic Backgrounds, Different Experiences

To further understand the impact of neoliberal economic development in Egypt, we can look at young people’s experiences in education, access to employment and participation in civic and political affairs. It is not a matter of who is “included” or “excluded” from reaping the benefits of the neoliberal project in Egypt, but of understanding how neoliberalism affects the life chances and struggles of young people today. Young people in Egypt who fall in the middle-income category have different life experiences than rich and poor youth. However, their aspirations are constrained by these very experiences. Pettit suggests that these young people have few social connections or capabilities to network with capital, which limits their chances for social mobility (Pettit 2015).

The story in this paper is similar, as it will show that the life experiences of young people vary first and foremost according to their educational level, and then according to their family’s income level. The most disenfranchised young people are those who left school prematurely, a large majority of them young women. The main reason for leaving early is poverty. Consequently, many young men enter the employment market at a fairly young age, earning very low salaries, while young women stay at home, reproducing the poverty cycle. Education is not the only factor, however, since urban young people who come from low-income families and have attained a high education level are less likely to be employed than peers with high education and mid to high family income.⁴ Even though these young people attend the same public universities as the middle-income young people, they lack the social

³ For more information on this programme, see the official website: <http://plp.eg/en/home>.

⁴ See for instance Tables 1 and 2.

network that would provide them access to good jobs with decent salaries.⁵

It is hard to analyse these young people within a framework of “inclusion/exclusion”. Although young uneducated poor people are indeed “included” in the labour market, specifically in the private sector, they are barely making it at the margins. A consequence of their poverty seems to be that they are also marginalized from civic and political participation compared to other young people their age. Even though political participation or voting in authoritarian regimes is more likely to reproduce authoritarianism than not, the mere fact that these young people do not participate - whether in civil society organizations or by voting, as will be presented later - shows their marginality within the polity. Accordingly, their life chances are dissociated from those of other young people who have had better educational opportunities and whose families fall within the middle and higher income levels. Though there is a discrepancy in the regional distribution of wealth, with urban governorates having the highest levels of income, when analysed further, it is clear that family income levels and education are far more important variables in determining young people’s migration, employment and civic and political engagement than their place of residence.

2. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

2.1 Survey and Sample

The survey was implemented in eight governorates of Egypt between 17 April and 10 May 2016 by the team of Professor Khaled Abdel Fattah under the auspices of Partners in Development for Research Consultancy and Training. The questionnaire design was the shared responsibility of Power2Youth partners and the survey was implemented in Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. The design was almost identical in all countries but some elements were omitted in Egypt.

The sample was drawn from the 2006 census sampling frame by the central statistical bureau of Egypt (CAPMAS) using enumeration areas as clusters. Border governorates with small populations were excluded. The governorates of Minya, Sohag and Qena represent Upper Egypt, the governorates of Kafr El Sheikh, Qaliubiya and Beheira represent Lower Egypt, and Cairo and Alexandria constitute the urban governorates of the sample. The sample was allocated proportionally to the strata using population as the size measure. A total of 85 clusters were selected with probability proportionate to size, and a random selection of 20 households and 4 extras was provided to the survey team by CAPMAS, for a total of 2,040 selected households. However, since not all households contained youth in the required age range (18 to 29 years), the final selection only includes 1,200 youth.

The sample comprised 560 males and 634 females. Five hundred and ninety-two individuals resided in Lower Egypt, 398 in Upper Egypt and 210 in the major cities of Cairo, Giza and Alexandria. At the time of interview, 31 percent of the respondents were still enrolled (11 percent in a secondary school, 3 percent in college and 17 percent at a university). Amongst those who had ended their education, 17 percent had left before completing basic schooling, 11 percent had attained basic education, 41 percent had secondary education, 13 percent had

⁵ Focus Group 3, 2015.

achieved a college degree and 18 percent had attained university education.

2.2 Employment and Income Levels

The survey shows that 33 percent of young people were employed during the previous 12 months. Among those who did not work in the reference period, 42 percent were students, while 36 percent were either housewives or conducted domestic tasks. Fifteen percent had been looking for a job, but had not found one. These can be considered as unemployed. It should also be noted that 60 percent of all young people who reported not having worked during the previous 12 months, would have accepted a full-time or part-time job if they were offered work with a decent salary. This high percentage suggests that a considerable number of young women would have liked to move from domestic chores to a job and that, similarly, many young people would be willing to work part time in addition to their studies or perhaps would rather move from studies to work, provided there were opportunities.

Employment opportunities are directly linked with a young person's networks, where close and extended family play a prominent role in finding work. Seventy-six percent of employed young people had found their job through either relatives (47 percent) or friends (29 percent). Only 17 percent of employed young people were the main breadwinner of their family.

The majority, 60 percent, had an average monthly income between 1,000-2,999 Egyptian pounds,⁶ with the highest income levels in the major urban governorates of Cairo and Giza. The majority of young employed people, 59 percent, were dissatisfied with their income. Fifty-six percent found their work to be enjoyable, or sometimes enjoyable. However, 72 percent had uncertainties about their job and feared losing it. A majority of 76 percent were dissatisfied with the government's efforts to help secure jobs for youth.

However, despite these constraints, 60 percent of young people were satisfied with their life today. Nevertheless, only 37 percent had felt cheerful and in good spirits during the past two weeks. In the qualitative fieldwork, some young people complained about not being able to live their "youthfulness". They want to have fun like other young people in the world. However, the social constraints and expectations from older people do not permit them to do so. For instance one young artist asserts that: "We just want to be heard [...] we are trying to prove our existence and that is all". Some young people during the qualitative fieldwork argued that young people are always faced by the challenge to prove themselves in society.⁷

2.3 Education and Its Impact on Employment and Migration

According to recent reports on employment in Egypt, the highest unemployment rate is amongst urban educated youth and as many as 85 percent of the unemployed are 15-29 years old (CAPMAS 2016). Young women have even higher unemployment rates than young men. According to reports on migration from Egypt, it is argued that educated young people are the ones with highest aspirations for employment abroad (Ghoneim 2009). The main assumption in the literature concerning young people's problems in the region in general and

⁶ This amounts to almost 100-300 US dollars, at the exchange rate between US dollars and Egyptian pounds in October 2016.

⁷ Focus Group 4, 2016.

in Egypt in particular is concerned with education and employment (Assaad and Barsoum 2007, Assaad and Krafft 2013). Below, I will add to this literature through first showing the employability of uneducated young people. Then I will argue that unemployment is mainly associated with educated youth from low-income families without sufficient social networks to find employment opportunities.

2.4 Education and Employment

The survey reveals and reconfirms the fact that unemployment is highly correlated with education: the higher the education level the more likely that young people will not find employment.

Let me first examine factors that explain early school exit using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis (Table 1). This will show the relationship between early dropout and employment. In this model, I used “uneducated young people” as the dependent variable, to understand who are the most likely young people to drop out of school before completing primary education. The independent variables were based on: (1) the place of residence (in this case I compared the urban governorates with governorates in Lower Egypt); (2) gender (here I chose young women to understand whether they are more or less likely to drop out of school compared to young men); (3) income level (which is based on young people’s economic self-classification of their household’s income level);⁸ (4) employment status the past 12 months (I developed a dichotomous variable of unemployed young people versus all young people who reported they did not work the past 12 months);⁹ (5) housewife (here I also developed a dichotomous variable of “housewife” versus all other young people who said that they did not work in the past 12 months).¹⁰

The highest level of dropout is found amongst young people from low-income families. Another important phenomenon to be discerned from the OLS model is that young women who reported being unemployed and staying at home, are also the most likely to have dropped out of primary education.

⁸ In the questionnaire this question encompassed five values for income levels: high, above average, average, below average, low. For the purposes of this model, I changed this nominal variable into a dichotomous variable, whereby all youth who reported to have below average and low household income levels were given the value 1. In the remainder of the report, income levels refer to young people’s economic self-classification of their household income levels.

⁹ The initial question in the questionnaire asked young people about the main reason for not working during the past month. Here 42 percent said they were students; 36 percent said they were housewives or conducting domestic work, 15 percent said they did not find a job; 2 percent did not want to work; 1 percent did not work for medical reasons; and 4 percent did not work due to social restrictions. I turned the 15 percent who did not find a job into a dichotomous variable - unemployed vs. the rest who answered that they had not been working in the past 12 months.

¹⁰ I did the same with the variable entitled “housewife”. Here I turned the 36 percent who answered that they did not work in the past 12 months due to domestic work or being housewives into another dichotomous variable - housewife vs. the rest who answered that they had not been working in the past 12 months.

Table 1 | OLS regression model taking incomplete primary education as the dependent variable

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2
Urban	.0341336 (.0198752)	
Lower Egypt	.0331916* (.0149422)	.0191576 (.0120748)
Female	-.0044374 (.0174512)	
Low income	0.0607256*** (0.0147911)	.0556764*** (.0128745)
Unemployed	.0205755 (.0193159)	
Housewife	.0566647** (.0174581)	.0291383* (.0134674)
_cons	-.0209391 (.0300932)	.0109178 (.0101892)
R-squared	0.0455	0.0213
Adj. R-squared	0.0383	0.0189
N of observations	803	1200

Notes: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001. - Standard errors in parentheses. - Model 2 is designed to check for robustness.¹¹

Conversely, young people with university-level education are mainly from mid-level income families who live in major urban cities like Cairo and Alexandria. Young people from low-income families and residing in Upper and Lower Egypt are the ones with fewer chances of higher levels of education, irrespective of their gender. For instance, 26 percent of young people who have below average income have a college or university degree, compared to 40 percent of young people whose family income levels are above average (Table 2).

Table 2 | Educational attainment of young people not currently enrolled (n=757), by place of residence, gender, perceived economic standing of household and employment status

	Incomplete elementary	Elementary	Preparatory	Secondary	College	University	Total	No.
All	6	11	11	41	13	18	100	757
Region								
Urban governorates	6	9	7	28	6	44	100	129
Lower Egypt	7	12	11	41	14	15	100	387
Upper Egypt	4	11	13	45	15	11	100	241
Gender								
Male	6	10	10	41	13	19	100	348
Female	6	12	12	41	12	17	100	409
Economic situation of household by national standards								
Above average	3	9	7	41	4	36	100	38
Average	4	10	10	43	12	21	100	451

¹¹ Here I examine how the main variables, or the “core” variables in the regression coefficient estimates, behave when the regression specification is modified through adding/removing variables (Lu and White 2014).

Below average	10	14	13	37	16	10	100	268
Employment status in the past 12 months								
Employed	6	12	10	36	13	23	100	322
Not employed	6	10	12	45	12	14	100	435

As mentioned earlier, the majority of young people, 67 percent, are not employed. Out of those, 36 percent are working domestically or are housewives, while 42 percent are still studying. The first category, young women with domestic chores do not consider themselves “unemployed”. Accordingly, I use the 15 percent of young people who report not having found a job as the unemployed category and conduct OLS regression based on unemployment as the dependent variable. Household income level, education level and area of residence (Lower Egypt versus urban cities) make up the independent variables (Table 3). The OLS results show that the majority of unemployed young people are highly educated young men from low-income families. This confirms the fact that young people who are networked and have family or friends who can find them a “wasta” stand a much higher chance of finding employment than their peers with the same educational attainment but from poorer families. This also corresponds with the perception of young people themselves. For instance, when asked about the importance of wasta in getting a job, 81 percent of young men and 69 percent of young women believed it is very important. In addition, respectively 77 and 74 percent of young people with average and below average income levels believed it is very important. Furthermore, the majority of young people interviewed during the qualitative fieldwork also argued that if a young person does not have a “wasta” it is very unlikely that he/she will find a job.

Table 3 | OLS regression model with unemployed young people as the dependent variable

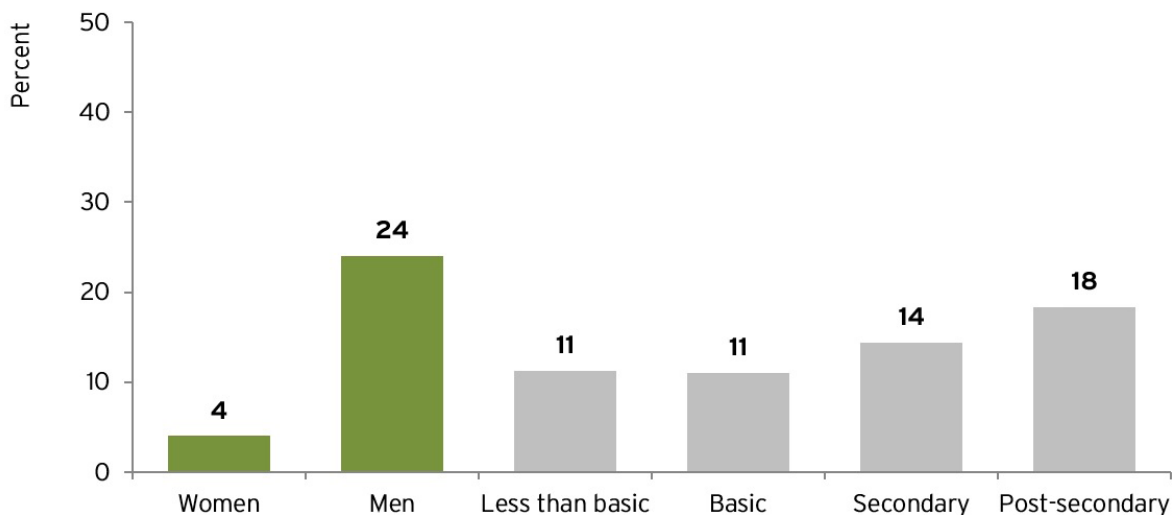
Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2
Female	-.2039755*** (.0265317)	-.200432*** (.0264883)
Urban	-.0552717 (.0360615)	
Lower Egypt	-.0359383 (.0268201)	
University	.5096896 *** (.0473401)	.5032085*** (.046845)
Secondary	.2168451*** (.0297013)	.2230609*** (.0295035)
Middle income	.051254 (.0435655)	
Low Income	.1325714** (.0463526)	.0905166*** (.0263947)
_cons	.388462 (.061404)	.3986782*** (.0464803)
R-squared	0.1988	0.1943
Adj. R-squared	0.1918	0.1903
N of observations	803	804

Notes: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001. - Standard errors in parentheses. - Model 2 is designed to check for robustness.

2.5 Migration and Employment

Migration and employment are closely related, with many young people from SEM countries being interested in travelling abroad for employment opportunities. According to the survey, as many as 14 percent of young Egyptians intend to travel abroad to seek employment, 39 percent preferring another Middle Eastern country and 32 percent stating they want to go to Europe. The interest in labour migration is much higher among young men than young women and increases with education (Figure 1), a finding which is corroborated by other studies analysing migration patterns from the SEM (Fargues and Venturini 2015, CARIM 2010). In accordance with the statistics, during all focus groups, migration for work was perceived as a viable choice for young men but more rarely for young women. The majority of respondents argued that if they were to find a job in the West or in the GCC, they would certainly pursue it (Sika et al. 2015).

Figure 1 | Percentage of young people who intend to travel abroad to seek work in the coming 5 years, by gender and educational attainment (n=1,193)



2.6 Civic and Political Participation

Only 3 percent of young people are members of civic organizations. However, many seem to be fairly passive members with 59 percent participating only a few times a year and 35 percent participating once a month. Internet activism is reported by 15 percent, and 10 percent argue that they could become an internet activist in the near future. Voting in the last parliamentary elections stood at 47 percent amongst young people aged 18-29, while participation in election campaigns is at 7 percent, with another 10 percent contending that they could do so in the future.

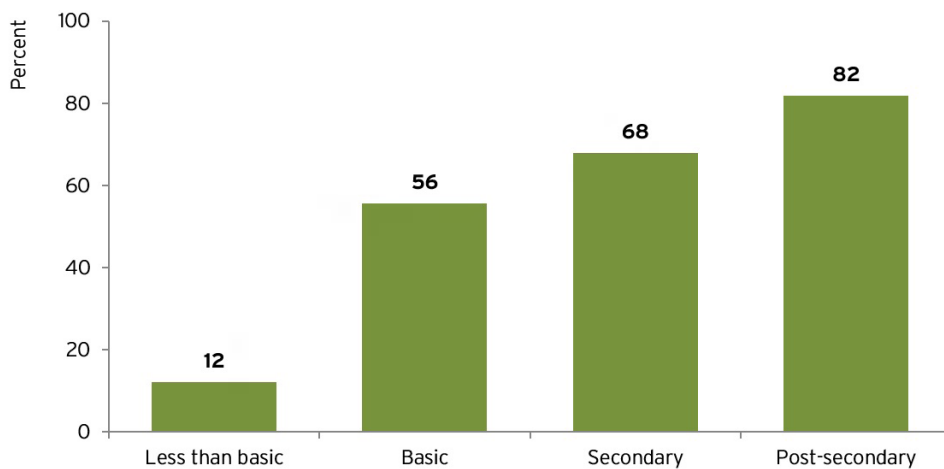
The main reason for voting is a belief that this is a duty (44 percent), followed by the need for change (36 percent) and 10 percent who support the incumbents. These answers provide different evidence from the established research in the region, which purports that electoral participation is based on patronage and receiving perks from incumbents (Lust-Okar 2009, Blaydes 2011). As stated, in this survey a higher percentage of young people are interested in voting for political and social change rather than to merely support the incumbents. It is

not clear, though, whether this is a generational issue, or whether it is a consequence of the Egyptian Uprising of 2011 and the ensuing events of multiple elections and mass mobilization for these elections. During the qualitative field-work the majority of participants argued that they were interested in civic and political participation to promote social, economic and political change, but that they were not supporting a specific candidate (Sika et al. 2015).

2.7 Education and Its Impact on Civic and Political Participation

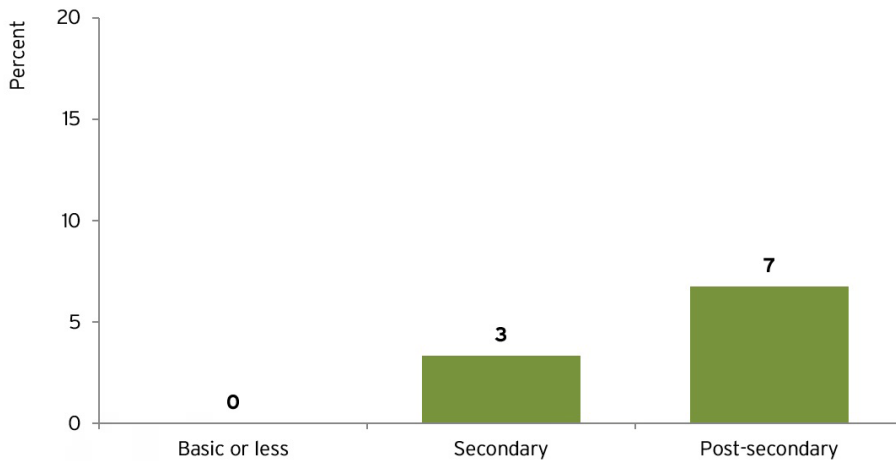
The majority of young people have smart phones (55 percent) and access to the Internet (59 percent). The highest usage of the Internet, 79 percent, is for social networking sites, followed by 52 percent who use the Internet for chatting, sending SMS, etc. General knowledge is sought through the Internet by 31 percent of respondents. Only 28 percent of young people use the Internet to download music. The primary means of communication about politics for young people is believed to be through social media, with 70 percent of respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing to a statement claiming this. There is a strong positive association between Internet use and educational attainment, with a wide gap in use between young people with a university degree and peers with low education (Figure 2).

Figure 2 | Percentage of young people who have ever used the Internet, by educational attainment (n=1,194)



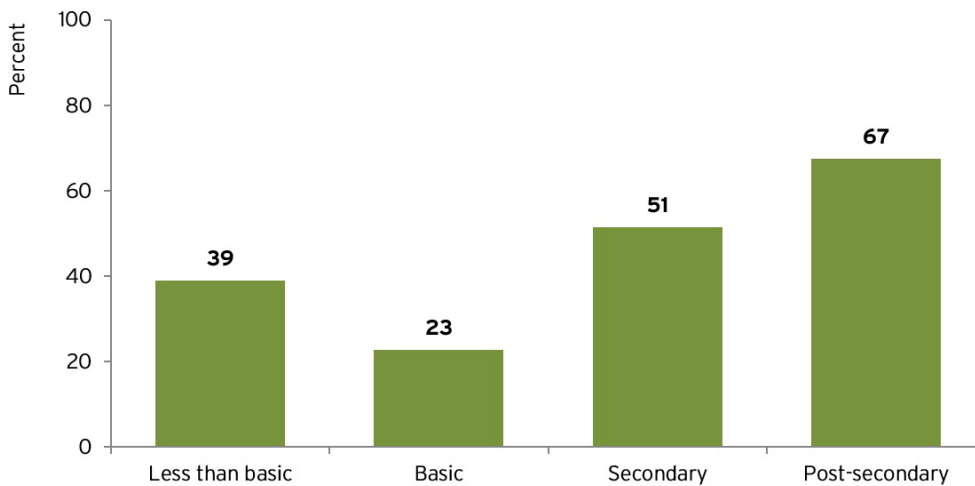
Participation in civil society organizations is highly associated with high education levels, place of residence and high-income background. The more educated, the richer and the more urban a young person is, the more likely that he/she will participate in civil society organizations (Figure 3). This was also found during the qualitative fieldwork: when reaching out to young members of civic or political organizations, our research team had difficulties in finding uneducated and low-income individuals. As a consequence, nearly 90 percent of our young participants were middle class and educated.

Figure 3 | Percentage of young people who are members of one or more organizations, such as a religious organization, a sports club, a political party, a trade union or a community association. By educational attainment (n=1,194).



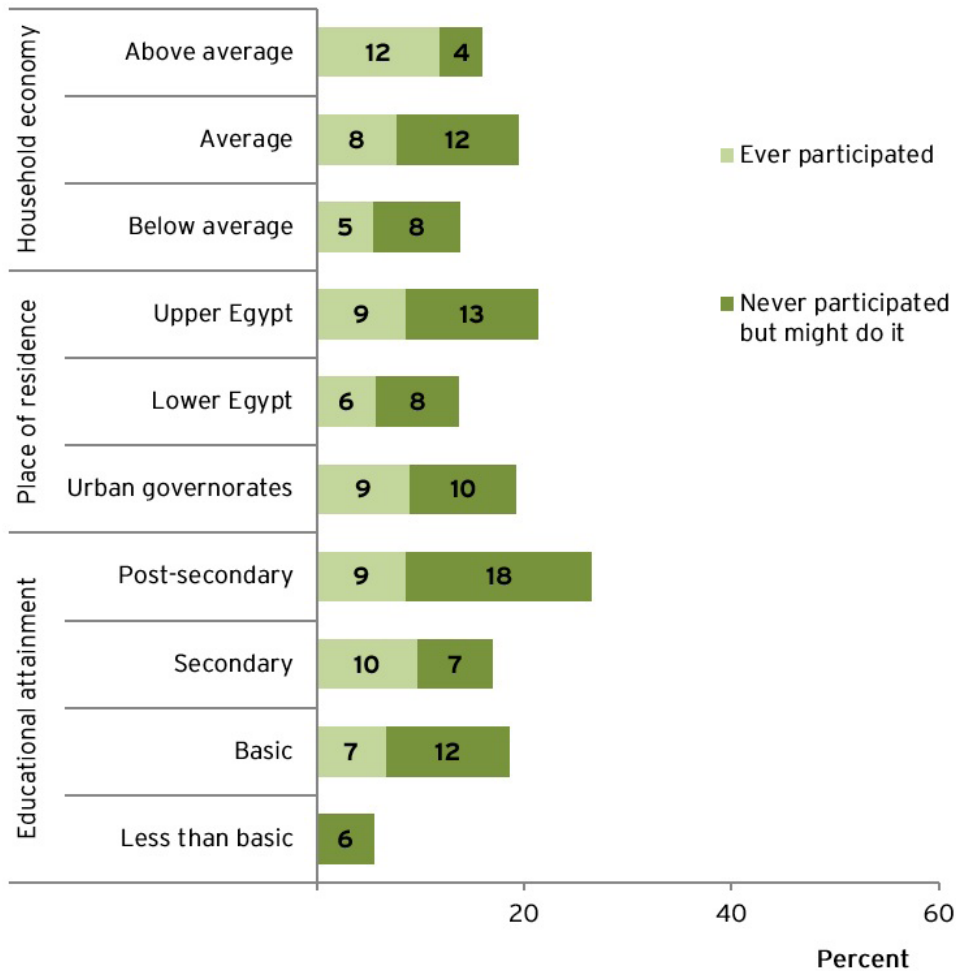
Voting behaviour is also associated with education levels, where young people with both secondary and post-secondary education are more likely to vote than the rest, at least as judged by levels of participation in the most recent parliamentary elections (Figure 4).

Figure 4 | Percentage of young people who participated in the 2015 parliamentary elections, by educational attainment (n=1,194)



Seven percent of all young people have ever participated in one or more election campaigns. People with incomplete basic education and young women are less likely to participate in election campaigns (respectively no one and 4 percent had ever participated, Figure 5).

Figure 5 | Percentage of young people who have ever participated in one or more election campaigns, and who have never done so but say they might consider doing so in the future (n=1,190). By educational attainment



2.8 Gender Equality

According to Salih and her colleagues (2017), women’s rights and gender equality in the SEM are intertwined with state feminism. They argue that “the legacy of these opportunistic forms of state feminism weighs on the capacity of local women’s rights activists to promote inclusive public debates, notably due to the widespread perception of gender mainstreaming and women’s rights agendas as being tied to the past authoritarian regimes, and against Islam and Islamist political opposition”. As important as this is for the analysis of gender rights and the equality of women, it is also important to examine how young people in Egypt perceive gender equality, and what their attitudes toward gender are.

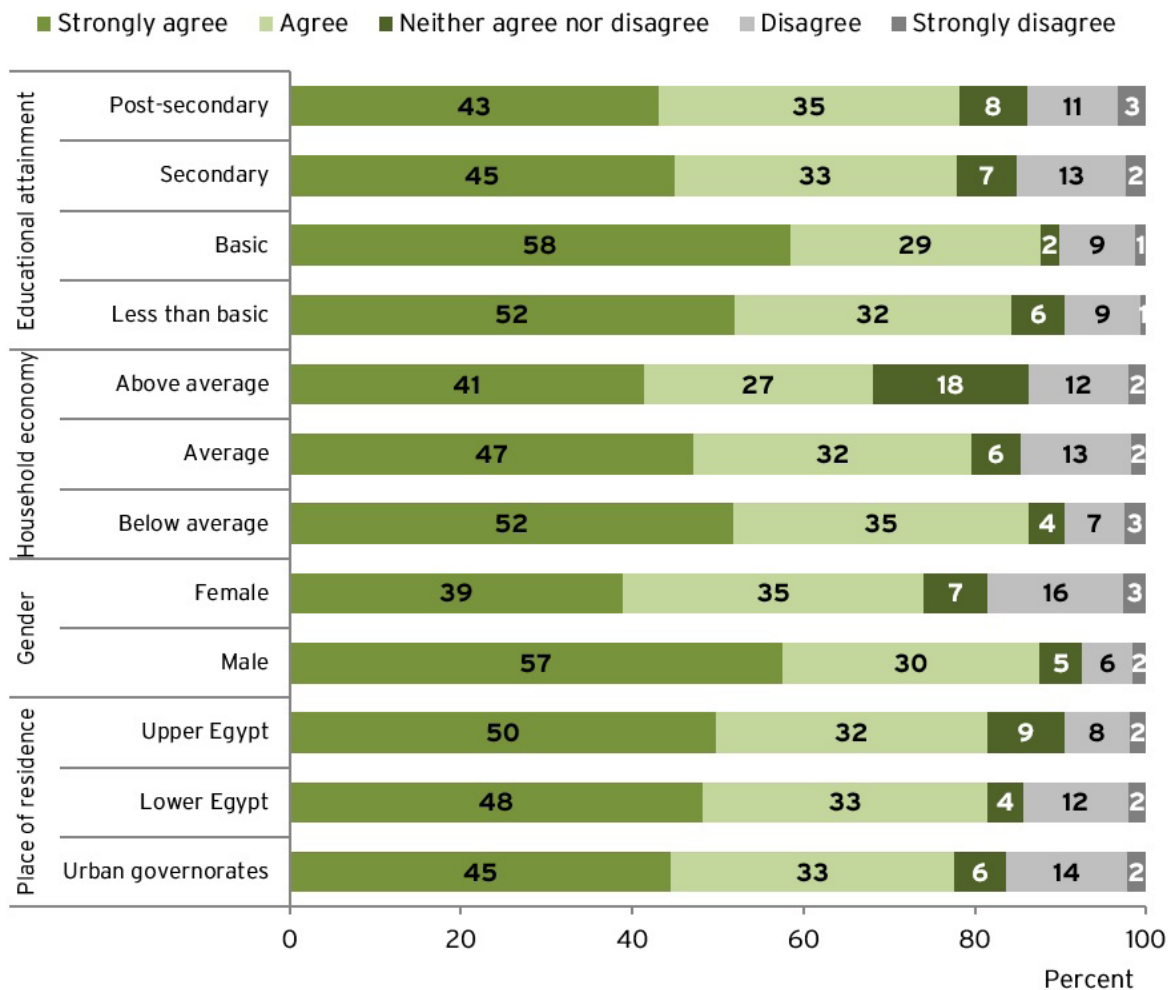
Perceptions of gender equality are ambiguous. On the positive side, 75 and 67 percent agree that women and men should be provided with equal job opportunities and equal access to education, respectively.¹² Equal pay for equal work is supported by 77 percent. Furthermore,

¹² Two in three respondents disagree with the statement that “A university education is more important for a boy/

a majority of 58 percent believe that young women have either very much or much influence on family decisions. The right and influence to choose their spouse is even more developed, with 79 percent saying that women do influence their choice of partner.

Nevertheless, according to 4 in 10 young people, it is men who should be making the most important decisions in the family. Nearly as many, 73 percent, believe that men make better political leaders than women. Also, when jobs are scarce, 75 percent consider that men should have a priority for employment. Women are less supportive of this position than men, as are young people with secondary and post-secondary education, those from families who are better off economically, and those who reside in the urban governorates (Figure 6). However, except for the gap in perception between young women and men, it is somewhat surprising how modest the variation is. Overall, young Egyptians come across as rather conservative and tolerant of the patriarchal society in which they live.

Figure 6 | Degree of agreement with the statement “When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women”. By place of residence, gender, the household’s economic standing and educational attainment (n=1,193)



man than for a girl/woman”.

When conducting the qualitative fieldwork, these issues were not directly addressed, especially equal job opportunities. Instead, young people discussed the problem of unemployment as a general “youth” problem, rather than applying a gender perspective. The major concern of young women was their feeling of insecurity on the street and the problem of harassment.

2.9 Trust in Formal and Informal Institutions

According to social capital theorists, trust is the main factor which builds social cohesiveness and integration. The presence of trust has a positive impact on interpersonal relationships, while its absence can lead to social and institutional breakdown (Franklin 2004). In Egypt, the majority of young people lack general trust and 61 percent argue that they need to be careful in dealing with other people. While 98 percent have complete trust in their immediate family, 62 percent in their extended family, 23 percent in their neighbours, 17 percent in co-workers, and 2 percent in people from other nationalities.

The story gets more distrustful with formal institutions; only 9 percent have complete confidence in the printed press. The level of confidence in TV and the Internet is higher with 30 percent for both. Confidence in local government and political parties stands at a mere 2 percent. The level of confidence in women’s organizations and in charitable organizations is 10 and 47 percent respectively.

These low levels of trust show that the neoliberal economy advocated by the regime is serving to increase trust among family networks and friends instead of wider social solidarity and trust. Young people trust their families, especially their close relatives. These are the most likely to provide assistance, and help them network with others to find employment. The problem with the low overall level of trust, however, is its negative impact on young people’s integration in society at large.

CONCLUSION

The Power2Youth survey shows that young people in Egypt are not equally excluded or marginalized. The majority are to some extent included in the polity, in one way or another. The major finding of this paper is that young people can be perceived as constituting three different categories, with three different levels of marginalization and uncertainty.

The first category holds the most deprived of all, young uneducated people. Living in poor economic conditions, they are marginalized in the employment market with the lowest income levels. Further, they are marginalized in the civic and political realms, with low chances of participation.

The second category is young people who have attained secondary education, and whose families fall in the mid and low income levels. These young people have high aspirations for change, and are very likely to participate politically through voting and through engaging in election campaigns. Nevertheless, they exhibit low levels of trust, especially in political parties and local governments. The level of marginalization of these young people is dependent on their family income: the lower the income level, the more likely they are to be unemployed.

The third category comprises young people with university education, who have the best life chances. They also have the highest aspirations for change (Pettit 2015). They are more likely to engage in public life, such as civil society organizations, or to vote to promote the political and social change they aspire for. These young people are also the most likely to be interested in migration, as their aspirations for better living conditions are higher than those of young people with less education. Nevertheless, even these highly educated young people are not equal when it comes to employment opportunities. Those from a low-income family background are the most likely not to find (decent) employment, while the others, especially those from richer families, have higher chances for employment. Even though young women have equal chances to attain secondary and higher education levels, their life experiences are different than those of young men, especially in employment and with regard to political participation.

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POWER2YOUTH is a research project aimed at offering a critical understanding of youth in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary, multi-level and gender sensitive approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, POWER2YOUTH explores the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion in the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth collective and individual agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey. POWER2YOUTH's participants are 13 research and academic institutions based in the EU member states, Norway, Switzerland and South East Mediterranean (SEM) countries. The project is mainly funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme.

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